



A big thank you to all our partners and stakeholders

As we are wrapping up the 2017 winter fire season, we would like to use this platform to convey our heartfelt gratitude to government departments, Fire Protection Associations (FPAs), landowners, members of the public and our heroes – the firefighters across the country – for their commitment and overwhelming support throughout this season.

It was not an easy one but, through collaborative efforts, we managed to limit the personal and economic negative effects that result from unwanted veld and forest fires.

Throughout the winter fire season, we have shared our journey with you, our readers and loyal supporters, in this newsletter and on our social media pages (Facebook and Twitter).

On behalf of our participants, with love, we thank you!

Thank for your engagement on our social media platforms, for the loud cheers and warm regards when you encounter our fire heroes on the streets in their yellow uniforms. Thank you for the words of encouragement and the support you showed during the devastating Knysna fires in June.

As this winter fire season closes, we spare a thought the Western Cape, whose summer fire season is just beginning.



Deputy President praises firefighters for excellent service to country



Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa addresses delegates and EPWP participants during the interactive session

During a Public Employment Programme–Inter-Ministerial Committee (PEP-IMC) tour to Thaba 'Nchu in the Free State on 13 October 2017, the Deputy President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, expressed his gratitude towards the firefighters from Working on Fire for serving the country in such an excellent manner.

He commended the firefighters for the discipline and high fitness levels visible in their work. "The international community knows about South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), of which the Working on Fire programme forms part. It is internationally recognised and thus a very important programme," said the Deputy President.

He said that the EPWP aims to uplift participants – mostly unemployed young people – and equip them with skills that will

make them more employable in the private sector. The Deputy President highlighted how EPWPs such as the Community Work Programmes and the Working on Fire programme, are touching and changing people's lives.

Deputy President Ramaphosa, who leads the PEP-IMC structure, was accompanied by several Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers and members of the PEP-IMC, including senior government leaders.

The aim of the tour was to highlight the contributions these programmes make to the socio-economic development of communities in the province.



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Western Cape prepares communities for fire season

The Western Cape officially launched the Provincial Fire Awareness Campaign on 27 October 2017 at the Hornlee Community Hall in Knysna.

More than 400 community members, WOF management and staff, learners from the Fraaisig Primary School, the Mayor and officials from the Knysna Municipality, and representatives of South African National Parks, Stellenbosch Municipality, the Southern Cape FPA and a host of community organisations were present at the launch.

Speaking at the event, the Managing Director for the Working on Fire programme, Trevor Abrahams said, "The value of fire awareness and fire safe preparation around dwellings cannot be over-emphasised. For this fire awareness campaign launch we focus on fire awareness initiatives in schools and communities, which have reached more than two million people over the past five years."



Over the next few weeks, firefighters and various partners and stakeholders will conduct fire awareness activities at schools and conduct door-to-door campaigns.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Editorial

Welcome to our October Newsletter and thank you for taking the time to read our latest edition. In a month full of highlights one of our proudest was when the Deputy President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, acknowledged Working on Fire as an internationally recognised Expanded Public Works Programme, during his visit to EPWPs in Thaba’ Nchu, Free State.

Working on Fire joined people all over the world as they observed International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) and acknowledged the role played by fires in disasters.

Earlier this month we celebrated World Teachers Day. Working on Fire participants equipped educators from early childhood development centres with fire safety tips when they conducted fire awareness workshops throughout the country.

You will also read about how WOF Social Development Practitioners hosted various workshops that focus on the wellness and holistic development of our participants and how participants are living the Working on Fire value of ‘making a difference’ in their communities.

This month WOF celebrated 14 years of Integrated Fire Management services and one of the participants who has been with the programme since its inception in 2003 shares fond memories while a Regional Manager continues to make notable strides in the programme.

Lastly, we wish the 13 High Altitude Team Crew Leaders who recently graduated at the academy all the best in their new roles.

Happy Reading.

MD Message: ‘Living the Values’

Trevor Abrahams



As a follow-up to my message last month about the successes we have thus far achieved with our ‘Back to Basics’ campaign, I am happy to report that we have now settled all of the outstanding public holiday payments with our October pay run.

I am also glad to note that many of our provinces participated in various International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) events throughout the country, which were aimed at reducing disaster risks in communities. These events are at the core of what we do at Working on Fire to assist communities to reduce their fire risks.

