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Firefighters on high alert as heat and drought fan runaway veldfires



Firefighters are on high alert as natural disasters continue to fan runaway veld fires. Photo supplied

Lizzy Bapela

Firefighters from Working on Fire have been hard at work during the past two months as its firefighters were busy fighting multiple fires across the country. In Limpopo alone, fewer than 100 firefighters provided fire suppression services battling five “intense” veld fires throughout the province since the beginning of this year (2016).

About 600 firefighters from Working on Fire in Limpopo are on alert to respond to the veld fires that may occur in the province. WoF Limpopo Provincial Spokesperson Matema Gwangwa said that the agency has also recruited two additional regional managers to add to the current three, which means all regions in the province have their own regional manager. She added that two teams in the province

are also on standby to be deployed to the Western Cape, should there be a request for assistance.

“As a result of the current drought experienced throughout the country coupled with high temperatures we have had unusual fire activities in the province. 2015’s fire season has been one of the worst and the busiest, and we have experienced the biggest fires in the Waterberg District. Though the number of fires in the province has reduced, the damage caused by the wild fires in the province has been the biggest. In one fire more than 80 000 hectares were lost to these fires,” said Gwangwa.

WoF’s fire awareness department has started with fire awareness campaigns and workshops, where they are targeting the areas which were mostly affected by the fires in 2015. Gwangwa further said that the agency 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. Many of these firefighters 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 (EPWP), they have been given a work opportunity to earn a living and to put food on the table for their families,” said Gwangwa.

Working on Fire is a national veld and forest fire fighting resource operating under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Affairs and it has close to 5000 firefighters based at 200 bases throughout the country. The programme provides veld fire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and landowners such as South African National Parks and Cape Nature.

Brandgevaar is nou oral

Die gebied word tans deur verwoestende veldbrande geteister en *Working on Fire*, die Departement van Omgewingsake se projek om bosbrande te bestry, is die afgelepe week hard aan die werk, besig om verskeie brande in die provinsie te bestry.

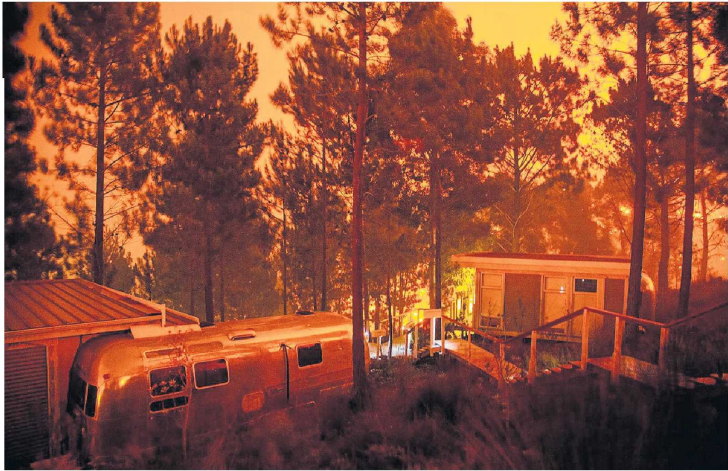
Sedert 11 tot 18 Januarie was hulle aktief besig met 22 spanne om brande te bestry. Die jongste brande was in die Simonsberg, beide in die Paarl- en Stellenbosch-areas, die Kaapse Skiereiland (Red Hill/Scarborough, De Waalrylaan, en Koopmanskraal), Houwhoek, Overberg en Hawston. In die Overstrand-streek was naby 400 brandweer-manne van *Working on Fire* aktief betrokke by die stryd teen die brande. Daarbenewens is 12 helikopters, 10 uitkyk-vliegtuie en vier vastevlerkwatervliegtuie aktief betrokke

om die brande onder bedwang te bring. As gevolg van die huidige droogte in die hele land, tesame met hoë temperature, moedig *Working on Fire* inwoners aan om baie versigtig te wees tydens hierdie brandgevaar-tydperk:

- Moenie vure in die oopte maak nie en moet geen vuur sonder toesig verlaat nie.
- Moenie glasbottels in 'n veld gooi nie. Wanneer sonstrale daardeur weerkaats kan brande ontstaan.
- In die geval van 'n groot vuur, rapporteer dit onmiddellik aan jou plaaslike brandweer (021 872 2323) of bel 107/021 480 7700.

Die bekende karavaan-vakansieoord in die Elgin Vallei, Old Mac Daddy, is hier omring deur reusevlamme tydens vandeeweek se verwoestende brand.

FOTO: DAVID MORRIS



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Firefighters battle wind to bring Glencairn fire under control



TOUGH TERRAIN: Firefighters in Herschel Road, Fish Hoek, work in dense smoke to save houses on the high-level roads.

Picture: JEFFREY ABRAHAMS

Michael Nkalane and Raphael Wolf

FIREFIGHTERS from various agencies, including the SA Navy, battled throughout yesterday to control a fire that cut a swathe across the mountain near Fish Hoek, forcing about 100 Glencairn families to evacuate their homes and destroying more than 50 hectares of vegetation.

The fire was believed to have started when a Metrorail train caught alight at Glencairn station. The body of an unidentified person was found in one of the two gutted carriages, Metrorail spokesperson Riana Scott said.

While it was unclear what had caused the fire, sparks ignited

vegetation on the mountainside and, fanned by wind, the fire spread rapidly.

“People from about 100 houses were evacuated,” subcouncil 19 chairperson Felicity Purchase said.

She said they were given shelter at the Fish Hoek Civic Centre. They returned to their homes last night after the fire was brought under control.

Damage to property would be determined once the fire was contained, she said.

“We cannot say how much damage the fire has caused to the properties for now. We will assess after the fire has been doused,” Purchase said.

Fire and Rescue Services

spokesperson Liezl Moodie said three helicopters were used to water bomb the blaze, while a number of firefighters were deployed to fight the fire.

The helicopters were later withdrawn due to poor visibility. Firefighters from Working on Fire, the navy and South African National Parks (SANParks) struggled to contain the blaze. Thick smoke filled the air.

Several Fish Hoek residents hauled out garden hoses to keep the fire at bay.

SANParks fire manager Philip Prins said they were not hopeful that the fire would be distinguished by late last night.

“Strong wind makes it difficult for firefighters to contain it.”

He said SANParks deployed 30 firefighters to assist the City’s 45 firefighters.

“We might be here even tomorrow (today). Fifty hectares of vegetation have been destroyed, but luckily fynbos was not affected.”

Scott said the cause of the fire was being investigated.

Police spokesperson FC van Wyk concurred with Scott that the burning carriages had ignited the mountain fire.

