



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

South Africa's largest deployment of firefighting resources

The recent fires between Knysna and Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape led to the largest deployment of firefighting resources and personnel in a single incident in South Africa's history.

Multiple fires engulfed the coastal towns of Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, Sedgefield and George from 7 June 2017. The Knysna Municipality had to evacuate several communities from their homes.

Seven people died due to the blaze and more than 20 000 hectares of vegetation were burnt.

The Knysna fire lasted twelve days and destroyed more than 600 structures in Knysna and Plettenberg Bay. Gale force winds that exceeded 90km per hour made firefighting extremely difficult.

At the same time that Knysna was burning, fires also erupted in the Tsitsikamma region and in the Langeni MTO Plantations of the Eastern Cape.

This necessitated the biggest-ever deployment of Working on Fire resources which saw close to 800 firefighters being active in the Knysna fires and those in the Eastern Cape.



KNYSNA FIREFIGHTING EFFORTS



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Government conveys gratitude and thanks to the firefighting heroes in Knysna



President Jacob Zuma, Minister of Environmental Services Edna Molewa, Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Minister Des van Rooyen and a host of cabinet ministers visited our firefighters at their base camp in Knysna to extend the government's thanks and gratitude to all the firefighters who worked tirelessly day and night to contain the Knysna fires.

"Your heroic efforts have not gone unnoticed and I thank you for your service to the people of Knysna in saving lives and protecting properties," President Zuma said. Minister Molewa said she was

proud of what her Department's Working on Fire programme had managed to accomplish in the Knysna fires. "These brave efforts by our firefighters have not gone unnoticed and their contributions during the evacuations led to the saving of lives," Minister Molewa said.

COGTA Minister Des van Rooyen hailed the Working on Fire programme as one of the success stories of government. "Working on Fire proved that young people can make an important contribution in saving lives and protecting properties and this programme needs to be supported by government," he said.

Cabinet statement congratulating Working on Fire

The Cabinet of the government of South Africa released the following statement on the Knysna fires on 21 June.

Cabinet commends the prompt integrated approach and response from government, business and ordinary South Africans in assisting the affected families. Cabinet pays tribute to the heroic volunteer firefighter, Bradley Richards and the truck driver John Blaaw who assisted firefighters in transporting water, who paid with their lives saving their community.

Cabinet further extends a special appreciation to the Working on Fire team that bravely fought the raging fires. They are our pride! Cabinet wishes a speedy recovery to the two injured firefighters, including Ian Barnard who sustained injuries while trying to save Bradley Richards.

President Zuma visited the communities of Wit Lekasie and Knysna Heights that were adversely affected by the fires. President Zuma attended the memorial service of Mr Richards. In the true firefighter team spirit, Mr Barnard was able to attend the memorial service of his colleague Mr Richards.

The President dispatched humanitarian and other support to all the affected areas. This was coordinated



COGTA Minister Des van Rooyen, President Jacob Zuma, WOF MD Trevor Abrahams and Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa

through the National Joint Operations Centre Disaster Management structure, working with the Western Cape Provincial Government and Provincial Disaster Management teams.

Cabinet thanks all non-governmental organisations, the private sector, volunteers and communities who are supporting affected communities.

WORKING ON FIRE MD ROADSHOW

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FIREFIGHTER JOINS SA POLICE FORCE

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Editorial

Dear Readers

Welcome to our June newsletter and thank you for taking the time to read our latest edition. This month's edition features the magnificent efforts of the Working on Fire (WOF) programme ground crews and aerial resources that assisted local fire authorities with the fires in Knysna in the Western Cape and the Tsitsikamma fire in the Eastern Cape.

His Excellency President Jacob Zuma visited the WOF base camp in Knysna with Department of Environmental Affairs Minister Dr Edna Molewa, who applauded the Working on Fire firefighters for their hard work and heroism.

We bring you reports on the national roadshow conducted by the Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, which started soon after he reaffirmed Working on Fire's commitment to the 'Back to Basics' campaign. This issue also covers the WOF employees Industrial Relations workshop which aimed to address fairness and accountability in the implementation of WOF disciplinary processes and policies.

In the midst of the good changes happening within the programme, fire awareness campaigns were launched across the country to ensure landowners, community members and learners were prepared for the winter fire season. WOF teams are on high alert, putting in fire prevention measures in areas with a high fire risk and educating the communities and schools about fire safety.