This month I want to briefly talk to you about the importance of understanding and living the Working on Fire values of the **A-Team**:

Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability and Making a Difference.

Accountability cuts across our entire Working on Fire programme, from the MD right down to our firefighters, wherein we ensure that all of us remain accountable for what we are expected to do in our work, whether it is firefighting, fire prevention or managing the programme.

Teamwork is essential in what we do in Working on Fire, whether it be managing the programme in terms of serving our participants or our firefighters’ activities on the fire line.

Excellence encompasses how we perform and excel even above and beyond our standards and encompasses how we conduct ourselves in all facets of our work.

Making a Difference is probably our most important value, that drives us as we seek to change the lives of our firefighters, management and the communities that we serve and protect.

These values are important as we grow Working on Fire while developing our participants and making a significant contribution to protecting our environment in communities across South Africa.

Love for nature led Pieter

Pieter van der Merwe was born on 4 December 1957 in Pretoria and grew up in the small mining town of Phalaborwa in Limpopo, where his father worked at the local mining company.

He competed in athletics, rugby, cricket and squash at school, completing his schooling at Frans du Toit High School in 1975.

His initial ambition was to become a veterinary surgeon and work in the Kruger National Park, but instead he completed a BSc Forestry/Nature Conservation degree at the University of Stellenbosch, where he went on to obtain a BSc Forestry honours degree.

He played rugby and achieved WP and University colours in the javelin throw during his studies.

Pieter had to report for two years’ compulsory military training in January 1981 and was enlisted in the airforce. Due to his tertiary education he was seconded to the nature conservation section of the military and worked with a team to compile conservation policies and management plans for military bases in the Western Cape.

Pieter has spent most of his professional career working in management in the



forestry sector. This include stints at the then Department of Forestry in the 1980s, SAPPI in Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, Usutu Pulp Company in Swaziland, York Timbers and at Working on Fire.

He joined Working on Fire in 2006 as National Ground Operations Manager and served as Managing Director between 2010 and 2011.

In a career of many highlights, Pieter:

- chaired the Zululand Fire Protection Association for three years.
- managed the first Sappi Forestry Unit to achieve a 5-Star standard in safety and environmental conservation.
- managed the first Sappi Forestry Unit to be presented with the Wildlife Conservation Floating Trophy (1991 and 1992).
- was presented with both Sappi Group Directors’ Floating Trophies for safety and achievements during 1992.
- Was runner-up at the Sappi SA Annual Excellence Achievement Awards in 1998.

Pieter is a family man and is happily married to Liza. They have two daughters and a son.

Pieter says, “I love sport and am a keen follower of rugby, cricket, hockey, athletics and golf. In my spare time I do gardening, bow shooting and love fishing and hunting. I spend most of my free time with my family.”

MD visits KZN as part of the ‘Back to Basics’ campaign



Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, recently visited KwaZulu-Natal to engage provincial staff and firefighters in reaffirming their collective commitment to the ‘Back to Basics’ campaign.

During the past months there have been significant strides towards bringing stability within the organisation. Abrahams encouraged KZN staff to dedicate themselves to the core values of the organisation, namely accountability, teamwork, excellence, adaptability and making a difference.

“We can only grow our organisation if we stay true to these values in our work and

private lives and there is a lot management can learn from teams,” said Abrahams.

The firefighters appreciated the opportunity to ask the MD questions about ‘Back to Basics’.

Richmond driver Sibusiso Mbhele said one of his favourite values was teamwork. “To me, it highlighted the importance of every department and every employee working together to achieve one goal, from firefighter level to senior level.”



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

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) [YouTube](#)

Environmental Affairs
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Co-operative Governance
Water and Sanitation

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

EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

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.

Living the Working on Fire values is the number one priority



Working on Fire Executive members, General Managers and Heads of Departments at the Senior Management Workshop in Mbombela, Mpumalanga

Living the Working on Fire values of Accountability, Adaptability, Teamwork, Excellence and Making a Difference in the lives of our firefighters and those communities and landowners whom we serve remains our number one priority.

This was the overwhelming message that came out of the recently concluded Senior Management meeting of Working on Fire, which was attended by Heads of Departments and General Managers from the programme.

Managing Director Trevor Abrahams told the meeting that everyone in Working on Fire, from management down to our participants, needs to understand these values and use them to benchmark their daily tasks to ensure that the programme saves lives, protects our environment and restores the dignity of our participants.

