



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

Minister urges vigilance during winter fire season

The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dr Edna Molewa, has urged communities and landowners to remain vigilant and protect themselves and their properties from the potential devastation of wildfires.

Dr Molewa further urged people to heed the daily Fire Danger Index (FDI) warnings issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS).

This warning comes after a large contingent of firefighters from the Department's Working on Fire programme, in collaboration with local Fire Protection Associations (FPAs), had to battle 27 fires that engulfed the Mpumalanga Highveld.

Ermelo, Warburton, Mayflower and Piet Retief were also noted as risk areas of concern in the province.

Except for the Western Cape that experiences a summer fire season, the rest of South Africa experiences a winter fire season.

This has been exacerbated by the current drought experienced throughout the country as well as high temperatures. Between May and August this year there were 81 fires in Mpumalanga, including grassland and plantation fires.

Working on Fire was requested to provide 150 firefighters as a standby resource by the Mpumalanga Umbrella Fire Protection Association (MUFPA). These firefighters have been deployed from the Western Cape (100) and KwaZulu-Natal (50).

The partnership with the Mkhondo and Umpuluzi Fire Protection Associations forms one of the biggest team mobilisations for the 2017 winter fire season.

In addition to Mpumalanga, over the past week close to 1000 firefighters from Working on Fire battled fires in the Eastern Cape (7), Free State (23), North West (1), Gauteng (23), Limpopo (8) and KwaZulu-Natal (23).

In addition to ground resources, 10 fire trucks, eight buses, four strike units and 12 bakkies with water pumps, seven spotter planes, four helicopters and three fixed-wing water bombers were deployed to fight the fires.

"It is encouraging to witness landowners collaborating with municipal, provincial and national authorities on fire suppression and management activities, and I encourage all landowners to join their local FPAs," says Dr Molewa.

The Department reiterates its call to people not to start any unnecessary fires.

Working on Fire provided fire suppression services at more than 800 fires and limited the damage to just under 122 000 hectares. The Working on Fire firefighting aircraft flew more than 600 hours during these fires (1 April 2017 - 30 July 2017).

Working on Fire also took part in one of the biggest mobilisation of firefighting resources to date when the programme dispatched ground and aerial resources to assist with the Knysna fires in June this year.



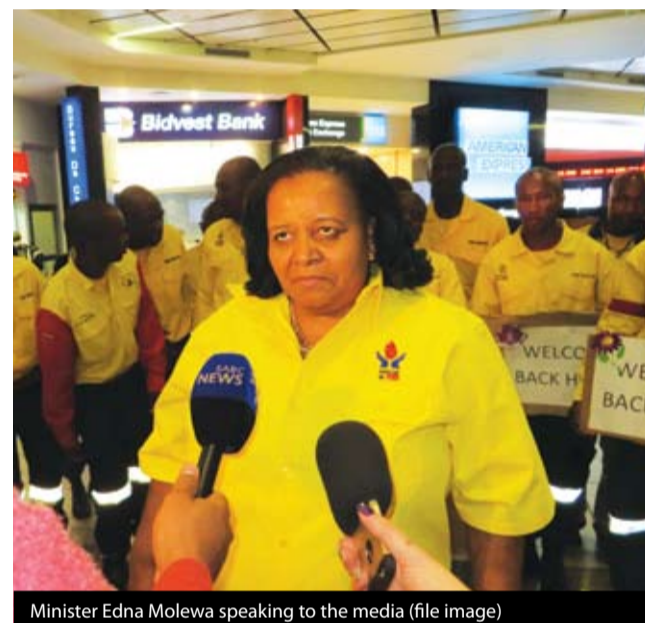
Firefighters at recent fire in Mpumalanga



Fires in the Eastern Cape



Mbazwana Team suppressing a fire at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Plantation



Minister Edna Molewa speaking to the media (file image)



Firefighters at KwaZulu-Natal fire

LIMPOPO FIRES

▶▶ PAGE 3

**MARCH AGAINST WOMEN ABUSE**

▶▶ PAGE 5

**FROM FIREFIGHTER TO CRIME FIGHTER**

▶▶ PAGE 8



Editorial

Welcome to our August Newsletter and thank you for taking the time to read our latest edition. As South Africans end Women’s Month, Working on Fire celebrates the achievements and contributions made by women to moving South Africa forward. In this edition we highlight women’s contributions in male-dominated occupations.

You will also read about our teams conducting fire awareness workshops for community members to ensure that they also take their fire risks seriously and learn how they can mitigate these risks.

This issue includes inspiring stories of how our participants are using the stipend the programme provides to better and empower themselves through further education, starting small businesses or bring social relief to their families.

A warm welcome to our new firefighters who just finished their training at the Training Academy. We wish you all the best in your new journey.

Happy Reading

MD Message

Trevor Abrahams



I would like to extend warm greetings to all our dedicated firefighters and staff across all provinces and to all the women in Working on Fire who celebrated Women’s Month in August.

The national theme for Women’s Month this year was ‘The Year of OR Tambo, Women United in Moving South Africa Forward’. To this end we are extremely proud of the fact that the WOF Programme is one of government’s most successful EPWP programmes, which has created work opportunities for many women across the length and breadth of South Africa. Thirty-one percent of our participants are women, which continues to be the highest ratio of women to men employed in this sector.