You will also read inspiring stories of how our participants are using the stipend the programme provides to bring social relief to their families, and empower themselves through further education and entrepreneurship.

We wish our former firefighters who have landed jobs in the South African Police Service and local municipalities well and warmly welcome the new recruits who will be trained to be firefighters.

Happy reading!

MD Message

Trevor Abrahams



I must first commend the Working on Fire firefighters who bravely fought raging fires in Knysna and Tsitsikamma under extreme weather conditions. Having visited the base camps to motivate the firefighters, I am happy that safety remains a priority on and off the fire line.

It also warmed my heart to see thousands of South Africans rally in support of our firefighters, bringing donations and extending a word of thanks to our firefighters. It is safe to say that we are well on our way to restoring Working on Fire to its former glory.

On the 'Back to Basics' campaign, I have also taken time to engage participants, management and partners through the national roadshow to address concerns and to ensure we are committed to implement the 'Back to Basics' campaign. Since the start of the 'Back to Basics' campaign we have sent out communiques addressing and resolving matters raised by firefighters and employees during the roadshow, such as the public holidays payment, fire season working hours, FFA BEE Employee Share Trust and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

These actions indicate that we are on our way to returning Working on Fire to its former glory and I appeal to participants to continue raising their concerns so that they can be amicably addressed.

I encourage employees and partners to continue our engagement through the Talk 2 Trevor forum at 072 985 8722, via WhatsApp text, voice note or SMS.

Knysna residents united as they say thank you to firefighters



On Saturday, 17 June 2017, the Greater Knysna residents formed a guard of honour during a unity march by fire services, to thank our brave firefighters for their hard work and dedication during the fires.



Knysna Mayor Eleanor Bouw-Spies presented Working on Fire MD Trevor Abrahams with a thank you gift from the people of Knysna. On the left is Acting Municipal Manager Johnny Douglas.

A special thank you to all donors who supported firefighting efforts during this time, including Operation SA, KFC, Al-Imdaad Foundation, Kulula Airline, Mango Airlines, FlySafair, Federal Airlines, Yusuf Abramjee, Operation SA, Pick n Pay, Game Stores, Boerie Squad, Silverton Radiators, Dr Brett Lederle, Greg Vogt and Cell C, community members and many more.

WOF ethics line

Working on Fire has launched a free and anonymous ethics helpline to enhance accountability and help root out unethical practices.

Concerned participants, management, stakeholders and service providers will now be able to anonymously report any fraudulent, corrupt and unethical practices encountered in the programme to KPMG, our external partner in this venture and an independent third party.

By doing so, we can help to protect the integrity of the organisation.

KPMG's call centres are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Its forensic agents are able to assist whistle-blowers in all 11 official South African languages, as well as an array of international languages.

To use the service, mention Working on Fire's name when you call. (see poster on page 8).

Keep us accountable. Anonymously report any unethical behaviour to our Ethics Line.

0800 21 25 31 | fraud@kpmg.co.za

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Working on Fire is on Social Media | [facebook](#)

Working on Fire is on YouTube (Working on Fire TV News)



Working on Fire is an Expanded Public Works Programme which resides within the Department of Environmental Affairs.



Our premium news products, WOFire News and WOF TV, have the single objective of being informative!

They are there to keep our participants informed about what's happening in WOF across the country.

WOF TV News and WoFire News are dedicated to the hard work of our participants and aim to focus on their stories, not only in relation to their work in WOF but also how they have grown and developed in the Programme.

Furthermore we feature many stories of participants who took responsibility for their own lives and also extended their compassion to others.

Readers are welcome to send us their stories in their home language and we will assist with translation and editing.

Please e-mail your story to news@wofire.co.za or submit them via your local Provincial Communication Officers, Regional Managers, Base Managers or Crew Leaders.

Huge logistical operations to support Knysna firefighting efforts

More than a thousand firefighters and management teams, including 14 pilots, were deployed to battle the Knysna blaze.

The Department of Environmental Affairs Working on Fire programme contingent that provided the bulk of the firefighting resources was made up of 485 firefighters in 22 teams, who assembled in the town of Knysna where they provided much-needed firefighting assistance to local fire authorities. The firefighting resources provided by Working on Fire made up 63% of the

total firefighting resources deployed in these fires. Eleven fire trucks, seven crew buses and 12 bakkies were dispatched to assist in the firefighting efforts and help with the evacuation of more than 8 000 residents.