"Whether you are a Manager, a Crew Leader, a Base Manager or a firefighter, living the Working on Fire values must be an integral part of your daily tasks," said Abrahams.

Much of the focus of the two-day meeting was on the Standardisation Processes and Back to Basics workshops that have been rolled out in the provinces.

Written by: Editorial team

Living the values and making a difference

The Maropeng Team, based on the West Rand in Gauteng, received high praise from the Mogale City Municipality for assisting communities in this town to rebuild homes destroyed by a tornado recently.

Ward Councillor Victor Molefe said in a statement that the Maropeng Team had made a huge difference in the lives of the informal community in Orient Hills.

"You brought hope back to the community after they lost almost everything in the heavy storm. Your contribution has not gone unnoticed and we would like to thank you for your help," Molefe said.

The initiative to improve the lives of the residents and communities that were affected by the tornado in Mogale City is a clear example of how the Maropeng Team has lived the Working on Fire value of 'Making a Difference'.

Well done to the Maropeng Team!!!



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Pledge to reduce disaster risks in communities

On 13 October, Working on Fire joined stakeholders throughout the country to mark International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR). On this important day, stakeholders commit themselves to work together and significantly reduce disaster risks in communities.

This day was initiated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 to promote a global culture of risk awareness and disaster reduction.

Working on Fire participated in one of these events in Durban where those present also pledged to reduce the number of people exposed to, or displaced by, disasters.

A representative at the Durban event of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Julius Kabubi said, "This year the aim is to start reducing the number of people affected by disasters."

The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Des van Rooyen, acknowledged the commitments by the Cities of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg to adopt the United Nations 10 Essentials, which are part of their pledged statements.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal



Minister Des van Rooyen speaking at IDDR event



Life and legacy of **OR TAMBO.** **100 YEARS**

CELEBRATING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF O.R. TAMBO



Accountability.... Teamwork.... Excellence... Adaptability.... Making a Difference

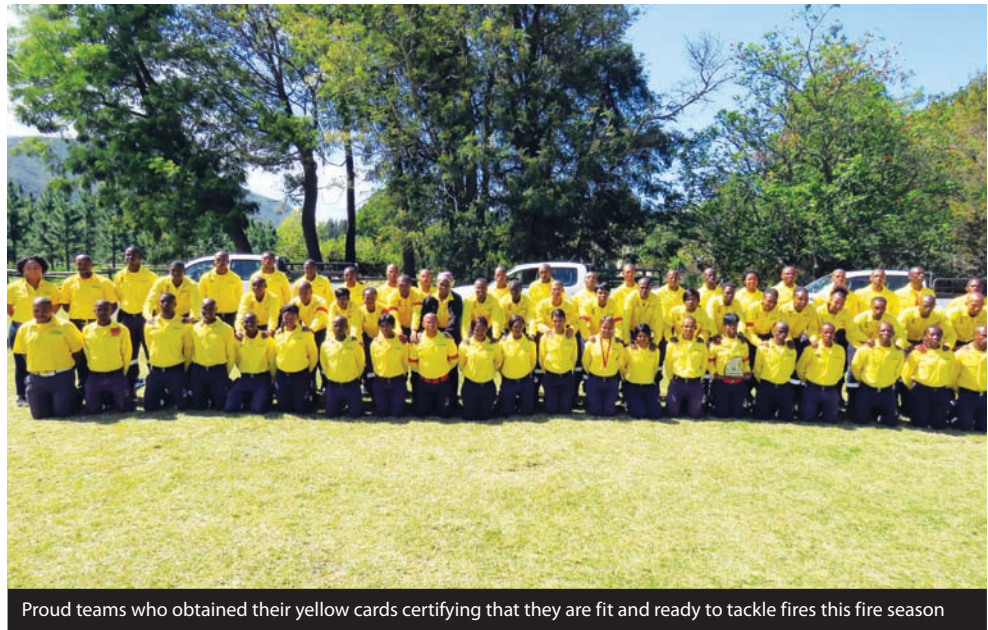
Today marks the Centenary of the late Oliver Reginald Tambo, who was born on this day, the 27th October 1917 in Mbizana in the Eastern Cape. Oliver Tambo was an exceptional leader who believed that you need to be Accountable for your actions and that you need to strive towards achieving common goals through Teamwork. Furthermore, he wanted us to strive towards achieving Excellence in our work and that you needed to remain Adaptable in an everchanging environment.