“A body was found in the burnt-out section of the train, but information with regards to the deceased is unknown. An inquest docket has been opened for investigation,” he said.

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Firefighters battle 20 fires in a week

Working on Fire (WoF), the National Department of Environmental Affairs' programme to help fight veld and forest fires, has been hard at work during the past weeks as its firefighters fought multiple fires across the province.

Provincial Communications Officer Lauren Howard said 20 fires raged throughout the province from 11 to 18 January. "Firefighters from the Eastern Cape are ready to be dispatched across the Western Cape."

Teams from George and Eden are also fighting fires in the Cape.

The fires in the Cape Peninsula saw close to 400 WoF firefighters employed. In addition, 12 helicopters, 10 spotter planes and four fixed wing tractor bombers were used. On Tuesday the Overberg fire that started on Sunday, continued to rage.

Since December 2015, in the Western Cape alone, about 900 firefighters battled more than 90 veld fires.

Working on Fire Western Cape General Manager Shane Christians, said, "We have close to 800 firefighters based at 28 bases. The programme provides veld fire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and landowners like South African National Parks and CapeNature."

Twenty-six aircraft (12 helicopters, four fixed wing air tractor bombers and 10 spotters) are based in Bredasdorp, Donkerhoek, George, Knysna, Porterville, Stellenbosch and Still Bay. This additional air support was made possible through a partnership with the Western Cape Government.

WoF working hard

Working on Fire, the National Department of Environmental Affairs' 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 the beginning of this year (2016) in Limpopo alone, just fewer than 100 fire fighters provided fire suppression services battling about five "intense" veld fires throughout the province.

About 600 fire fighters from Working on Fire in Limpopo are on alert to respond to the veld fires that may occur in the Province. WoF has also recruited 2 additional Regional Managers to add to the current 3, which means that all regions in the province have their own regional manager.

Two teams in the province are also on

standby to be deployed to the Western Cape should there be a request for assistance.

As a result of the current drought experienced throughout the country coupled with high temperatures we have had unusual fire activities in the Limpopo province. 2015's fire season has been one of the worst and busiest, where we have experienced the biggest fires in the Waterberg district" according to WoF.

Though the number of fires in the province has reduced, the damage caused by the wild fires in the province has been the biggest. In one fire in the Waterberg more than 80,000 hectares were lost to these fires.

Working on fire's Fire Awareness department has started with the Fire awareness campaigns and workshop, where they are targeting the areas

which were mostly affected by the fires last year.

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. 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 Expanded Public Works programme of government they have been given a work opportunity to earn a living and to put food on the table.

Working on Fire is a national veld and forest fire fighting resource under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Affairs and it has close to 5000 fire fighters based at 200 bases throughout the country. The programme provides veld fire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and landowners like South African National Parks and CapeNature.

Brand na vier dae geblus

HANNES VISSER

Die droë warm weer van die afgelope week en onverskilligheid met die maak van vure het brandspanne die afgelope week laat bontstaan om 'n vuur in Schoemanspoort onder beheer te bring. Die vuur wat Sondag by 'n piekniekplek langs die pad na die Kango Bergoord ontstaan het is gister in die vroeë oggendure finaal geblus.

Meer as 30 brandbestryders van Working on Fire, sowel as brandbetryders van Eden brandweer en Oudtshoorn brandweer het sedert Sondag probeer om die brand te blus. Volgens brandbestryders is daar 'n vermoede dat die brand Sondag veroorsaak is nadat mense langs die pad by die rivier ontspan en vleis gebräai het.

Die vuur is Sondagand onder beheer

gebring en brandbestryders het Maandagoggend die vuur dopgehou. Uiteens warm toestand en 'n sterk wind het die vuur Maandagmiddag egter in 'n oogwink laat opvlam en versprei. 'n Warrelwind het die vuur oor die teerpad laat versprei.

Brandspanne kon daarin slaag om te verhoed dat huise en 'n kerkgebou wat in die pad van die brand was beskadig word. die brand is ook gekeer voordat dit na die Kango Bergoord en na nabygeleë plase kon verprei.

Waar die brand in die berge versprei het was dit baie moeilik om dit te bestry, maar brandbestryders het tog daarin geslaag om die brandlyn te bereik.

Lede van die publiek word weereens dringend deur owerhede versoek om uiteens versigtig te wees wanneer vuur gemaak word. "Mense moet slegs plekke wat vir

die maak van vure ingerig is gebruik en nie by enige stilhouplek vuur maak nie," het 'n lid van die brandweer gesê. "Brandende

vuurhoutjies en sigaretstompies wat weggeskiet word kan ook tot groot brande en ernstige skade lei."



Die vuur het by tye tot naby arbeidershuise versprei waar brandbestryders en inwoners dit gekeer het.



Die vuur Dinsdagaand met die Raubenheimerdam in die voorgrond. Foto: Johan Meintjies.

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Vrywilligers op Kleinmond het vroeër vandeewee via sosiale media drink- en eetgoed vir die brandslaners bymekaar gemaak.

Brand in bedwang

KLEINMOND – Die brand wat sedert Saterdag in die Houwhoek/Elgin omgewing verwoesting gesaai het, is Maandag vir eers onder bedwang gebring. Die brand het digby Botrivier ontstaan. Daar word vermoed dat opsetlik gestig is. Daarvandaan het dit gou langs die N2 deur die Houwhoek vallei na Elgin versprei. 'n Tweede brand het kort na die eerste ontstaan en die twee het later een vuur geword. Dit het vinnig deur die kommersiële denne plantasies en oor plase heen beweeg en plek-plek groot verwoesting gesaai. Spanne van die Overberg distriksmunisipaliteit, Overstrand, Working on Fire, die lugmag en veral die plaasboere en hul werkers het kragte saamgesnoer om die brand te bestry en daar was by tye soveel as 200 mense betrokke by die poging. Die N2 en R43 moes soms gesluit word vir verkeer en 'n digte rookwolk het Sondag oor dele van Kleinmond en Bettysbaai gehang. Buiten

ons plaaslike brandweer en Working on Fire spanne was KAWS ook betrokke en het plaaslike vrywilligers drink-en eetgoed bymekaar gemaak en aanry vir die brandslaners. Teen Woensdagoggend was die vuur onder beheer. Dit sal egter nog tot die naweek dopgehou word. Talle ander brande is intussen elders in die Overberg aangemeld en teen Woensdagoggend was die brande op Pearly Beach en Elim nog nie onder beheer nie.



KAWS was ook betrokke

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Beware of veldfires

RUSTENBURG HERALD – RUSTENBURG – Working on Fire, Department of Environmental Affairs' programme to help fight veld and forest fires, has been hard at work during the past two months as its fire fighters fight multiple fires across the country.