In addition to these ground crews, Working on Fire also dispatched 17 pilots, six spotter planes, four choppers and two Air Tractor 802 water bombers to provide aerial firefighting resources. Aerial resources flew 238 flying hours and did 1 900 water drops.



WOF Base Camp



Firefighters had a tough time on the fire line to extreme weather conditions



Firefighters were also flown into the Western Cape

Firefighters from Working on Fire were also deployed from various parts of the Western Cape, Free State, North West, Eastern Cape,

Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Working on Fire dispatched 20 management employees to support these firefighting efforts.



Working on Fire Western Cape General Manager, Shane Christain, Assistant General Manager, Felicia Ngwasheng and Working on Fire National Spokesperson, Linton Rensburg welcome deployed firefighters at the OR Tambo Airport



COGTA Minister Des Van Rooyen thanking firefighters at Unity March



Firefighters from WOF formed the bulk of the resources at Knysna fire



Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, taking time to meet with firefighters in Knysna

WOF Free State revitalised by MD visit

The Managing Director of the Working on Fire programme, Trevor Abrahams, visited the Free State on 2 June 2017 and met with the provincial staff and crew leaders representing all the teams in the province.

The purpose of the MD's visit was to inform provincial staff, participants and stakeholders of the changes in management, to address the 2015 Canada deployment, to listen to the concerns of individuals and to promote the new 'Back to Basics' campaign.

"The Working on Fire programme has gone through a rocky period. We have had a lot of changes that we all do not necessarily agree with and moving forward we will be going back to the basics," said Abrahams.



Trevor Abrahams Free State Provincial Roadshow

"We are very happy to have Mr Abrahams back who we trust will take this programme back to where it was. We know that he is a very busy man and therefore we really appreciate that he personally came and had a meeting with us and that we could raise our concerns to him face to face and take those answers back to our teams," says Jane Khanye, a Type 1 Crew Leader from the Bloemfontein Base.

The visit was highly appreciated by all who attended and proved to be very fruitful in terms of settling concerns and clarifying where the programme was heading.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

WOF MD engages with crew leaders and base partners

Working on Fire's Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, embarked on a national roadshow to meet with the base partners and crew leaders to exchange views on the changes in the WOF programme.

The roadshow kicked off in Limpopo at the Traffic Department Auditorium with various stakeholders present, including Fire Protection Associations, SANParks, Type 1 Crew Leaders and members of the provincial management.

"Since the implementation of WOF Integrated Fire Management in our area there's been reduction in unemployment among the youth," said Annelie Becker, a base partner from Rooiberg. "We would

like to request WOF to look at opening a second team in our area as there's a demand for WOF services."

Due to the limited time available for the roadshow, WOF has launched the 'Talk to Trevor' campaign which is an open forum for communicating with our Managing Director. This campaign aims to address the issues and concerns of both our internal and external stakeholders.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



WOF MD Trevor Abrahams with the stakeholders during the provincial roadshow

Workshop reinforces WOF commitment to fairness in the workplace



Working on Fire and High Altitude Teams Crew Leaders and Base Partners attended the Industrial Relations workshop

The Mpumalanga provincial office hosted a series of Industrial Relations (IR) workshops across the province for 35 crew leaders and base partners to reinforce Working on Fire's commitment to a fair and equitable disciplinary environment. Various presentations at the workshop revisited the objectives of the WOF disciplinary and grievance policies.

WOF Mpumalanga General Manager, Martin Bolton, urged crew leaders to work together with provincial management, base partners and teams to ensure fair and equitable

labour practices. Stressing the importance of the workshop, Bolton said, "It is of utmost importance that we all know the correct steps that need to be taken when applying WOF's disciplinary and grievance procedures."

WOF's Executive Committee convened a similar workshop for senior management officials in Gauteng in May.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Motivating leaders to take the province forward

Working on Fire Western Cape recently hosted its 2017 Crew Leader Workshop at the Wolwekloof Training Academy.

As part of the 'Back to Basics' campaign initiated by Working on Fire Managing Director Trevor Abrahams, the Western Cape management and crew leaders representing their teams used the event to work through various WOF policies and procedures.