However, most importantly, Oliver Tambo strongly believed that through your actions you needed to Make a Difference in the lives of communities.

Working on Fire is proud to be associated with these values of Oliver Tambo which we also seek to emulate daily in the work that our participants do throughout the country.

Let us Remember these Values of Oliver Reginald Tambo.





Proud teams who obtained their yellow cards certifying that they are fit and ready to tackle fires this fire season

Western District in Eastern Cape - Ready for fire season

More than 160 firefighters from nine Working on Fire teams in the western part of the Eastern Cape recently attended the week-long yellow card assessment held in Witelsbos.

According to WOF Eastern Cape Assistant General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, the objective of the Yellow Card Training Camp was to issue competency cards to all the participants able to pass the required fitness test and examinations.

“The teams were assessed on their readiness by testing to see if they were mentally and physically fit to face fires during the fire season,” Dyantyi says.

Dyantyi says that the yellow card training is

also a good opportunity for the participants to refresh firefighting skills.

The Eastern Cape has two fire seasons. The winter fire season runs from May to October in the eastern part of the province and the summer fire season starts in December in the western part of the province.

During the yellow card assessment, all firefighters had to work hard to obtain their yellow cards and pass the fitness tests which included a 2.4km run, push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups as well as passing through a fire wall.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Educating the community about fire disasters

International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) is celebrated around the world on 13 October every year. The objective is to educate the public about the disaster risks and to increase awareness of the importance of risk reduction.

This year WOF partnered with various municipalities to host campaigns in the communities as part of the build-up towards the main district event which was held on 18 October.

During the build-up campaign, WOF fire awareness facilitator, Kgwadi Kgamane, conducted a presentation about wildfires and

disasters and educated community members about the impact of wildfires.

“Every year people lose their incomes as a result of job losses due to the wildfires. In most cases you’ll find that if there were knowledge and education, some of these wildfires wouldn’t even happen,” says Kgamane.

Kgamane also shared fire safety tips with the community members and highlighted everyone’s responsibility to prevent wildfires from occurring.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Kgwadi Kgamane conducting a presentation for community members during the IDDR build-up campaign at Aganang



Working on Fire in the Western Cape had a round table discussion with fire authority representatives from the City of Cape Town, Cape Nature, Overberg Municipality, Greater Overberg FPA and the Provincial Disaster Management Centre, sharing available resources and their preparations for the coming fire season.

The Provincial Fire Workgroup meeting was held at the Provincial Disaster Management Centre in Tygerberg.

Western Cape Provincial Fire Work Group

International Day for Disaster Reduction in the Western Cape

In marking International Disaster Risk Reduction Day, Working on Fire (WOF) Western Cape Teams attended events in various municipalities across the Western Cape.

The Jonkershoek Team and the Jonkershoek High Altitude Team participated in the Sandringham Farm Awareness Campaign in the build-up to International Disaster Risk Reduction Day. 1 300 learners from surrounding farms and conservation land attended several fire awareness sessions with all stakeholders involved in safety and emergency response to communities.

The Limietberg Team attended an outreach programme at the Thusong Centre in Wellington.

Fire Awareness Training Officer Rudi Lucas says, “The team interacted well with community members and stakeholders. The team informed event participants about being fire safe in and around their homes, and proudly explained what the Department of Environmental Affairs Working on Fire programme was. The day was a huge success and the Thusong Coordinator gave us an excellent review for our participation at the outreach programme.”



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Firefighters sharpen skills at camp



The Limietberg, Helderberg and Tulbagh Teams at the YCT Camp in Bredasdorp.

Working on Fire Western Cape has been hard at work preparing its participants for the 2017/18 veld fire season.

“With an overall 90% pass rate received at our annual Yellow Card Training, I am confident that we are ready for the coming fire season.

Over the past two years, the Western Cape participants assisted various landowners, Fire Protection Associations and local fire authorities in suppressing close to 500 fires across the province.

With all measures put in place leading up to the summer fire season, together with the support of our partners and stakeholders, we will be on high alert during the coming fire season,”

says WC Acting General Manager Felicia Ngwasheng.