Since December 2015 in the North West alone, fire fighters provided fire suppression services to fire authorities in battling two “intense” veld fires throughout the province.

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

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 throughout the Province. The programme provides veldfire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and landowners like South African National Parks.

The North West Province has 14 vehicles which consist of six buses, one fire truck, two Samil trucks and five Bakkies.

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UNSUNG HEROES SAVE THE DAY

Lucky Pakela, of the Kouga Fire Department, leads a group of firefighters from Working on Fire. Rain brought relief to hundreds of Cape St Francis residents yesterday whose homes were threatened by a fire that started on Saturday afternoon. Firefighters from the community brought the blaze under control

Picture: EUGENE
COETZEE



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BLAZE HEROES



FACE OF BRAVERY: With exhaustion etched on his face, courageous Kouga firefighter Lucky Pakela leads a group from Working on Fire through the ashes and charred bush yesterday after they played a major role in controlling and extinguishing blazes in the Cape St Francis area
Picture: EUGENE COETZEE

Joint effort fights off raging fires menace

Tremaine van Aardt
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SMILES returned to the faces of hundreds of Cape St Francis residents yesterday as the skies turned grey with rain clouds after a night of panic as fires raged and threatened homes.

Heroes included four firefighters who collapsed from smoke inhalation after putting the flames out.

About 200 households in Cape St Francis were evacuated on Sunday night as a precautionary measure after the blaze – which started at about 2pm on Saturday – flared up as a result of increased wind.

During the early hours of yesterday, about 50 residents were on the frontline, aiding weary firefighters by creating firebreaks, providing the emergency workers with food and energy drinks, and at times even manning the hoses.

The extent of the blaze was evident yesterday as smoke hung over the resort and parts of neighbouring St Francis Bay.

The charred remnants of indigenous flora replaced the once-lush bush surrounding the towns, with smouldering pockets still remaining.

Fortunately, welcome rain at 10am brought relief that the situation, reminiscent of the 2012 St Francis Bay inferno, was under control.

The showers continued sporadically. Cape St Francis Civic Association chairwoman Trudi Malan said communication was key to containing the raging flames.

"Together with Kouga Disaster Management, we gave the order to evacuate at about 7pm on Sunday," Malan said.

"Our residents were amazing. We had teams of bush-wackers cutting firebreaks – they were involved everywhere.

"And the residents also assisted with their knowledge of the terrain, wind conditions and so on.

"It was magical manpower – the cooperation between the community and firefighters was unbelievable. And the major-

ity of these local volunteers are accountants and other professionals, who are probably sitting with blisters on their hands today," Malan said.

Kouga municipality spokeswoman Laura-Leigh Randall said the fire was under control by 3pm.

But its cause was still unknown.

"Early reports were that the fire had been caused by a flare [in the Irma Booysen Flora Reserve], and the police are investigating," Randall said.

Kouga chief fire officer Dewald Barnard said in his 28 years' experience, the only other fire of its kind in the area which could compare occurred in 1992.

"Last night, it was huge – the flames were easily 15 to 20 metres high," he said.

"It was only through the assistance of all involved – the community, our fire service, and assistance from Nelson Mandela Bay and the NSRI – that we managed it.

"There were plenty of volunteers ... there were also two choppers involved, one from Working on Fire and the other a private one," Barnard said.

"There were about 30 to 40 firefighters and the locals as well."

Greenbushes fire station commander Marius Meintjies said his crew was called to the scene at about 9pm on Sunday.

They helped in stopping the fire in the early hours of yesterday through setting up a perimeter which, in some places, was less than five metres from homes.

Meintjies said the intensity of the blaze resulted in four firefighters collapsing after putting the flames out.

He said it was "out of sheer endurance that they could stand till then".

"It was a huge fire. How we did it, I still don't know – but we did," he said.

By late yesterday, firefighters were still damping a few hotspots and keeping an eye on the wind.

No houses were damaged, but a grass boma in Mosterthoek caught fire.

Hard two months for WoF staff in E Cape

REPORTER

THE Working on Fire programme has been hard at work during the past two months with its firefighters busy fighting fires across the country.

Eastern Cape spokesperson Nthabiseng Moko-ne said that since December firefighters had provided fire-suppression services to authorities in battling nine intense veld fires throughout the province.

The province has 13 buses, four Se-mil trucks, three strike units, two fire tankers and 13 bakkies

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"Working on Fire is a national veld and forest fire-fighting resource under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Affairs and it has close to 570 fire fighters based at 22 bases.

"The programme provides veld-fire suppression support to the provinces, disaster management centres, Fire protection associations and landowners like South African National Parks and Cape Nature," Moko-ne said.

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Brand in Piekenierskloof rig groot skade aan

Berig: Mariaan Smuts

CITRUSDAL: Boere langs die Olifantsrivier het groot skade gely toe 'n brand Saterdag weerskante van die rivier uitgebreek het. Die een brand het vermoedelik in die Wynland Distriks Munisipaliteit begin en teen Woensdag oor die berge gekom in die rigting van Porterville en Citrusdal. As gevolg van die wind het die vlamme vinnig na die laerliggende dele van die Olifantsriviervallei versprei. Baie boorde het skade gehad, maar ons het nie verneem van boorde wat heeltemal vernietig is nie. Na bewering moes 'n troue by Die Vlei, op die Bo Rivier pad, vroeër stop ter wille van die gaste se veiligheid. Een geluk is darem dat die bruidspaar vroeër op hul wittebrood kon vertrek.

Aan die oorkant van die rivier, op The Baths pad, het boere ook skade aan hul boorde gehad en volgens Paul Nieuwoudt, 'n bestuurder van een van die plaas daar, is alles vanaf die 10 tot 25 km merk op dié pad swart gebrand. 'n Trekker op die plaas het uitgebrand. Nieuwoudt sê dit smeul nog, maar daar is niks meer wat kan brand nie. The Baths berig dat hul geen skade op die oord self gehad het nie, alhoewel dit reg rondom hul gebrand het. Ter wille van hul gaste se veiligheid is almal gevra om te ontruim. Die oord is onlangs deur nuwe bestuur oorgeneem en groot verbeterings is reeds aangebring.

Die bestuurder, Manie Gordon, sê dis net genade van Bo wat hul gered het. Blykbaar is verskeie "transformers" in die omgewing uitgebrand.

'n Tweede brand, wat hoog in die berge naby Kardoosie begin het, het by Piekenierskloof Lodge groot skade aangerig. Die bestuurder, Jan Horne, het aan Ons Kontrei gesê dat daar reeds Donderdagaand, hoog in die berge agter die Lodge, 'n brand was, maar dat lede van WDCM en helikopters die brand Vrydag geblus het. Saterdagmiddag was hul by The Baths en het ongeveer 14:30 teruggekeer na die Lodge.