This platform allowed crew leaders the opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions for improvements to how the WOF programme supports its participants. Western Cape General Manager Shane Christian says, "It was a very successful workshop and I am positive that this province will move in the right direction going forward."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Western Cape crew leaders attended the workshop

WOF joins DEA Deputy Minister to commemorate World Environmental Day

The Department of Environmental Affairs Working on Fire Mookgophong Team joined the Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister, Barbara Thomson, and the rest of the world in commemorating World Environment Day (WED) and World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) on 5 June.

The event was held at Schoonoord village in Sekhukhune district, the historic home of Kgosi Sekhukhune who played an important role in the struggle against colonialism.

World Environment Day is observed annually to promote awareness of the importance of preserving the environment. The day is meant to mobilise people to tackle environmental challenges such as climate change, global warming, air quality, ecosystem management, deforestation, biodiversity loss and the illegal poaching of wildlife.

Although WDCD is usually celebrated on 17 June, a joint celebration was held because these celebrations are complimentary in many respects. Both have as their core objective to raise people's awareness of the impact they have on their environment and the need for collective action that has a positive effect on our environment.

The event started with the Mookgophong Team escorting the Deputy Minister into the Peter Nchabeleng Community Hall where the official event took place. Hundreds of people from neighbouring villages attended the event.

During her keynote address Deputy Minister Thomson said, "As you may be aware, land is a vital natural capital for producing food and other ecosystem goods and services. It is even more so for the rural poor, especially women, who rely heavily on land as their most significant asset for the sustenance of their livelihoods and the well being of their household and families."

The health and wellbeing of communities, and especially the rural poor, are intricately linked to the health and productivity of the land. The vital functions of land and soil are of critical importance to food, renewable energy and water security. Land degradation therefore directly threatens people's livelihoods.

WOF plays a major role in protecting the environment by implementing integrated fire management services such as fire prevention, fire detection, prescribed burning, fire damage rehabilitation, research, fire awareness and fire suppression.



The WOF Mookgophong Team escorting Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister Barbara Thomson at Peter Nchabeleng Sports Centre

"We need to protect our land from being over-used so it can continue to provide us all with food, water and energy to support our wellbeing. If we sustainably manage our land, we will reduce the impacts of climate change and reduce the

potential for disasters. Our success in this regard will depend on our ability to avoid degradation in new areas, and by prioritisation of the restoration of degraded land to enable it to regain its natural abilities," said the Deputy Minister



After learning about fire safety learners demonstrate the stop drop and roll

Working on Fire supports Child Protection Week



Western Cape Working on Fire teams engaged in a number of National Child Protection Week activities

National Child Protection Week, which ran from 28 May to 4 June, is marked annually to raise awareness about the rights of children. It aims to mobilise all sectors of society to care for and protect children.

Working on Fire, CapeNature, Bredasdorp community members, Pick n Pay staff members and Child Welfare personnel gathered in Kleinbegin, Bredasdorp, and marched in support of National Child Protection Week. Kleinbegin drew international media attention

when one of its young residents, Anene Booyens, was gruesomely raped and murdered in 2013.

In Hermanus, the Kleinmond Team marched down Hermanus Main Road with Kleinmond Social Welfare and Community Development Workers to raise awareness about child protection.

Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Learners prepared for fire season at Royal Show

Working on Fire in KwaZulu-Natal participated in the Royal Show in Pietermaritzburg.

The Thurlow and Albert Falls Teams educated and entertained learners in the WOF kids zone. Firefighters demonstrated how to crawl low under smoke and what to do when your clothes catch fire. Learners were then asked to demonstrate and some won prizes for the best answers to questions on what they learned.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer Bongumusa Nyathi says, "The aim of the WOF kids zone was to

educate primary school learners about the impact of fire and safety in the home and at school.

"We had a great reception from learners and teachers. They participated in all the activities planned. As it's the start of the winter fire season, our topics are linked to preparing learners to be safe this winter fire season. Teams will continue educating learners," says Nyathi.

Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

WOF Free State marks National Child Protection Week



WOF teams have their voices heard on Child Protection issues

National Child Protection Week is marked annually to raise awareness of the rights of children. It aims to mobilise all sectors of society to care for and protect children. Child Protection Week was held from 28 May to 4 June this year under the theme 'Let us all protect children to move South Africa forward.'

Despite efforts by the government and civil society to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation, children remain vulnerable.

Many more people and organisations need to join hands in defeating these social ills.

Working on Fire in the Free State joined various organisations in the province in activities that highlighted the abuse of children and women. The Marquard, Vrede and Ficksburg teams participated in demonstrations and marches to highlight the pandemic of violence and abuse that currently plague communities throughout the country.

