**Free State learner dies as lightning strikes near Theunissen – South Africa**

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**One pupil was killed and another severely injured, when lightning struck as they were walking home from Taiwane Secondary School.**

Provincial education spokesperson Howard Ndaba said the Department is saddened by the Grade 9 learner’s death. Thoughts and prayers are also with the loved ones of the injured Grade 11 pupil who’s being treated in the Virginia Hospital.

Local religious leaders have been approached to comfort the school community, and the local clinic will provide further support.

Free State Education MEC Julia Maboya expressed her heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased, and extended wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured learner.

The incident comes in the wake of an impact-based level 4 weather warning issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), cautioning residents of the Free State, Northwest, and parts of the Northern Cape about heavy rains and severe thunderstorms.

The forecast made mention of strong winds, lightning, hail, and the potential for flash flooding, road closures, and damage to infrastructure.