Ongeveer 15:30 het hul weer vlamme in dieselfde area as Donderdagaand opgemerk en hy het dadelik die brandweer en Charl du Plessis van Natuurbewaring gekontak. Die brandweer kon egter nie dadelik kom help nie aangesien hul in die vallei by verskeie ander brandpunte besig was. Horne het toe sy eie personeel gemobiliseer totdat die brandweer kon kom help.

Gaste van die selfsorgeenhede is gevra om te ontruim en na die hoofgebou te kom. Die wind het sterk gewaai en binne 'n halfuur die vlamme afgedruk na hul grens. Vier van die eenhede aan die verste punt van die N7 se grasdakke het begin brand, maar kon vinnig geblus word. Die inhoud van die eenhede het baie rookskade opgedoen, maar kan skoonmaak word. Hy sê hul het 'n boorgatpomp verloor en water is op die oomblik beperk. Bestuur van die Lodge het hul uiterste bes gedoen om gaste te akkommodeer en ook in sommige gevalle ander verblyf vir hul gekry. Die selfsorgeenhede is gesluit vir opruimingswerk, maar die hotel gaan voort soos gewoonlik. Horne sê daar was ge-



Ons Kontrei joernalis, Natasha Buys het die foto Saterdag, 16 Januarie geneem in die Piekenierskloofpas. Die rook was baie dig en voertuie het langs die pad afgetrek.

Foto: Natasha Buys

lukkig geen lewensverlies nie en hy bedank sy personeel vir hul onbaatsugtige hulp asook die bure en dorpenaars wat kom help vure slaan en water aangery het. Groot dank ook aan die brandweer en WOF se lede wat onverpoos gewerk het om die vuur van die geboue weg te hou.

Horne sê as hy so rondom hom kyk en sien hoe dit lyk, is hy dankbaar, want dit kon soveel erger gewees het.

Die N7 was Saterdagmiddag laat vir 'n tyd gesluit as gevolg van die digte rook en swak sig. Motorbestuurders moes van ompaaie gebruik maak totdat die pad later weer oopgestel kon word.

Lede van die brandweer was Sondag nog

in die omgewing om die situasie te monitor.

Dit het nog op baie plekke gesmeul en hul moes die situasie goed dophou. Van die vlamme het blykbaar weer Sondag oor die pad naby die plaas Modderfontein gespring, maar is deur helikopters van WOF geblus. Teen Dinsdag, 19 Januarie was alles in die area onder beheer, maar daar was nog steeds brande in die Porterville omgewing.

Hard two months for Working On Fire staff in EC

REPORTER

THE Working on Fire programme has been hard at work during the past two months with its firefighters busy fighting fires across the country.

Eastern Cape spokesperson Nthabiseng Mokone said that since December fire-fighters had provided fire-suppression services to authorities in battling nine intense veld fires throughout the province.

The province has 13 buses, four Semil trucks, three strike units, two fire tankers and 13 bakkies.

Working on Fire draws its firefighters from the poorest of the poor.

They go through extensive training, and are characterised by their fitness, discipline and exceptional work ethic and bravery.

Many of these firefighters, who spend days and nights on end fighting fires, come from impoverished communities.

She said that through their employment in the Working on Fire programme as an extension of the government's Expanded Public Works Programme they had been given an opportunity to earn a living and put food on the table.

"Working on Fire is a national veld and forest fire-fighting resource under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Affairs and it has close to 570 fire fighters based at 22 bases.

"The programme provides veld-fire suppression support to the provinces, disaster management centres, Fire protection associations and landowners like South African National Parks and Cape Nature," Mokone said.



Working on Fire workers trying to detect fire in the veld.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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Hard two months for Working On Fire staff in EC

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Working on Fire workers trying to detect fire in the veld. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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NW firefighters on high alert

Since December the WoF team has battled two intense veld fires

ELFAS TORERAI

THE ongoing hot temperatures and a protracted drought season in North West has become a fertile ground for veld fires.

Other parts of the country particularly the Western Cape have experienced runaway fires that have forced residents in certain areas to leave their homes. Crops and property have been destroyed in some cases.

This has put the province's Working on Fire (WoF) team on high alert for any such outbreaks in the province.

WoF is a department of environmental affairs programme to help fight veld and forest fires and the team has been hard at work during the past two months as its firefighters were busy fighting multiple fires across the country.

Since December the team has battled two intense veld fires that broke out in the province.

WoF spokesperson Patricia Maanelo said: "We experienced two fires during December with a total loss of 21 hectares of pasture and our firefighters continue to remain on high alert."

"As a result of the drought expe-

rienced throughout the country coupled with high temperatures we have had unusual fire activities in the Free State province which expe-

rienced 35 fires during December."

Maanelo said WoF draws its firefighters from poor communities as a way of creating opportunities for young people who often do nothing in their villages.

"Those recruited go through extensive training characterised by their fitness, discipline and exceptional work ethic and bravery. Many of these firefighters who spend days

and nights on end fighting these fires come from impoverished communities.

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

WoF is a veld and forest firefighting resource under the Department Of Environmental Affairs. So far

it has close to 438 firefighters based at 18 bases throughout the province.

"The programme provides veld fire suppression support to the province, disaster management centres, fire protection associations and landowners like South African National Parks.

"In the province we have 14 vehicles which consist of six buses, a fire truck, two Samil trucks and five bakkies," Maanelo said.

In the past veld fires have left pasture and animals destroyed and Maanelo said that should dry conditions continue there was a strong likelihood of more fire outbreaks.

elfast@thenewage.co.za

In the province we have 14 vehicles which consist of six buses, a fire truck, two Samil trucks and five bakkies



DOUSING THE FLAMES: The firefighters ready to deal with any outbreaks as high temperatures continue.

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Joint effort to fight flames

KAREN KOTZE

One person died and more than 100 hectares of vegetation were razed in the three-day blaze which was ignited by the Simon's Town-bound Metrorail train last week.

The fire was fanned from train number 0143 which caught alight at 10am, on Thursday January 21. From the train's three carriages, the horror then leapt across the tracks and crept towards Glencairn Heights and Fish Hoek, with residents in each suburb on high alert. Some homes were subsequently evacuated because of threats of smoke inhalation.

Thursday was lost entirely to thick smoke and fanned flames, with help arriving in the Far South over the next days from Kraaifontein, Kuils Rivier and as far away as George.