Many of our women participants have evolved from being firefighters to becoming administrative and management personnel in the programme, while others have found employment in the formal sector. Our women participants are proud of who they have become, mainly thanks to the continuous training and development which they receive at Working on Fire.

We are amidst our winter fire season and our teams across the country have been kept busy with some big fires in their provinces. The recent spate of fires in Mpumalanga also led to the Fire Protection Associations in that province requesting that we deploy additional firefighters from other provinces to be on standby to assist them, should the need arise.

To this end we have once again demonstrated the capacity of Working on Fire to seamlessly deploy firefighters from across the country to hotspots where they can provide assistance to our partners and landowners. On a personal note, I have been back in Working on Fire as Managing Director for just over 90 days. I must firstly thank the WOF Board, the Executive Committee, Senior Managers, including General Managers, and our partners for the support I have received in bringing about change in the programme but moreover your support for our ‘Back to Basics Project’.

Most importantly though, I need to thank our participants who have warmed up to our ‘Back to Basics Project’. We have started the journey together to restore discipline and respect in the programme. During the past 90 days I met many of you. We sat down together and we listened to everyone about how we will restore Working on Fire to its former glory.

There is still a lot to be done but I know that we can count on each other to make Working on Fire the best programme to work in once again.

I urge all our firefighters to remain vigilant and safe on the fire line.

Working on Fire Executive Committee

The Working on Fire Executive Committee (Exco) is the structure in WOF led by the Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, and is responsible for the overall leadership of the company. It is the structure through which the MD is able to obtain input in managing the company and keeping the Exco members to account for their specific portfolios.

The Exco members are responsible for providing guidance on the overall direction and management of the company AND providing the strategic guidance and management of their portfolios.

The Executive Committee is specifically responsible for:

1. Adopting the annual operating plans and annual budget of the company.
2. Providing strategic direction on the day-to-day business and affairs of the company. Specifically:
 - 2.1 The development, review and monitoring of the implementation of policies of the company;
 - 2.2 Establishing best management practices and functional standards;
 - 2.3 The adoption of implementation strategies of the company;
 - 2.4 Prioritising and allocating the company’s capital, technical and human resources.
3. Providing input to the senior management appointments in Working on Fire and reviewing the performance management of and incentivising WOF personnel.
4. Maintaining a group-wide system of internal control to manage all group risks associated with WOF’s operations and ensuring that they are effectively managed in line with the DEA contract and the Ministerial Determination.
5. Ensuring that the policies and practices of Working on Fire are complaint with all legal and regulatory prescripts.
6. Making recommendations, requests for action and tabling reports to the Board relating to matters beyond the scope of its authority.
7. Forming sub-committees to assist it in the execution of its duties.

THE CURRENT EXCO CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

Trevor Abrahams: Managing Director, responsible for the overall leadership and management of the company.

Sandiso Ntsoni: Head of Finance, responsible for the financial management of the company.

Piet van der Merwe: Executive for Operations, responsible for all the operations aspects of the company, including WOF Operations, WOF Services, Dispatch and Coordination and WOF Aviation.

Jacob Mkhonto: Head of Human Capital, responsible for the human resources and social development functions in the company.

Jacob Singo: Head of Occupational Health and Safety, responsible for the management of the OHS functions in the company.

Ancil Lee: Executive responsible for Information Management in the company.

Luthfia Cader: Executive responsible for communications and fire awareness in the company.

Shane Christian, the National General Manager responsible for Provincial General Managers and HAT, has also been invited to be part of the Exco.

I started my employment with Working on Fire on 1 March 2017, reporting to the MD and serving as a member of the Executive Committee. Prior to working for WOF, I worked for Kishugu Holdings as a SHEQ Manager from July 2016.

I started my career in 2005 at Fraser Alexander Construction at the bottom, as a Safety Administrator. I was a fully fledged Safety Officer when I left Fraser Alexander and joined RSV Enco Consulting in 2010. I also worked for Strata Worldwide and Grindrod Intermodal as a Senior SHEQ Officer. I now have over 10 years experience in the occupational health and safety field, gained while working in different industries such as construction, mining, warehousing and logistics. I have also served in different management capacities.

I hold a diploma in Safety Management and certificates such as SAMTRAC, OHSAS 18001 and ISO 14001 Implementation and Auditing, Risk Management and Train the Trainer, among others. I will be completing my Bachelor of Arts degree in Disaster and Safety Management in 2018.

I am married and blessed with three children, two daughters and a son. I enjoy spending time with my family, attending my beloved church, the St. Engenas ZCC,

PROFILE OF JACOB SINGO WOF Executive Committee Member, Occupational Health and Safety

and jogging. I also like taking part in charity programmes in my community.

I am originally from Ohrigstad, but lived in Johannesburg before moving to Nelspruit.



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.