Before being deployed across the province, just over 700 participants stationed at 28 bases in the province underwent a Yellow Card Training Camp from 26 September to 6 October, to refresh their firefighting skills and test their physical and mental fitness in preparation for the coming fire season.

The 2017/18 veld fire season officially starts on 1 December 2017 and will continue to the end of April 2018.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Jonkershoek Team members educate learners about fire safety to reduce fire disasters

Educators equipped with fire safe techniques



Thirty early childhood development (ECD) educators from the Eastern Cape were equipped with fire safe techniques during the early childhood development workshop presented by Working on Fire's (WOF) Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans.

The workshop was part of WOF's integrated fire management strategy for protecting the environment which includes fire prevention, suppression and fire awareness. The workshop was held in Amalinda last month. Hans says the objective was to teach the educators how to be fire safe so that they could go back to their centres and implement what they learnt and practice with the learners.

"It is by means of them practising fire drills and understanding fire escape plans that we will

ensure that the children understand those as well," Hans says.

He says that educators must identify fire risks at their centres and come up with plans to mitigate those risks to ensure their learners' safety.

"Educators must also demonstrate crawling low under the smoke and ensure that children are able to master it as it will help them in case there is fire," says Hans.

One of the educators, Thokozile Manese from Uzukenyangweni Daycare in Mdantsane, saluted WOF for the workshop saying that what they had learned will aid them at their centres and in their communities.

Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

SANDF officials receive FireSafe workshops



Despite the winter fire season nearing its end, Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO) in Mpumalanga, Mbuso Siwela, continues to work tirelessly to raise fire safety awareness throughout the province.

Besides conducting FireSafe workshops in fire-prone communities, Siwela visited the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) camps on a weekly basis throughout the month of September and October, to provide fire safety tips to military personnel.

According to Siwela, the weekly visits were at the invitation of the SANDF.

"WOF in Mpumalanga has an exceptional working relationship with the SANDF that spans over three years. After receiving their invitation, I rolled up my sleeves and rose to the occasion," says Siwela.

Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

ECD educators taught fire fundamentals



Fire Awareness Officers held a workshop to teach early childhood development (ECD) teachers in the Botshabelo area of the Free State about the fundamentals of fire, how fires are started, how to extinguish different types of fires, the different sources that can fuel a fire and how to successfully evacuate during a fire.

Working on Fire has been rolling out FireSafe workshops to ECD centres across the country. The workshops educate and empower teachers to understand and identify fire risks in and around their schools. Teachers are also taught

how to conduct their own FireSafe workshops with the children at their schools.

Free State Fire Awareness Training Officer Tommy Mokoena says, "We hosted our early childhood development workshop in Botshabelo. We invited various teachers that work in the area and taught them about fire safety inside and outside the house. We expect them to implement what we have taught them."

Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

KZN hosts early childhood development workshop



KwaZulu-Natal Working on Fire Communications Cluster, in partnership with the KZN Department of Social Development, has conducted the Early Childhood Workshop for educators in the uMngeni Municipality in Howick.

The aim of the workshop was to create communities that are fire resilient by educating communities and schools, using CAPS-aligned lesson plans.

KZN Community Fire Awareness Officer Makhosi Dladla says, "It's imperative for educators to be fire safe as fires can occur at schools. We discussed the importance of an evacuation plan and having fire extinguishers at their centres."

The workshop covered understanding the Fire Danger Index, impact of fires, fire risk assessment, fire management plan and what to do in case of a fire at their school.

"Educators were very engaging during the workshop and eager to invite our firefighters to their schools. There are people who do not even know how to use a fire extinguisher or know the contact details of emergency services, which can be the deciding factor between life and death in an emergency," says Dladla.

Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Educating the community to be fire safe

Working on Fire Limpopo conducted a FireSafe workshop for the community of Makgodu in the Moletjie area outside Polokwane. The objective of the workshop was to equip the community members with the skills to identify fire risks at their homes. Part of the workshop involved coming up with evacuation plans for their households.

Every year the country loses lives due to the fires that occur in the communities, most of them in the informal settlements. Most of these fires are caused by negligence and lack of knowledge and some people end up causing wildfires which destroy thousands of hectares of vegetation.

"By educating these community members we ensure that the knowledge and education will reach more people and will impact positively on our society," says Kgwadi Kgamane, the Fire Awareness Facilitator.