Table Mountain National Park's Integrated Fire Manager Phillip Prins said the estimated damage exceeded 100 hectares. He said the east side was taken care of by the City of Cape Town's fire and rescue crews while SANParks crews were battling the Fish Hoek side.

He said at one stage there were 108 people engaged in the fire fight and by Friday at 2pm, 30 were still on active duty, monitoring hot spots.



■ Helicopters water bomb the blaze on Elsie's Peak.

He said on Thursday winds had reached up to 60km/h, making the situation very difficult for the three helicopter pilots who were water bombing the flames along Elsie's Peak and then, beyond.

He said the pilots worked until all visibility was lost and they were forced to stop.

"They wanted to keep going, but when smoke and winds are that strong and you have no visibility, you have no choice but to stop," Mr Prins said.

Liesl Moody, the City of Cape Town fire department spokesperson, said three helicopters and 10



PICTURES KAREN KOTZE

■ Metrorail's train 0143, engulfed in flames on the outskirts of the Glencairn station. **Inset:** Residents and passers-by trapped by the road blocks gather to watch the battle between fire and fire fighters.

crews from the city council, Working on Fire and Table Mountain National Park were brought in to fight the fire.

She confirmed that the fire had spread from the train over Elsie's Peak towards Fish Hoek, propelled by strong winds.

Residents in Contour and Mountain roads were asked to leave

their homes.

In an unusual turn of events, navy tugs formed an integral part of the fight. When the False Bay Echo arrived on the scene, the train fire had just been doused, but the fire was raging along Elsie's Peak. The navy tugs were still spraying plumes of water over the three burnt carriages, which Metrorail staff had

removed from the rest of the train to prevent the fire from spreading.

However, the fire had a sudden and violent resurgence, sending thick black clouds of smoke billowing up the burning mountainside.

Continued on page 3

Cause of fire still being investigated by authorities

From page 1

Ward 69 councillor and Sub-council 19 chairwoman Felicity Purchase kept her Facebook page updated throughout the day, advising residents of the latest instructions, when to evacuate, where help was needed and directed people to the civic centre, where volunteers gave freshly-off-duty fire fighters food, eye washes and some welcome refreshment.

"The navy tugs were spraying the vegetation around train. They could not spray directly onto train until electricity was cut off, to prevent shocking workers.

"I really want to thank everyone for a fantastic team effort," she said.

"I also want to thank the affected residents for their co-operation with rescue workers," she said.

At 2pm, due to the severity of the smoke cover, mountainside residents were asked to evacuate to the Fish Hoek civic centre.

At 7.20pm Ms Purchase wrote: "The fire has run across behind Glencairn Heights over the plateau near the mast and down the Fish Hoek side."

The next day she reported that the fire had flared up on Echo Road and an evacuation alert was given at about 2am.

"However, the wind dropped at about 4am and the firemen worked fantastically to contain above fire belt. Very scary, but we can relax now for a

while," she said.

She offered that anyone needing trauma counselling contact her as the impact on some of the children had been quite severe.

During the fires, Melodie Kingma wrote on Facebook: "All of the people involved and in particular those physically fighting the fires are truly totally dedicated community people – they are worthy of humanitarian awards – it has been a never ending battle – yip, battle – against the elements and probably arsonists as well. Well done – there are just not words strong

“ Navy tugs
were spraying
vegetation
around train ”

enough to describe the admiration and respect these people deserve."

Metrorail Western Cape said no injuries were initially reported, and all commuters were safely evacuated from the train. "However, a body was subsequently discovered in one of the burnt carriages," said spokesperson Riana Scott.

She said the cause of the fire is under investigation, and could not confirm whether or not sparks were seen on the newly re-opened line before the train caught fire. "We can-

not speculate about the cause, and await the outcome of the police investigation into the matter," she said.

Police spokesperson Captain Angie Latchman confirmed that a case of malicious damage to property had been opened and an inquest has been registered, with respect to the burnt body on the train.

"Both these cases have been registered at SAPS Simon's Town for investigation," she said.

"The identity of the deceased has not yet been established. An autopsy has been scheduled, which may will shed some light in terms of an identity.

The exact cause of the fire is still under investigation," she said.

● Metrorail increased its reward for information to R100 000, guaranteeing full anonymity to anyone providing information to secure a conviction.

Anyone with information is requested to contact report crime or suspicious behaviour to any of the following numbers:

Crime Stop: 08600 10111

Crime Tip-offs: SMS 32211

Metrorail Protection Services: (021) 449 4336



■ Above: Flames spread across the mountain.



■ Left: The fire fighters did their best to contain the blaze.

PICTURES: JUAN WERNECKE

Publication: Kasi Vision (Zwelihle)

Date: 2016-01-29

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Shoprite Group supports firefighters

Over the past few weeks the Shoprite Group has been supporting local disaster management teams in their relentless quest to get the runaway fires under control through a number of donations and other forms of assistance.

Checkers in Hermanus donated food and drinks to assist with the fire in Elgin last week, with the Checkers refrigeration truck initially stationed at Houw Hoek Inn before moving to Stellenbosch.

The fire fighters fighting the Simonsberg fire in the Helderberg area received sandwiches, energy bars and drinks, bottled water, aftersun, vaseline, eye drops and fresh fruit from the Checkers supermarket in Stellenbosch. The Group also provided an 8-ton refrigeration truck, stationed at Delfera, to help keep products cold for the fire fighters. Shoprite Klapmuts donated 20 kg

of bacon, 100 eggs and 100 rolls for a special breakfast held for the fire fighters.

The Shoprite Group also assisted the community of Masiphumelele outside Noordhoek at the beginning of December by donating a truckload of food and supplies worth over R130 000 to relief organisations such as the Red Cross Society.

“The Shoprite Group is committed to supporting and strengthening all the local communities in which it trades, and has a long history of reaching out to communities when impacted by disaster,” said JC Smit from Checkers head office.

If you wish to assist the fire fighters you can make a contribution directly to Volunteer Wildfire Services.

Volunteer Wildfire Services, Nedbank
Branch: Foreshore, Branch Code: 108309
Account Number: 1083321226



Fire fighters from Working on Fire.

Knysna pilot one of heroes in St Francis fire

● **Yolande Stander**
yolande.grm@gmail.com

Garden Route fire teams have played a major role in fighting a massive veld fire near St Francis Bay in the Eastern Cape which broke out last Saturday.

One of the standout role-players was Knysna pilot Nico Heynes of the Working on Fire (WoF) programme, who worked for two days scooping water from residents' swimming pools to douse the flames.

Thanks to efforts by firefighters and some rain on Monday the fire had been brought under control by Tuesday, while teams remained on the scene to ensure it did not flare up again.