Introduction of Editorial Team

Editor-in-chief:

Linton Rensburg

National Communications Manager

Deputy Editor:

Olwethu Mpeshe

Communications Coordinator

Provincial Communication Officers:

Parapara Makgahlela

Matema Gwangwa

Nompilo Zondi

Lauren Howard

Wayne Mokhethi

Lebogang Maseko

Nthabiseng Mokone

WOF TV Video Journalists:

Christalene de Kella

Rethabile Selepe

General contacts for WOFIRE NEWS

Tel: +27 21 418 2569 • Cell: +27 82 508 0990 • Email: news@wofire.co.za

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.



WOF DEMONSTRATES SERVICES AT LETABA SHOW

Working on Fire Limpopo's communications cluster attended the Letaba Show, the most well attended show in the Mopani District. The Letaba Show targets all age groups in the communities of the surrounding areas.

WOF was given an opportunity to exhibit by the Letaba Fire Protection Association which sponsored the WOF stand at the show-ground. This was WOF's first attendance of the Letaba Show and the team managed to reach more than 20 schools in two days. They educated visitors to the show about the impact of fires, personal safety, climate change and provided many fire safety tips.

"We were honoured to be here. At our stall we had an opportunity to educate learners and also to share fire safety tips with the farmers and communities. After this we will be moving around a lot as there's a high need for our fire awareness workshop in various communities and organisations," says Sello Matlhare, the Community Fire Awareness Officer for Limpopo.

The Tzaneen Team, which does duty under the Letaba FPA, used their resources to demonstrate how to suppress a fire. The team concluded the day with its famous drill.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Firefighters demonstrating for the audience.

2000 hectares lost in a day to wildfires

Working on Fire (WOF) participants in Limpopo had a very busy start to August as they battled raging wildfires in the Waterberg District. Waterberg is one of the areas which is prone to wildfires due to the type of vegetation.

About 100 WOF firefighters were dispatched to fires at Welgevonden where an estimated 2 000 hectares of vegetation were destroyed. The firefighters had to work through the night to protect the environment and save properties from being destroyed.

As the vegetation in these areas is very dry the chance of more wildfires had increased. To prevent more vegetation from being destroyed, the firefighters had to conduct back burns and succeeded in the early hours to bring the raging fires under control.



WOF firefighters battling the raging fires at Welgevonden in the Waterberg District

About 75 WOF firefighters from Leseding, Alma and Vingerkraal were dispatched to the Welgevonden fire to conduct a mop up, the final stage for fire suppression. The teams also kept a close eye on flare ups that could cause the wildfire to resurge. The WOF teams worked very hard to gain control and completely extinguished the fire by the end of the second day.

Our firefighters have been thoroughly trained in fire suppression and are confident of managing all the wildfires that are occurring in the province. WOF will be keeping a close watch on the Waterberg District during this peak period of the fire season.

Five schools taught fire safety



The Highveld Team conducted fire awareness activities at various schools during August

Because children are generally curious beings, it is not a surprise that they form a high percentage of people who fall victim to fires. Children must be taught from a young age to understand how dangerous fires can be and how to react during unwanted fires.

The Working on Fire Highveld Team has been reaching out to schools to teach learners about fire safety. Over the past weeks, fire awareness activities were conducted at the

Stelfontein, Tukisang, Hata and Tshupane primary schools and Tshedimosetso pre-school to educate learners about fire risks and fire safety.

The team called on parents to keep an eye on children to ensure they do not play with materials that can cause fires at home and outside their homes.

Saving lives through education



Fire Awareness Training Officer Rudi Lucas assists the foundation phase educators with their assessment

Working on Fire's fire awareness cluster hosted a FireSafe workshop at the Lawaaiikamp Community Hall for 30 Foundation Phase educators from the Eden District to ensure that communities and schools are fire safe ahead of the 2018/19 Fire Season.

Androlene Killian, Western Cape Fire Awareness Training Officer says, "The aim of these FireSafe workshops is to educate and empower educators with the knowledge to understand and identify the fire risks in and around their schools. These teachers are also taught how to conduct their own training in their different schools with their learners. It is important from an early age to teach young kids about the dangers of playing with fire, which can

lead to immense disasters and, ultimately, loss of lives."

The educators shared some of the fire incidents they experienced during the devastating fires that swept across the Garden Route in June 2017.

Ilungelolethu Crèche educator, Zimasa Ziqwayi says, "This workshop was very informative as I have learnt a lot about fire safety and evacuation plans. I am now going to take this information and teach other educators and learners at our crèche. I'd like to thank Working On Fire for their help. Keep on doing more of these workshops."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



WOF National General Manager, Shane Christian, conducting the workshop

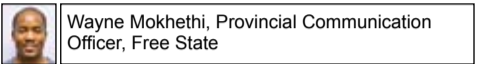
WORKSHOP SEEKS TO SIMPLIFY DAILY OPERATION

Shane Christian, the newly appointed Working on Fire National General Manager, recently visited Working on Fire Free State provincial staff to engage with, train and provide additional information about the Working on Fire programme to the staff members.

The three-day workshop included a session on risk management facilitated by Tony Mancos, and an information session on the WOF ethics line which concerned employees at Working on Fire and other stakeholders can use

to anonymously report any fraudulent, corrupt or unethical practices to an independent third party.