Community members doing a risk assessment exercise at Makgodu in Moletjie during the community fire safety workshop

Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

KZN SDP conducts Financial Intelligence Workshop at Shongweni

As part of the outreach to participants’ kids, Hloniphile Ndlovu, Social Development Practitioner in KZN, arranged a WOF Kids Workshop on Financial Mangemnet and Savings with the Shongweni Team.

“The aim of the workshop was to encourage participants to teach their children about finance and money skills and to instil this further, a session was held with children of Shongweni firefighters” said Ndlovu

The sessions are about sharing money skills to children, helping them to understand money and each child then receives a money tin/box

with a task to save some of his or her pocket money. In December the SDP will meet with the children to follow-up and evaluate success of the project.

“The session is done with the parents as they have to monitor their children , this is a long-term project, but all parties involved are excited” added Ndlovu.

The SDP plans conduct more outreach projects with firefighters children in the future.



Workshops conducted to improve teamwork



Loskop Team members attending the interpersonal relations workshop

The Social Development Practitioner in Mpumalanga, Condrick Mukhudwani, recently visited the Loskop and Sterkspruit teams to conduct workshops focusing on the importance of maintaining good and healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

According to Mukhudwani, the workshops were aimed at strengthening employee relations at base level, as this would enhance productivity at work.

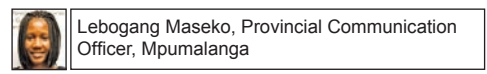
Participants were encouraged to work in groups, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining good working relationships.

Loskop Base Communications Representative Bongani Mthimunye says the workshop was

important because firefighting required a great deal of teamwork.

“I am pleased that our team had a chance to attend the workshop. In a way, it helped us reflect more about how we can improve how we work and communicate with each other,” says Mthimunye.

Mathews Mthimunye, senior Crew Leader at Sterkspruit says, “My team and I also learned a lot from the workshop and we will be implementing some of the things on a daily basis, such as improving how we communicate with each other.”



Cancer Awareness Month

Working on Fire Social Development Practitioners from the Eastern Cape have conducted cancer awareness talks with teams in the province since the start of October.

According to the SDP in the western part of the province, Siphokazi Jack, these workshops were presented because October is Breast Cancer Awareness month.

Team members were taught about the causes, types and signs of cancer as well as how to screen themselves for breast cancer.

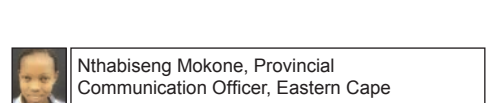
Jack says people should know the signs of cancer so that they can be treated in time if they are diagnosed with the disease.

WOF provincial staff received an educational awareness presentation from CANSA representative, Nonvuyo Gqibitole. The staff were informed about the factors that contribute to causing cancer and discovered that 90% of cancer was a result of environmental factors while 10% was gene-based.



Addo Team show Pink balloons in support of Cancer Awareness Activities

The SDPs also conducted workshops at bases on conflict management, communication and work ethics. The main objective of these workshops was to equip the teams with skills to enable them to deal with daily life situations at work and at their homes.



WOF promotes cancer awareness



As part of Working on Fire’s employee health and wellness programme, the City of Johannesburg health department facilitated a cancer awareness workshop with provincial management.

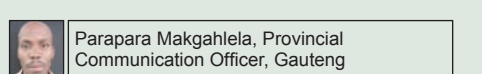
Social Development Officer Sabelo Buthelezi says the aim was to raise awareness about breast cancer and other types of cancer.

“We were in Breast Cancer Awareness month, therefore it was imperative that we educate our employees about this disease,” he says.

Breast cancer remains a threat to women’s health and lives and other cancers posed a

serious threat to wellbeing of both men and women, said nurse Leah Morumudi.

“With knowledge, people can best act if confronted with breast cancer or other cancers. I am glad our engagement with staff here was quite frank as it meant the message arrived home,” she said after the workshop. WOF staff were also screened for high blood pressure, diabetes and HIV/AIDS.



Mental health awareness workshop for Limpopo participants

The month of October is regarded as mental health awareness month with World Mental Health Day marked on 10 October every year.

To raise awareness this month, WOF Limpopo’s Provincial Social Development Practitioner (SDP) conducted workshops at the bases to educate WOF participants about living with people who are intellectually challenged.