Fired up by entrepreneurial spirit

"I got the money to establish my business from the Working on Fire programme, so the programme deserves credit for the role it played in my life," says Maredi Leshilo, formerly a firefighter at the Roodeplaat Base.

Leshilo not only saved parts of the stipend he earned as a firefighter to kick-start his spaza shop but also managed to buy a car.

"This work opportunity really served as a stepping stone for me and I used it correctly," says Leshilo.

The financial course the programme offered during the training is helping Leshilo to manage the finances of his business.

He says that he ran his business while off duty at first and only exited the programme when he was convinced that the business was sustainable.

He recently exited the programme to focus on his business. In the near future, he hopes to be employing one or two people to work with him. "I am selling grocery items to customers and I am doing well," he says.

An entrepreneur at heart, he says it was always his wish to start up his own enterprise and assist with providing employment in the country.

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



From the left in the front row is Maredi Leshilo who exited the programme to run a business

WOF gives hope to youth

Reflecting on the commemoration of Youth Day, Joseph Sebothoma says the award-winning Working on Fire programme is a weapon in the fight against youth unemployment that gives us hope of a better future.

"The Working on Fire programme provided me with a job opportunity which restored my dignity as a young person. I have reason to celebrate Youth Day because the programme has touched and changed my life positively," says Sebothoma, a firefighter at Mdala Base.

In the struggles of young people today, unemployment and poverty top the list and WOF has helped thousands of young men and women to have their first experience at employment.

"For young people in the programme, this work opportunity brought poverty relief in our families," Sebothoma says.

Sebothoma says that the training and skills imparted by the programme were critical to his development. He feels he learnt to value discipline and ethics when he joined the programme.

The work opportunity not only helps put food on the table but the programme also keeps participants being positive.

"We could be doing drugs and wasting our lives," he says.

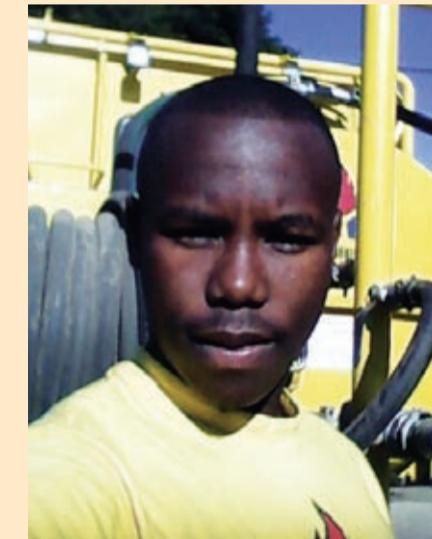
Thanks to the programme, the enthusiastic gospel singer says he is optimistic about the future.



Joseph Sebothoma of Mdala base says WOF helped to give hope as young person

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

WOF recruits more unemployed youth



Regional Manager, Thulani Myoli said the new recruits will be sent to the Training Academy for the 24 Days Advance Firefighting training

Working on Fire prides itself in carrying out the government mandate of providing job opportunities for unemployed youth across the country.

During the first week of Youth Month, five young people were recruited to the Joubertina Team in the Eastern Cape.

According to Regional Manager Thulani Myoli, all the candidates that came to the recruitment drive had to undergo a fitness test which included push-ups, sit-ups and a 2.4km run – 12 minutes for males and 14 minutes for females.

"Among all the young people who came to this recruitment, only five were selected to be trained as firefighters and be part of the Joubertina Team," Myoli says.

He says that with the western part of the province facing devastating fires, all the teams had to be at full strength and ready for duty at a moment's notice.

"Everyone tried their best during the fitness test although conditions were very windy, making it hard for them," Myoli says.

"These new recruits will be taken to Nelspruit for the 21-day advanced firefighting training."

The sky is the only limit



Zakhele Nxumalo, a WOF firefighter at Nelspruit Team and part-time student

"Nothing can stop me, not even poverty can stand in the way of what's coming," says hardworking Zakhele Nxumalo. The 23-year-old joined Working on Fire in October 2016 and plans to become a professional mechanic.

After spending close to a year in the programme, Nxumalo registered for Mechanical Studies N3: Fitter and Turner as a part-time student at Intec College.

Nxumalo plans to complete his studies, and use money saved from his stipend to apply for his driver's licence.