Christian says, “The aim of the roadshow was to engage with the provincial staff and to implement the back-to-basics programme by introducing simpler methods of doing daily tasks and improved ways of monitoring these tasks.”



WOF lecture focuses on Integrated Fire Management Service

Mpumalanga General Manager Martin Bolton was invited by the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) to give a lecture to sugarcane farming students focusing on the control of fire.

The university facilitated a sugarcane production certificate programme from 19 June to 21 July 2017 at the UMP Mbombela campus.

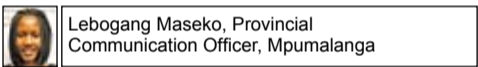
Bolton’s fire lecture focused on common causes of wildfires, their impact and control measures that should be taken in case of unwanted fires.

Bolton’s detailed presentation also discussed integrated fire management services such as prescribed burning, fuel load reduction, community

fire awareness, early detection and fire suppression plans.

The lecture was presented at the invitation of Gerhard Viljoen, Deputy Director in Continuing Education Services at UMP. Viljoen says, “Burning of the cane is a common practice with cane farmers, especially the ones doing manual harvesting.”

The lecture was therefore important as it would assist sugarcane farmers to understand the control measures that should be implemented in cases of wildfires.



Provincial General Manager Martin Bolton presents a fire control lecture to students at the University of Mpumalanga

Dispatcher tops national audit

A man in a yellow shirt is sitting at a desk, holding a large trophy and a certificate.

Type 3 Dispatcher Obakeng Moholo with the trophy and certificate he received in appreciation of his sterling work

Obakeng Moholo, a WOF North West Type 3 Dispatcher, joined the programme in June 2013 as a firefighter at the Barberspan Base. In 2014, using part of his monthly stipend from the programme, he applied to study Financial Management at Oxbridge College. In the same year, he applied for the Type 3 Dispatcher position and landed the job.

Moholo is one of the two Type 3 Dispatchers who became top achievers when audited nationally. The other Type 3 Dispatcher was Sifiso Nzimande from KwaZulu-Natal. Moholo’s score of 98%, helped the North West take

second place in the dispatch audit out of eight provinces.

Moholo says he gives thanks to his provincial coordinators, provincial management, crew leaders, drivers and colleagues for striving to make the WOF programme shine.

Moholo says he enjoys all the responsibilities that come with his job. “I learned discipline from base level, and have learned to be a workaholic. I realised during my Type 3 Dispatcher training that if I work hard I can make myself, my family and my province proud with the quality of my work.”

Garden Route Rebuild Initiative

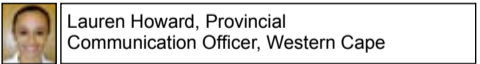
The Working on Fire teams, in collaboration with the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association, have been working in the Brenton and Belvidere areas of Knysna on soil erosion management as part of the Garden Route Rebuild Initiative (GRRI).

Priority sites have been identified where there is a high risk to homes and infrastructure of soil erosion due to the recent wildfire. The WOF teams have been felling burnt vegetation and stacking them in strategic areas along the contours to help prevent soil erosion. The stack line prevents further sheet erosion by allowing faster plant regeneration, and opening terrain for easy access for herbicide application to alien invasive plants.

Other measures were implemented, such as

the laying of bio-degradable berms (‘bio-sausages’) and blankets. The bio-sausages slow water velocity, prevent or reduce sediment flowing down steep slopes and reduce the chances of mudslides.

After installing the bio-sausage, grass seed is sown along the sausages. The WOF teams, who have covered an estimated 15 hectares so far, have received enormous praise from the public and other role-players for their work on this project. There are more sites to be tackled but they are working on one site at a time to ensure that the areas remain safe.



Working on Fire teams rehabilitating areas in Brenton on Lake




WOF Eastern Cape marches to condemn women abuse

WOF EC marches against women abuse

Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape, in partnership with various stakeholders, marched against the abuse and killing of women to mark Women’s Day. According to WOF Provincial Social Development Practitioner, Siphokazi Jack, this march was aimed at raising awareness around violence against women, following a spate of reports of women being brutally killed and abused in the country. Jack says, “Things will not change in a day but we are spreading the word that killing and abusing women is unacceptable,” adding that the country needed more awareness. Provincial General Manager, Monde Maqula, says that they would like this message that women

should be respected and not abused to be heard and acknowledged. Along with various teams of WOF fire-fighters, the SAPS, the Department of Social Development, the Traffic Department, GUCC Christian Organisation and learners took part in the march. The Jansenville Team also went to great lengths to show their appreciation to women in management. This team arranged an outing for female provincial managers as well as the two females.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Female firefighters faced Knysna fires



Evelyn Mthethwa, a Type 2 Crew Leader at the Dr JS Moroka Base, was one of several female firefighters who helped suppress the Knysna fires

The female firefighters who were deployed to douse the raging fires in Knysna in June proved that women ‘hold the knife on its sharpest side’, says Evelyn Mthethwa, a Type 2 Crew Leader at the Dr JS Moroka Base. She was one of many gallant and dedicated female firefighters who helped the Working on Fire Programme to save lives and suppress the fires in Knysna. Mthethwa says the Knysna fires constantly changed direction and swept fast. “The fires were tough to suppress. They posed a serious threat to crews on the fire line, but as women we were not deterred because we were rigorously trained to suppress fires. We were steadfast.”

