

Fire fighters on high alert

BRITS POS - BRITS - Fire fighters is on high alert as high temperatures and drought continues to fan runaway veldfires.

According to Patricia Maanelo (communications officer department of environmental Affairs) the department's Working on Fire programme to help fight veld and forest fires, has been hard at work during the past two months as its fire fighters were busy fighting multiple fires across the country.

Since December 2015 in the North West alone, fire fighters provided fire suppression services to fire authorities in battling 2 "intense" veld fires throughout the province. The province has 14 vehicles which consist of six buses, a fire truck, two Samil trucks and five bakkies.

"We experienced two fires in the the province last month with a total loss of 21 hectares and our fire fighters continue to remain on high alert," Maanelo said. "As a result of the current drought experienced throughout the country coupled with high temperatures we have had unusual fire activities in the Free State province which experienced 35 fires during December."

Working on Fire draws their firefighters from the poorest of the poor. They go through extensive training, and are characterized by their fitness, discipline and exceptional work ethic and bravery.

Maanelo says many of these fire fighters who spend days and nights on end fighting these fires come from the impoverished communities.

"Thanks to their employment in the Working on Fire programme as an extension of the government's expanded public works programme, they have been given a work opportunity to earn a living and to put food on the table."

Working on Fire is a veld and forest fire fighting resource under the auspices of the department of environmental affairs and it has close to 438 fire fighters based at 18 bases. The programme provides veldfire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and landowners like SA National Parks.



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