The fire started in the Irma Booysen Flora Reserve and although there were reports that the

cause of the fire could have been a flare that landed in the reserve, police have rubbished the information.

WoF spokesperson Linton Rensburg said Heynes was part of one of two of their teams, based in the Garden Route and Tsitiskamma area, who had assisted the Kouga municipality's fire and rescue services in bringing the fire under control.

"Early on Sunday morning a Working on Fire helicopter was dispatched from Knysna where it is currently based, and pilot Nico Heynes spent two days helping with the fire suppression efforts. Late on Monday afternoon the helicopter returned to base in Knysna," Rensburg said.

"Our firefighting pilots and our teams on the ground play a key role in fighting fires and it was crucial in this Cape St Francis fire that

aerial resources were made available to assist the ground crews."

He added no fatalities or injuries had been reported so far.

Rensburg said many people in and around Cape St Francis would probably not know that the national Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme – established to assist in fighting veld and forest fires – had been instrumental in fighting these fires.

He added WoF teams had been hard at work over the past two months. Since December last year, in the Western Cape alone, just shy of 800 firefighters provided fire suppression services to fire authorities in battling more than 70 "intense" veld fires throughout the province.

TO PAGE 2



Nico Heynes, a Knysna pilot, flies over St Francis with a load of water. Photo: Christopher Scott

Publication: Knysna Plett Herald
Date: 2016-01-28
Page: 2 -- Part 2 of 2

Knysna pilot a fire hero

FROM PAGE 1

"We experienced more than a hundred fires throughout the country during December 2015 with a total loss of 39 000ha. About 52 teams, 1 300 firefighters, were active on these fires. Our firefighters continue to remain on high alert and a national deployment team of firefighters are ready to be dispatched to the Western Cape and other hotspot areas throughout the country."

Rensburg said as a result of the current drought experienced throughout the country, coupled with high temperatures, there had been an unusually high number of fires. An example of this is the Free State, which saw 35 fires so far. The previous year the province did not experience a single fire.

While there were reports that Plettenberg Bay firefighters had been dispatched to assist with the St Francis Bay fire, the Bitou municipality said no formal request had been made and that only local WoF firefighters had been deployed.

"In the eventuality of a request for assistance, the first and primary consideration of the Bitou fire department remains the provision of essential firefighting services, rescue and aid to Bitou residents, in the event of any fire, emergency or disaster. Deployment of Bitou firefighters at this stage is mainly focused on deployment to the Eden district as and when required. We however appreciate and acknowledge the imperatives of interprovincial and cross-provincial border assistance," Bitou municipal spokesperson Manfred van Rooyen said.

"For this week particularly also, with Civil Aviation Authority audit to be conducted at the Plettenberg Bay airfield, which includes an audit of the firefighting capacity and readiness to respond to incidents around the operations at the airport, if such a request for deployment of Bitou firefighters to the St Francis fires comes, we would in all likelihood have to decline the request."

Publication: South Cape Forum

Date: 2016-01-29

Page: 8

Vure hou brandbestryders besig

Elize Blom

WES-KAAP Die Working on Fire (WoF) spanne van die die Nasionale Department van Omgewingsake se program om veld- en bosbouure te bestry was die afgelope tydperk baie bedrywig.

Volgens Lauren Howard, provinsiale kommunikasie beampte van WoF is daar 20 vure deur die provinsie ondervind gedurende die tydperk vanaf 11 tot 18 Januarie wat deur 22 spanne aktief beveg is.

Plaaslik het Charl Wade, area-bestuurder van die westelike gedeelte van die Southern Cape Fire Protection Agency (SCFPA) en bestuur van die WoF spanne bevestig dat daar van 1 Desember

tot 21 Januarie 21 vure deur die SCFPA se WoF spanne in die SCPFA grense (basies Eden DM se grense) bygewoon is, waarvan meer as 24 000 persone ure vuur geveg is. *“Die grootte van die spanne wat uitgeroep is, was vanaf vyf tot 22 brandbestryders. Vure was tussen twee tot nege dae lank bestry. Die B-munisipaliteite, uitsluitende George en Knysna Brandweer wat ongelukkig nog geen terugvoer deurgegee het, was vir Desember uitgeroep na 94 brande rondom dorpe en plase in die Eden DM grensgebied. Ladismith en Riversdal se spanne het met brandbestryding op verskeie vure in die Kaap gaan help gedurende die afgelope paar weke se groot brande in die Botrivier-, Villiersdorp-, Hawston- en Elim-areas.”*



Tydens beheerde brande moet daar veral na die brandbare materiale, weersomstandighede en die topografie opgelet word.

Beheerde brande onder bespreking

Elize Blom

HESSEQUA Die maak van beheerde brande is 'n algemene bestuurspraktyk om veld te bestuur en landbougrond voor te berei vir bewerking.

Beheerde brande word hoofsaaklik toegepas vir risikovermindering, grondvoorbereiding, plantegroei verandering, ontligting van natuurlike veld, brand van fynbos, beheer van indring-erplante en brand van stoppellande na 'n oes.

Volgens Charl Wade, areabestuurder van die westelike gedeelte van Southern Cape Fire Protection Agency (SCFPA) en bestuurder van die Working on Fire (WoF) spanne, werk die grondeienaars goed saam met die SCFPA en die Eden DM brandweerdienste. "Kommunikasie en probleemoplossings word deurentoend bevestig en geïmplementeer."

Volgens hom word die amptelike vuurseisoen vir die Suid-Kaap tans aanvaar vanaf 1 Desember tot 30 April, maar die area is in die proses om as 'n heeljaar vuurseisoen geklassifiseer te word.

"'Een groot rede is die warm bergwindtoestande gedurende die wintermaande," verduidelik hy. Gebeurtenisbeplanning verg dat elke plaaslike munisipaliteit spesifieke maande aandui waartydens die risiko te hoog is vir die maak van beheerde brande.

Die inligting word bespreek en in die operasionele plan dokument vir die 2015/16 vuurseisoen deur die distriksmunisipaliteit aangeleë.

"Eden DM se operasionele plan dokument



WoF spanne besig met die toepassing van beheerde brande.

bevestig geen beheerde brande mag van Desember 2015 tot Maart vanjaar in hulle gebied van verantwoordelikheid gemaak word nie, hoewel daar spesiale permissie onder regte toestande aan persone uitgereik kan word, mits die plaaslike munisipaliteit ook toestemming daarvoor verleen.

"Die SCFPA fasiliteer die proses vir hul lede sover moontlik om noodsaaklike beheerde brande te laat gebeur, om veldbestuur te bevorder en risiko te verlaag."

Belangrik om te weet

Die maak van beheerde brande word verbied

gedurende die volgende maande deur die spesifieke munisipaliteite:

Knysna: Desember 2015 tot Maart 2016.