Women in the programme were recognised on Women’s Day for participating in suppressing the fires that had threatened to destroy the livelihoods and homes of the residents of Knysna. Mthethwa says female firefighters participated equally with their male counterparts because they can be just as strong. “Recognition meant that we had done good work during those fires. And we are grateful to have been recognised.”



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng


KZN men march against the abuse of women



Male firefighters took part in the march to condemn violence against women and children

The KwaZulu-Natal Working on Fire Albert Falls and Umngeni Teams participated in the Ngiyendoda Emadodeni Men’s March which took place in the Pietermaritzburg city centre. The march was organised by the KZN Social Development Practitioner, Hloniphile Ndlovu, to mark Women’s Month. She says, “The aim of the march was to encourage men to stand up against women and children abuse. Ngiyendoda Emadodeni means ‘I am a man among men.’” Placards bore messages denouncing violence against women and children as the firefighters and supporters marched to a nearby taxi rank promoting peace.

“The march comes after a men’s talk held last month facilitated by Zazi Nxele, that focused on addressing some of the social issues that men deal with. This assisted male firefighters to understand the objective behind the march and to also change their mind-sets and hopefully the mind-sets of other men in their communities,” says Ndlovu. Umngeni Base Communication Representative Sfiso Hlela says, “The march went well but we hope to have more external stakeholders who would assist victims of violence to get help.”



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal


Aganang Team celebrates Women’s Day in style



Aganang WOF participants entertaining the audience at the Ga-Mashamaite Tribal Community Centre during the Women’s Day celebration

The WOF Aganang Team attended the Women’s Day celebration at the Ga-Mashamaite Tribal Community Centre in Moletjie in support of the stakeholders that they work with and also to raise awareness among community members. “We saw it beneficial to support this worthy event and to salute the women that we have in the WOF programme who are holding the baton and leading strong teams,” says Elliot

Mokobodi, a Base Communications Representative at Aganang Base. Apart from their presentation, the team also entertained the audience with dances and songs during the event.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Participant makes moves up the ranks

Many motivated people are influenced by their mothers, says Phetho Bolofo from Ongeluksnek Base, who believes that his mother inspires him to work hard.

The 26-year-old passed matric in 2012 but could not further his studies due to financial constraints.

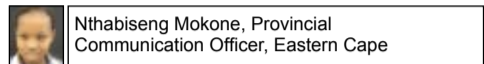
“Life was tough.I stayed at home while my friends went to universities but my mother never stopped motivating me,” says Bolofo.

He heard that WOF was recruiting at Ongeluksnek Base and decided to give it a try. He was recruited and underwent rigorous training to qualify as a firefighter at the Training Academy in Nelspruit.

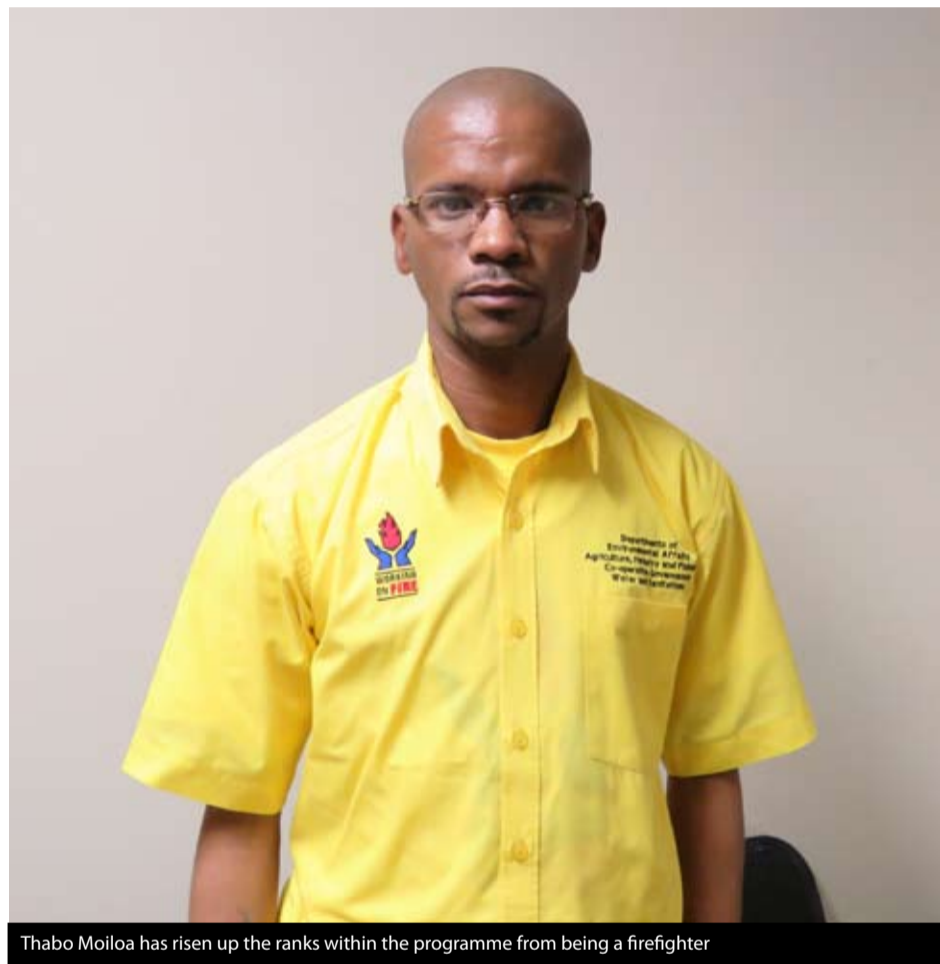
“In 2016 I was selected to be the Base Communication Representative of the team and that made me proud. I learned to write articles about the team’s fire awareness activities.

