**Family distraught as teenager is killed by lightning -South Africa**

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By Ntombizethu Ngcobo

Days before his final examinations, matric pupil Ntethelelo Ndawonde (17), from Willowfontein, was walking home with two other pupils when he was struck by lightning and died at the scene on Thursday afternoon.

A close family associate said they were informed of the incident by one of the teachers from Ikusaselihle High School.

“When we received the news, we thought he was injured. When they showed us where he was, we couldn’t believe he was already dead”

“The lightning was very severe,” said the family associate.

“Where he was struck, a hole [deep] enough to fit half a shoe was left in the ground.

“His clothes were torn apart and his right side was burnt. I have many unanswered questions. He was a good boy, and we were expecting great things from him.”

The school governing body (SGB) said the tragedy has left the school community deeply distressed.

“We are working hard to make our school one of the best in the community. This has affected us greatly, especially the pupils.

“It’s even more difficult because this happened just days before they start writing their exams. We hope they will heal, focus and be able to succeed,” an SGB member said.

Ndawonde’s classmates, though struggling to talk about the tragedy, described him as humble and said he would be greatly missed.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education spokesperson Muzi Mahlambi called the situation unfortunate, especially with the high expectations families have for their children during exam time.

“We send our condolences to the family during this difficult time. Ndawonde went to school to study and was supposed to write his first exam, but sadly, that didn’t happen,” said Mahlambi.

He added that psychologists were sent to the school to offer counselling to the pupils.

“His desk will be empty when they are writing the exams. We knew that would affect the pupils, which is why we provided psychological support,” Mahlambi said.

Acting uMgungundlovu SAPS spokesperson Warrant Officer Panchael Singh confirmed that an inquest docket had been opened for investigation.