George: November 2015 tot Maart 2016.

Mosselbaai: November 2015 tot Januarie 2016.

Bitou: Desember 2015 tot Februarie 2016.

Hessequa: Desember 2015 tot Februarie 2016.

Oudtshoorn: November 2015 tot Maart 2016.

Volgens Wade moet die grondeienaar wat wil brand, steeds die betrokke permit inspeksie laat doen om 'n geldelike brandpermit te be-



kom. "Tydens die maak van beheerde brande moet die persoon verantwoordelik vir die vuur oplet veral na die brandstof (brandbare materiaal), weerstoestande en die topografie voor dit aangepak word."

Die SCFPA is 'n nie-winsgewende maatskappy wat lede werf en grondeienaars help om deur middel van alle aspekte van geïntegreerde brandbestuur, aan die brandwette te voldoen en grondeienaars te assisteer waar moontlik.

Vir meer inligting skakel SCFPA Riversdal by 028 713 1987.

Working on Fire battle 20 fires per week

Working on Fire, the National Department of Environmental Affairs' programme to help fight veld and forest fires, has been hard at work during the past week as its firefighters were busy fighting multiple fires across the province.

We experienced 20 fires throughout the Province during 11 January - 18 January 2016 with 22 teams active on these fires. Our firefighters continue to remain on high alert and a nationally deployed team of firefighters from the Eastern Cape is ready to be dispatched across the Western Cape.

The latest fires in the Cape Peninsula (Red Hill/ Scarborough, De Waal Drive, and Koop-

manskraal), the Houwhoek Fire - Overberg and the Hawston Fire in the Overstrand region had close to 400 firefighters from Working on Fire who are active in providing fire suppression services to local fire authorities. In addition, 12 helicopters, 10 spotter planes and 4 fixed wing tractor bombers were active in these fires during the past few days.

As a result of the current drought experienced throughout the country, coupled with high temperatures, we encourage residents to be cautious during this period and to follow a few safety tips:

- Do not make fires in the open or leave fires

unattended

- Do not throw bottles into the veld as they can magnify the sun's rays and start fires
- In the case of a large fire, report it immediately to your local fire authorities or dial 107 / 021 480 7700.

Since December 2015 in the Western Cape alone, just under 900 firefighters provided fire suppression services to fire authorities in battling more than 90 veld fires throughout the province.

Working on Fire WC General Manager, Shane Christians, says that "we have close to 800 firefighters based at 28 bases throughout the Province.

The programme provides veldfire suppression support to the provinces, Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations and land-owners like South African National Parks and CapeNature."

Aerial Resources: Western Cape Fire Season: Infrastructure such as 26 aircraft (12 helicopters, 4 fixed wing air tractor bombers and 10 spotters) are based in Bredasdorp, Donkerhoek, George, Knysna. Porterville, Stellenbosch, and Stilbaai.

This additional air support was made possible through a partnership with the Western Cape Provincial Government.

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Eastern Cape firefighters hard at work



Working for Fire Firefighters worked alongside the Kouga Municipality's Fire and Rescue Services until this week's fires in St Francis Bay and Cape St Francis were under control. Photo: Supplied

STAFF REPORTER

This week's fires in St Francis Bay and Cape St Francis were the latest call-out in what has been a busy period for Working on Fire (WOF), the National Department of Environmental Affairs' programme to help fight veld and forest fires.

Early on Sunday morning a WOF helicopter was dispatched from Knysna and pilot, Nico Heynes, flew more or less non-stop all day Sunday and Monday, scooping up water from swimming pools to douse the blaze. According to residents, he was instrumental in preventing the flames reaching the informal settlement of Sea Vista.

Longmore and Krom Rivier WOF teams arrived in the area at 5am on Monday morning and worked alongside the Kouga Municipality's Fire and Rescue Services until the situation was under control.

However, fires flared up again on Wednesday – including in the Sea Vista industrial area although firefighters managed to extinguish it before it reached the informal

settlement.

Residents of St Francis Bay have been urged to douse their thatched roofs with water and to keep them wet.

A second helicopter was dispatched on Wednesday afternoon and WOF firefighters remained on the scene.

The local community has also been working tirelessly to support the teams with food and water.

WOF say that, since the beginning of December, their fire fighters have helped fire authorities battle more than 11 "intense" veld fires in the Eastern Cape alone.

Throughout South Africa, 52 WOF teams (1300 firefighters) were involved in suppressing more than a 100 fires during the same period.

They add that their firefighters continue to remain on high alert and a national deployment team is ready to be dispatched to particularly high risk areas such as the Western Cape at a moment's notice.

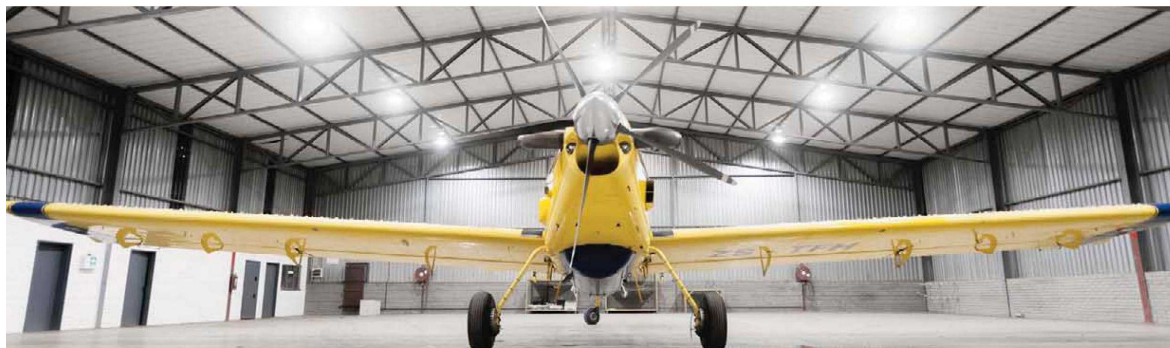
In the Eastern Cape, WOF has close to 600 wildland fire fighters stationed in 23 teams

across the province (out of nearly 5000 firefighters based at 200 bases nationwide). They too are on high alert given the current weather conditions.

They will also conduct extensive community fire awareness campaigns during the next couple of months to prepare people for the winter fire season.

WOF say that through their partnerships with Provincial Disaster Management Centres, Fire Protection Associations, SANParks, various private and public landowners and local municipalities, they will be able to respond quickly should the need arise.

Not only does WOF provide vital fire fighting support, it also helps to create livelihoods. It recruits unemployed people, gives them extensive training and, they say, creates a team "characterised by their fitness, discipline and exceptional work ethic and bravery" adding that, thanks to their WOF employment, they are able to earn a living and support their families.