“A year later I was chosen to go to the Type 2Crew Leader course. I knew it was not going to be easy but I told myself I needed to work hard to move up the ranks,” he says.

He passed the course and is now on probation as a Type 2 Crew Leader.“I thank the programme for everything that I am today,” says Bolofo.



Participant’s rapid rise to the top



Thabo Moilola possesses an inspirational story of how persistence, hard work and a little bit of luck can open doors that you never thought would open.

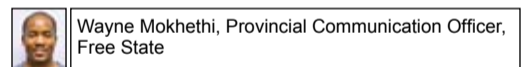
Moilola joined Working on Fire in June 2004 as a firefighter in the Qwa Qwa team in the Eastern Free State. This was the first WOF base to be established in the Free State. He was promoted to Type 2 Crew Leader in the same year and served in that position until 2008 when he became a Type 1 Crew Leader.

Many management qualities were identified in Moilola and he was swiftly promoted to the position of Regional Manager. He successfully managed various teams within the province for three years. With an evident passion for ground operations and integrated fire management, Thabo was promoted to the position of Ground Operations Manager for the Free State.

Through Working on Fire Moilola has been privileged to travel abroad. He worked in East Kalimantan in Indonesia as a Divisional Supervisor where he provided integrated fire management training in the area for three months.

This year Moilola has enrolled at the University of the Free State Business School where he is completing the Management Development Programme.

“I would like to encourage everyone in the programme, especially firefighters, crew leaders and drivers to pursue their dreams. Work hard for what you want and don’t wait for anyone to do it for you. The sky is the limit,” says Moilola.



Selaelo goes an extra mile to save lives



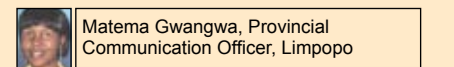
Selaelo Vincent Chepape is a Type 1Crew Leader at Molemole Base in Limpopo whose passion for saving lives and protecting the environment goes beyond fighting fires.

As South Africa has a high rate of severe injuries and trauma due to road accidents, hospitals are in constant need of blood donors.

“Istarted donating blood last year while attending the learnership at the Working on Fire Academy in Nelspruit. My blood is one of those blood types that are scarce and I’m proud of myself that I’m sharing my blood to save lives,” says Chepape.

After donating at Nelspruit, Chepape was contacted by a representative of the South African National Blood Service in Mpumalanga for a second donation, but due to the long distance he asked to be referred to a centre in Polokwane which is closer to his home town.

“Saving lives is a calling for me. I guess I was born for this as even at WOF as a leader of a team of firefighters, you have to be passionate about saving lives before anything else. I’m glad that WOF exposed me to various ways of saving lives,” says Chepape.