“The main objective was to inform and educate the colleagues about mental health. Much of the focus was on educating people not to discriminate against those who are primary victims and their families,” says Provincial SDP Michael Ramatsea.

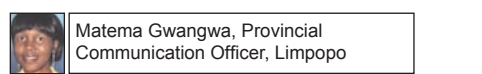
Ramatsea also emphasises that we should not only take good care of the intellectually challenged when it suits or benefit us, but instead they should be loved and nurtured all the time. Many intellectually challenged people are abused by their families and used as a source of income (through disability grants).

“Through awareness we hope to make a change in our society and to encourage the



Molemole participants lend an ear to the Social Development Practitioner during the mental health awareness workshop

community to work together in taking care of these intellectually challenged people as they didn’t choose to be the way they are,” says Ramatsea.



Ficksburg Team supports cancer awareness

The Working on Fire Ficksburg team recently participated in Relay For Life, a unique event hosted by the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), and the largest cancer engagement and fundraising activity in the world!

The team supported the initiative by walking around a track for an entire night. The event which was held in Ficksburg to create awareness about cancer and its devastating effects on society.

The Relay For Life not only offers communities the opportunity to participate in the fight against cancer, but it commemorates those lost to cancer,

while representing the hope that those who are fighting cancer will be supported and that one day cancer will be eliminated.

Ficksburg Base Communications Representative Mphatswe Motete says, "It was really a privilege for our team to participate in the relay. Our team's fitness level is high and this enabled us to complete the 12-hour relay."



Wayne Mokheithi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



Samuel Mmolotsi

Emerging farmer has big plans

As part of his concerted effort to break the cycle of poverty in his family, Samuel Mmolotsi, a firefighter at De Wildt Base, has become a livestock farmer. Two years ago, he bought one cow with his stipend.

Mmolotsi says, "I now have six cows and intend buying more. Farming is not easy but once it takes off dividends can be very good. I saw opportunity in farming. I'm ready to face the challenges and storms ahead."

Mmolotsi, who wants to become one of the leading red meat producers in this country, says he intends running a feedlot in the future.

He is a member of the National Emerging Red Meat Producers Organisation (NERPO), an

organisation that he says helps emerging farmers with funding and technical advice.

Mmolotsi made contact with various successful commercial farmers in De Wildt through the Working on Fire programme who inspired him.

"These farmers helped me secure a plot I can lease and kick-start the feedlot project. It was not easy at all but I have determination to succeed. As young people, we need to commit to doing things for ourselves," says Mmolotsi. "More youngsters look down on farming but the agricultural sector continues to create more seasonal jobs."



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

KZN Maguzi Team assists elderly resident to build her home

As part of their Mandela Day initiative, the KwaZulu-Natal Maguzi Team decided to support an elderly local resident living in a mud house who desperately needed a new home. The team decided to build her a one-room brick home.

Maguzi Type 1 Crew Leader Patrick Gumede says, "As the Manguzi Team we committed ourselves to the project of building a house for a disadvantaged old lady who lives by herself, a widow who's not receiving any grant within the Manguzi community."

The team received R800 for Mandela Day activities with which it bought 10 bags of cement, and the firefighters then added R130

each from their own pockets to start building the house. They plan to complete it before the end of the winter fire season.

The Maguzi building project received R825 donated by the Exco, GMs, AGMs and HODs from the Working on Fire head office and the team needs about R2 000 to finish the project.

"We've identified more homes and people that we would love to assist and we hope to assist them one project at a time, as we are also part of the community and want to make a difference," says Gumede.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal



The unfinished home of the elderly beneficiary

Aganang participants help hospital prevent flood damage



WOF Aganang participants assisted the Knobel Hospital personnel to remove the water in the wards after the heavy rains

The Aganang Team responded to the call of duty at WF Knobel Hospital in Aganang Municipality, where they assisted the hospital to remove water that flooded the hospital during the recent heavy rains that were experienced in the province.

"Our responsibility is not only responding to fires or implementing integrated fire management. We also save lives and restore dignity to the communities that we operate in," says Elliot Mokobodi, the Base Communications Representative at Aganang Base in Limpopo.

"We worked very hard with the hospital personnel to prevent the flood water from causing damage to the hospital. We worked as a team and managed to clear the water inside the theatre department," says Mokobodi.