Kishugu Aviation gives Cape Fire season aerial support during fire season

The summer fire season in the Cape has arrived early this year, mostly due to the extreme El Nino effect, which caused periodic warming in sea surface temperatures along the African coastline.

Since the fire season officially started on 01 December, our aviator firefighting-teams were ready to once again take to the skies together with our ground support.

The Working on Fire (WoF) Programme which is implemented by Kishugu on behalf of the South African Government, is an initiative which is hailed as one of South Africa's most successful job creation programmes. Kishugu has more than 30 years' experience in wildland firefighting and is a world leader in supplying Integrated Fire Management Services (IFMS) to forestry and other land users globally.

"Over the past couple of months, FFA Aviation (Kishugu Aviation) worked hard together with the SA Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) to have our operation certificates (AOC) reinstated after flight restrictions were placed on some of our aircraft," CEO of Kishugu Aviation, Johan Heine states.

This included a very demanding and rigorous Five-Phase Process with the SACAA as required by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to have its certification reinstated. We are

thankful to the SACAA for their help and guidance during this period as it was successfully completed.

Johan says, "Kishugu values service delivery to our customers and during the six month evaluation period we were still able to deploy ground teams and other aerial support to assist wherever fires were detected".

Kishugu's fleet of spotter and bomber aircraft took to the air when the fire season started, and the UH-1H helicopters were fully operational in the middle of December. They are equipped to deal with the fire season, and this includes our aviation fleet which is operated in conjunction with the Western Cape Provincial Disaster Management Centre and other partners. The nine helicopters are supported by four AT-802's and nine command and control aircraft.

Johan says, "undergoing all the required processes gives us the confidence that our aircraft safety standards, audit standards, pilot training and selection and operational standards are on par with the highest international standards".

Over the past seven years, Kishugu's fleet has flown 21,716 hours engaged in aerial firefighting with Working on Fire and other clients. With our sophisticated dispatch and coordination systems, Kishugu Aviation was able to deploy their fleet of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to wherever needed. Kishugu Aviation has a long list of

strategic partners, who have joined forces with us over the years as we jointly prevent and combat devastating wild fires.

"We pay tribute to the different fire protection associations, the National and Provincial parks, the City of Cape Town, the different forestry companies and the National and Provincial Government, and finally the landowners and game farmers," Johan says. "I want to thank each client and stakeholder for their support and understanding during this evaluation process. I want to assure the people of our country that we are stronger and more ready than ever to protect the lives, environment and property from wildland fires."

Kishugu holds a bright and prosperous future with exciting new ventures. Our values include Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability and Making a Difference; and therefore we are positive the steps we've taken over the last few months will ensure Kishugu remains the leader in IFMS – all for the greater good.

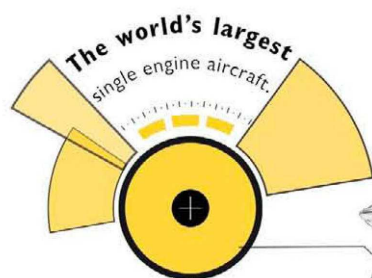
We are 100% committed to adhering to these standards in every aspect of the work we do.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE | KISHUGU.COM

Kishugu Aviation: Mission Possible

Kishugu **mainly** uses the UH-1H and AT-802's to **fight** fires. These two aircraft are mainly built for firefighting and are globally used for this purpose.



DID YOU KNOW?

Kishugu Aviation has **300 years** combined experience within their management team.

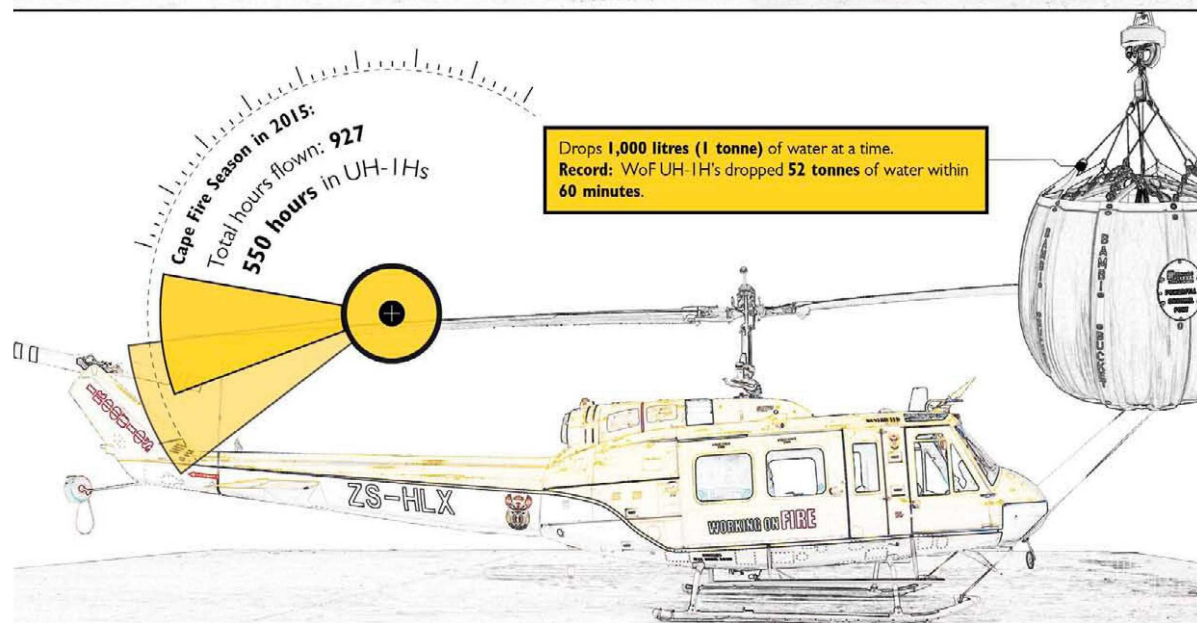


Technologically programmed to discharge **3,000 litres** in pre-set volumes and intervals, to ensure precision-drops on fires.

AT-802

Globally recognised as the ultimate fire-fighting single-engine airtanker.

AT-802 travels **305km/h** vs other fixed wing Bomber's **190km/h**, making its response time quicker.



Drops **1,000 litres (1 tonne)** of water at a time.
 Record: WoF UH-1H's dropped **52 tonnes** of water within **60 minutes**.

UH-1H

Used by more than 40 countries worldwide, mainly for firefighting.

Siren to airborne time **5 minutes** vs other twin-engines which sometimes take up to **12 minutes**.