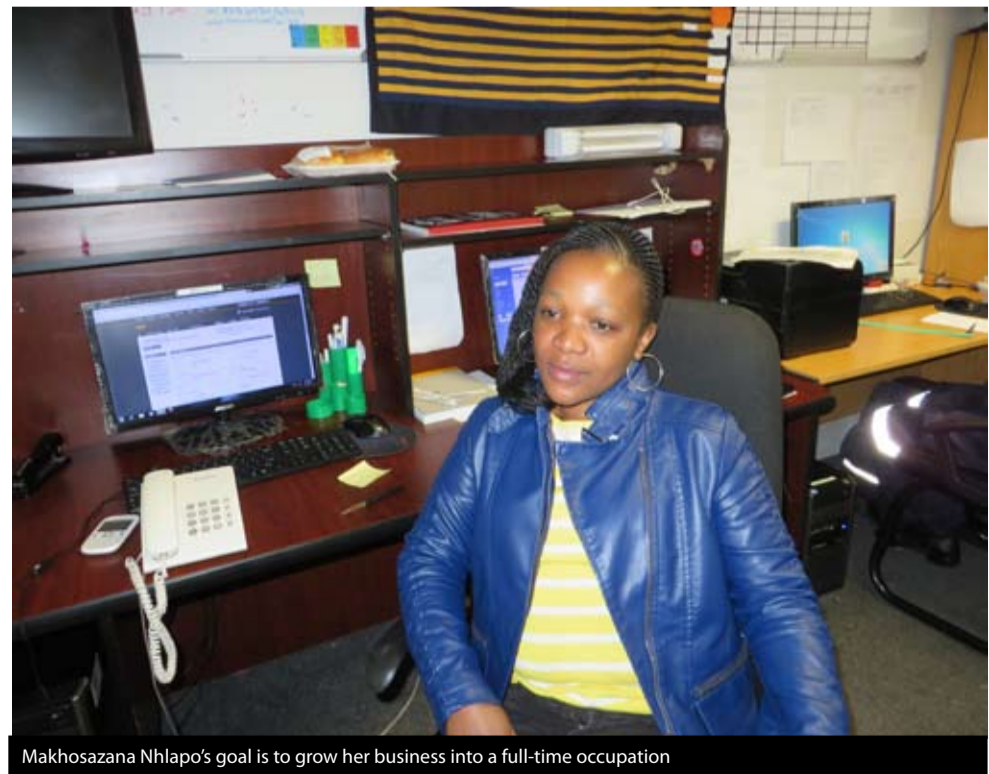
Dispatcher breaks stereotypes

Type 3 Dispatcher Makhosazana Nhlapo is using carpentry skills acquired in the programme to generate extra income. She saved her monthly stipends to purchase tools to kick-start the project which she believes will uplift her.

During her time off, she builds wardrobes and installs doors for customers in her township of Ratanda in Heidelberg.

“People are surprised when they find me fitting doors and designing wardrobes. They think it must be done by men only. I am breaking these stereotypes,” says Nhlapo, who says it was difficult at first to start the project without the tools of the trade.

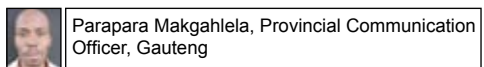
“Skills acquired in the programme are beginning to pay off. I am dedicated to succeed. People are willing to try my services,” she says.



pursuing it. I am good with measurements and drilling,” says Nhlapo.

Her dream is to be running and growing the business on a full-time basis in the future. She is working to improve her marketing

capabilities and marketing of her services in the nearest townships.



Participants fly the WOF flag at Marathon

The Sun to Sun half marathon race was presented by the Nedbank Fast Legs Running Club. Runners competing in the half marathon event begin the scenic route at 08h00 at the Black Mountain Hotel and finish at Mbabana Stadium in Thaba’Nchu.

This race was introduced three years ago and it has shown tremendous growth since then. It attracts top athletes from around the province and neighbouring Lesotho. The race programme included a 10km and 21.1km road race between the Thaba’Nchu Sun and the Naledi Sun.

This year the Clocolanteam took part in the marathon and showcased the WOF firefighters’ physical abilities. These participants were in the lead group right up to the finish line, with three runners managing a top 10 finish in the 10km race for males.

Ratseki Manuel ended the race in fifth place, Bongani Tigedi secured seventh place and Mongale Thuso ended in eighth place. Lerato Chaotsane came even closer to victory, ending the ladies’ 10km race in second place.



Wayne Mokheithi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



Clocolan firefighters participated in the 2017 Sun to Sun Half Marathon

Participant plays in professional soccer league

Thirty-year-old Thabisile Thaga, a storeperson for the Dr JS Moroka Team, did not allow patriarchy to stop her from achieving her dream of becoming a professional soccer player. She hails from the rural town of Tweefontein in Mpumalanga.

“Playing football as a woman was taboo. It was a men’s sport,” she says.

Thaga has played in the under-20 national ladies’ team and won the Vodacom championship title with the Detroit Football Club. A midfielder, Thaga now plays for the Coal City Wizards Football Club in the Sasol Ladies’ Professional Soccer League.

During the week, she trains with the males at the local football club. “I am the only lady playing with the males in the village. This gives me more of a fitness edge over other ladies,” she says.

Thaga says it’s good that the men no longer discriminate against her during training, as “Football cannot be for the men only. The WOF programme acknowledges us as women. The programme accommodated me as woman to make a living,” says the football star.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Thabisile Thaga is a professional soccer player for the Coal City Wizards club in Witbank

Participant urges colleagues to uplift themselves



Sphamandla Manyayi’s goal is to be the best vehicle manager at WOF

Sphamandla Manyayi WOF was recently appointed a driver by WOF KwaZulu-Natal. Manyayi was recruited in March 2012 and became a Base Communications Representative last year.


But while proud of this achievement, he had set his sights on other opportunities at WOF. Manyayi says, “I wanted to be a driver because I saw the opportunity as a first stepping stone within the company.

“I really enjoyed the training and I learnt a lot of new things. I am not just a driver but a vehicle manager, and my aim is to be the best driver WOF has ever had.”

Manyayi embodies the leadership and cooperative spirit that participants often discover in themselves when taking the opportunities offered to them at Working on Fire. “After getting my own driver’s licence, I then started helping my co-workers. I am very proud of their progress as one has passed and another is currently doing her driver’s licence.”

In motivating his colleagues, Manyayi says, “Have short-term goals and work on them. Never quit. Thomas Edison’s light bulb experiments failed a thousand times but he got it right. I say, let us fall forward.”

[When asked how it felt to fail a thousand times, Edison said, “I didn’t fail a thousand times. The light bulb was an invention with a thousand steps.”]



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

RECRUITS LEARN THE VALUE OF WORKING TOGETHER



Five newly appointed firefighters from the Mookgophong Team

“The first time when I arrive at the WOF Academy, we didn’t know what to expect. It was a whole new environment to us. We had mixed feelings of happiness and being scared at the same time,” says Maite Thobela, a newly appointed firefighter at Mookgophong Base.

Pursuing its commitment to restoring dignity and alleviating poverty, WOF recruited five Mookgophong youths and trained them in firefighting skills before they were placed at their base. These young men and women couldn’t contain their happiness as they talked about the change the programme brought in their lives.

Firefighter wins fun run on Women’s Day


Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal’s eThekweni Team firefighter, Xolisile Sithole, won a fun run competition on Women’s Day. Sithole says, “I’ve loved running since primary school and the passion continued into high school. I’ve entered various running competitions since then, such as the Spar Women’s Race.”

Superbly fit, Sithole completes the WOF 2.4km run in 10:30 minutes. She also enjoys competing during the Yellow Card Training Camp to improve her finishing time.

“I’ve seen that by working hard and committing myself, I can move forward in life. Through dedication, I was able to complete rope access training,” she says.

Sithole took first place for women and second place overall running against men and women in the Fun Run and Walk event.

“I am very proud of my achievement. This Woman’s Month I encourage other women to never give up on their dreams. Train, train and train more to accomplish in life,” says Sithole.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal



Xolisile Sithole shows off her medals

Former firefighter now field ranger

Working on Fire prides itself in providing unemployed youth from disadvantaged communities with skills that improve their employability. The success of the programme is proven by the regular numbers of former WOF participants who land jobs either in government service or the private sector annually.

Miranda Langaklaas joined the programme in July 2016 after struggling to get a proper job due to lack of skills.

“Prior to joining WOF I got piece jobs that didn’t pay much but helped me to survive,” she says.

When she heard that WOF was recruiting in Baviaanskloof, she knew she had to grab the opportunity in order to better her life.

“I passed all the fitness tests and was selected to the team. This was my first good job,” she says with a smile.

She was sent with other recruits for firefighting training in Nelspruit. “On my return I worked hard, doing fire suppression and fire prevention which included conducting school and community fire awareness,” says Langaklaas.

Almost exactly a year later, her hard work led to a better opportunity.

“Early this year I applied to be a field ranger



Former firefighter Miranda Langaklaas started her new job as a field ranger in July.

at the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency. My application was successful due to the work experience I gained at WOF. I got the job in July,” she says.

Langaklaas appreciates what the WOF programme did for her. “I would like to advise firefighters to work hard work and dream big. The sky is the limit,” she says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

WOF welcomes 124 new firefighters

A prestigious graduation ceremony was held at the Nelspruit Training Academy on 1 August 2017, where 124 newly trained firefighters were welcomed to WOF. They will be based in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.

The event marked the successful conclusion of the 24-day Basic and Advanced Firefighting training programme that has extensively prepared them as wildfire firefighters.

Giving a speech on behalf of the new firefighters, Gift Malejwe described his stay at the Academy as “mind-blowing” and humorously said it needed to be “tasted to be understood”.

The firefighters were trained in fire awareness and education, prevention and fire suppression. They were also trained in skills such as first aid, carpentry, cooking, health and safety and communications.



WOF welcomed 124 new firefighters in a prestigious graduation ceremony

Former participant lands new job

Lulama Mabhe recently exited positively from the programme after serving as a firefighter at the Krugersdorp Team. She is now a security officer at Cook Mine 2 in Randfontein in the West Rand.

Mabhe says Working on Fire has served as a stepping stone in advancing her career. She says the programme helped her with skills development.

“The programme brought me hope when I had no means to make a leaving. It shaped my life positively,” she says.

Mabhe used the stipend she got from the programme to pay for her learner’s licence and security training.

Mabhe, who is originally from the Eastern Cape, says her current position pays well. She urged her former colleagues to step up and look for opportunities where possible.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Participant’s journey from health & safety to community safety

A former firefighter from the North West Mamusa Team, Makeresemose Mampe, thanks WOF for providing her and many other young women with work experience which has enabled her find more job opportunities.

Mampe was recruited in 2010 and served as a SHE representative.

“My roles were to act as a herbicide applicator, a First Aider and conduct fire awareness activities with my teams in the neighbouring communities,” she says.

As WOF prioritises a high level of physical fitness to ensure firefighters’ safety on the fireline, Mampe underwent regular fitness training with her team while working as a firefighter.

“Because I am physically fit – I can run 2.4km in less than 12 minutes and can do more than 60 sit-ups in under a minute – the Metro Police training was easy for me, which gave me an edge over other candidates.”

Mampe now works as a Metro police officer in Cape Town. She thanks WOF and encourages the programme to keep decreasing the number of unemployed youth.

“I thank WOF for the work experience and the skills instilled in me. WOF enabled me to provide for my family and motivated me to dream big and always find ways to uplift myself.



Makeresemose Mampe in her Metro Police uniform

“To all firefighters, if I did it then you can too. Aim for better living and never give up because you all have what it takes. WOF has equipped us with much more than skills,” she says.



Lulama Mabhe has earned her security and learner’s licences