The team's intervention limited damage to the property and risk to the patient wards.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Celebrating 14 years of service



The Working on Fire programme celebrated its 14th anniversary this October. Khomotso Moagi, who is now a Ground Operations Manager (GOM) in Gauteng, is a veteran participant in the programme.

Moagi, who hails from Bushbuckridge, recalls that when she was recruited into the second established Graskop Base on 6 October 2003, there were no Crew Leaders.

She attended the Type 2 Crew Leader course in February 2004 and the Type 1 Crew Leader course in 2005.

"I remember, we were four females and 11 males attending the course," says Moagi.

The GOM recalls how her team used taxis to attend fire calls in the beginning. "I can assure you that there were no fatalities," she notes wryly.

At that time, there were only teams in Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Participants attended firefighting training at the base which lasted for two days.

Moagi says, "We used to be trained by ex-soldiers in how to do drilling and basic fitness exercises."

She never thought then that one day WOF would be a national programme celebrating its 14th birthday.

Rising through the ranks, she was promoted to training manager at the academy. There, Moagi says her role was to train new recruits to become firefighters and Crew Leaders. It was through hard work and dedication that Moagi rose to her current position.

Talking about the recruitment of female parolees into the programme, Moagi says the initiative was quite close to her heart as it fulfilled the poverty alleviation mandate of the programme. She says it was good to work with ex-offenders.

HAT participants graduate as Crew Leaders



Thirteen High Altitude Team (HAT) participants successfully completed the 26-day Crew Leadership Training programme at the Nelspruit Training Academy on 27 September 2017.

Based in the Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, the newly appointed Crew Leaders were trained on invasive plant control, environmental first aid, dispatch protocol and transport management, among other aspects.

Addressing participants, HAT General Manager Dave Williams said he was impressed with the calibre of leaders the Training Academy continued to produce.

Williams said the Crew Leaders should "take the baton and run with it. Go back to your teams and implement all that you have learnt here."

He said he was immensely proud of the discipline HAT Crew Leaders conveyed and congratulated them on their new journey.




Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

"I have seen this programme touching and changing lives of young people positively, including myself," she says.

"I have been overseas through this programme. I am privileged to have been part of this successful flagship government programme," Moagi says, adding that working at WOF was her first formal employment.

Happy birthday WOF!



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Participant shows the value of poverty alleviation programmes

Statistics South Africa recently released a Poverty Trends report showing that the number of people living in extreme poverty increased to nearly 14 million between 2011 and 2015. The report revealed that the people most vulnerable to poverty in our society are children aged 17 or younger, females, black Africans and people living in rural areas, as well as persons with little or no education.

These findings confirm the value of the Working on Fire (WOF) programme, which continues to provide skills, training and employment opportunities to young men and women in disadvantaged communities, to alleviate poverty.

Twenty-seven-year-old Welcome Motha is an excellent example of the impact of the programme.

Born and bred in Barberton just outside Nelspruit, Motha joined WOF in 2010 as a firefighter and has since worked up the ranks to where he now works as a Regional Manager in Mpumalanga. Motha says he found out about the programme by chance.

"After I passed my Grade 12 with flying colours, I applied for registration at the University of Limpopo. I planned on enrolling for a qualification in an education-related field," he says.

"When I received the acceptance letter, I knew I was well on my way out of poverty. I promised myself that I would work hard to break the devastating cycle of poverty and make my parents proud of me," says Motha.

But due to financial constraints, Mothawas not able to commence studying. Although he was unemployed for three years after passing Grade 12, this did not deter him and he held onto the hope that his day would come.

"I remember my mother telling me there was a community meeting and I should attend to find out what it was about. When I got there, I saw WOF firefighters conducting a door-to-door fire awareness activity. I immediately knew WOF was a programme I wanted to work for," he says.

"It was the discipline and teamwork they conveyed that made me want to know more about the programme."

Shortly after he found out that the programme was training young men and women as community volunteers to provide firefighting services, he volunteered. "Little did I know that it would be my breakthrough," he says smiling. "From the firefighting level, I am now responsible for managing three teams of about 75 firefighters in my province."



Motha says that apart from the material gains he has been able to achieve over the years, WOF enabled him to realise his dream of studying, as he registered with Intec College and is about to receive his project management certificate. The father of three daughters has also expressed his commitment to education by investing money towards educating his children.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