"Life hasn't always been easy and nothing could have prepared me for the challenges I have faced as a young man," says Nxumalo.

"Having said that, I have WOF to thank for the opportunity they have provided to me and many other participants. I am now a registered student and my breakthrough is around the corner," says Nxumalo.

 Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

 Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Female firefighter scoops best runner award

"Be passionate about what you do and you will always be successful," says 35-year-old Nomakhosi Matola, a firefighter from Nqadu Base in the Eastern Cape.

Matola was the best female runner in the last group that attended the Yellow Card Training Camp held in the province this year.

She finished the 2.4km run – which female firefighters are required to finish in 14 minutes – in the record time of 10:45. She received a medal for being the best female runner.

"Running that time was the best feeling ever. I even ran better than my male colleagues," says Matola.

She said that because the team lives at the base, they have enough time to train, even after working hours.

"I am passionate about running and I would like to participate in marathons within the province one day," says Matola.

"I would like to advise firefighters to maintain their fitness by training every day. It's not just about being awarded. Being fit is healthy and will assist a lot in fighting fires during this coming fire season," she says.

Provincial Training Officer Handry Makwena says Nqadu Team was selected as the best team in the last group and was awarded a trophy.

During the YCTC top-performing teams are awarded as a way of motivating teams to work hard.

 Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Nomakhosi Matola in the middle finished her 2,4KM run in 10 minutes 455 seconds



Manti Mabizela from Golden Gate finished in 3rd place in the women's 10km race and won R300 in prize money

WOF flag flies high at Sol Plaatjie Memorial Marathon

Working on Fire participants competed in the Sol Plaatjie Memorial Marathon that was held in Bethlehem in the Free State recently. Twenty-one participants from the Heilbron, Golden Gate, Bethlehem, Senekal, Ficksburg, Clocolan and Marquard bases travelled to Bethlehem to run the 10km, 21km and 42km races.

Manti Mabizela from Golden Gate finished in third place in the women's 10km race and won R300 in prize money. Most of the WOF participants were in the top 5 and top 10 finishers in the

21km and 42km races. "The participants from the respective bases were good ambassadors of the Working on Fire programme at the event and I am very proud of them for giving their all during the races, even though the competition was fierce," says Azola Bangani, the Eastern Free State Regional Manager.

 Wayne Mkhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Joe Gqabi female firefighter participates in MTN Marathon

Working on Fire female firefighter, Dirontsho Penelope Rantsane participated in a 10km race at the MTN Marathon in Johannesburg on 10 June this year.

Rantsane, who is from the Joe Gqabi Team in the Eastern Cape, has been participating in marathons since 2008.

"My love for running gave me an opportunity to be part of the WOF family, because I was physically fit. I passed the recruitment process early this year and I was selected to be one of the firefighters," she says with a smile.

Rantsane dropped out of school due to financial problems but that did not stand in her way to do something better with her life. After she left school she could not get a job and survived on the little money she won from marathons.

"In 2009 I won two medals for being in the top 50 of the 21km City to City Marathon in Johannesburg and the 42.2km Soweto Marathon from Soweto to Johannesburg," says Rantsane.

Getting medals has always motivated her running career. "It was in high school when I realised my passion and focused on running.

"I would like to thank Working on Fire. As a runner with no trainer, the programme plays a big role in my physical fitness as we do fitness tests at bases," 29-year-old Rantsane says.

"The stipend I get from WOF also assists in my running career," she adds.



Dirontsho Penelope Rantsane participated in a 10K MTN Marathon

Runner sets new record



Steve Sereko of Krugersdorp is the best male runner in Gauteng

Twenty-five-year-old Steve Sereko of the Krugersdorp Team powered his way through the 2.4km run in 7 minutes 41 seconds during the Yellow Card Training Camp (YCTC) recently. Male firefighters are required to finish the 2.4km run in 12 minutes while their female counterparts are required to finish in 14 minutes.

Sereko, who believes he is a natural sprinter, participates in marathons such as the Cross Country Marathon. He could not participate in this year's Comrades Marathon because he did not have money for the ticket.

Sereko says he prepared well for the YCTC because it was important to him to qualify so that

he can goon the fire line when needed. "I took the Yellow Card assessment very seriously and devoted myself to it," he says.

Grounds Operations Manager Khomotso Moagi says Sereko is the best male runner on the programme in the province.

"I trust that this will inspire other teams to do better in the 2.4km run. We are humbled by his performance during the Yellow Card assessments. All the teams did very well during the assessment," she says.

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

WOF recruits over 40 unemployed youth to train as firefighters

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme in the Eastern Cape continues to show its commitment to restoring dignity and saving lives. Recently WOF recruited more than 40 young people in the province.

Provincial Training Officer Handry Makwena says six youth were recruited for Longmore Base, four for Sarah Baartman, three for Baviaanskloof, seven for Ongeluksnek, five for Cedarville, 10 for Tsitsikamma, four for Witelsbos and five for Kromsriver Base.

Makwena says the selected candidates were the ones who passed the recruitment fitness test.

"Working on Fire's recruitment criteria includes a fitness test which consists of 40 push-ups, 40 sit-ups – each exercise to be done in under a minute – as well as running 2.4 km in 14 minutes for females and 12 minutes for males," says Makwena.

All the new recruits will be taken to the training academy in Nelspruit and will undergo training courses that include advanced firefighting,

fire safety and other specialised skills before being deployed to their bases.

"These recruits will be trained extensively on the essentials of integrated fire management," he says.

The recruitment of unemployed youth is part of the WOF objectives to restore dignity for young men and women in the province.

"This opportunity will help alleviate poverty in the homes of our fellow firefighters," says Makwena.

Ground Operations Manager of the province, Vuyo Poponi, says that they are topping up teams in the East District to get ready for the winter fire season so that teams can maintain team strength and perform their day-to-day fire prevention work.

 Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Recently appointed Fire Chief Lucas Mahlake, a former Working on Fire firefighter and Crew Leader

Former WOF firefighter appointed Fire Chief at local municipality

Lucas Mahlake was recently appointed Fire Chief for the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality in Mpumalanga.

As a young man from a small town in Mpumalanga seeking employment opportunities, Mahlake found a home at Working on Fire in 2004.

"When I joined WOF, I knew nothing about firefighting. One thing I was certain of was that I wanted a career that would enable me to protect people from the devastating effects of fire," says Mahlake.

After working as a firefighter for three years, Mahlake was appointed Crew Leader in 2007.

"Through the highly specialised firefighting training and leadership skills provided by WOF, I then worked as a Senior Fire & Rescue Officer before I was appointed as Fire Chief," says Mahlake.

"My life wouldn't be the same were it not for WOF," says Mahlake, who expressed his heartfelt thanks to WOF Mpumalanga's provincial management officials for believing in him and for providing the training and skills that led to his new position.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Spreading his wings

Ananias Motsepe, a former firefighter at the De Wildt Team, is now a data capturer for the Department of Environment Affairs in Cape Town. He exited the programme after serving Working on Fire as an assistant provincial stock controller.

Motsepe says the experience he acquired as assistant stock controller helped him a lot.

"The new position required exactly what I was doing as an assistant stock controller," says Motsepe.

Ironically, it was only after failing the Type 2 Crew Leader course that he gained a position in the stock control department. "My heart was sorely bitter. I struggled to forgive myself," he says.

But despite the initial struggles, he was able to use the opportunities to build the foundation for where he is today.

Noting that his new position required him to up his performance, Motsepe says, "I have the right basics and experience to execute the duties. Life shall never be the same again."



Ananias Motsepe has got a new job with the department of environmental affairs based in Cape Town

Skills acquired at WOF help former firefighter to pursue his dream

Former firefighter Sizwe Nhlonzi from Magazi is currently training at the South African Police Services College in Pretoria after being at Working on Fire since 2014.

"Training started in February. I'm doing well and coping with all the activities we are required to perform," says Nhlonzi.

Nhlonzi always wanted to be a traffic officer, but says being a police officer is even better. "I believe Working on Fire prepared me in fitness and discipline. Most of the things we do at SAPS are the same as WOF when it comes to fitness and discipline," says Nhlonzi.

"I see myself being a successful and disciplined constable who will fight crime as I was fighting fires and hopefully being promoted to sergeant in the future," says Nhlonzi.

Nhlonzi encourages his former colleagues to be patient, further their studies and always apply themselves in everything they do.

"I thank WOF for taking a chance on me. At WOF I got the opportunity to go to Canada in 2015 and 2016. I went overseas and travelled in a plane for the first time which was always a dream of mine," says Nhlonzi.



Sizwe Nhlonzi



Parapara Makgahela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal