



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

DISASTER REDUCTION DAY

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SHE BUILT A HOUSE FOR HER PARENTS

▶▶ PAGE 6



TOUGHEST FIREFIGHTER CHAMPS

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Firefighters to remain on high alert

Despite the fact that all indications are that this current winter fire season has been one of the best in terms of a reduction in the number of veld and forest fires as recorded by Working on Fire, all provincial teams will continue to remain on high alert over the next month. Participants in the Eastern Cape, North West, Gauteng,

Mpumalanga and Limpopo were kept busy in the first half of October as they battled several fires while working closely with landowners, Fire Protection Associations and Disaster Management Centres.

On 8 October five teams battled to suppress the Langeni Forest fire in the Eastern Cape and

they had to work around the clock to bring it under control.

With the Gauteng fire season nearing its end, the Vaal Marina Team successfully extinguished a raging fire in Vaal Marina, working with the structural firefighters from the Meyerton Fire Department to bring this

fire under control. One thatched roof house was burnt. And in North West the Castello Team was dispatched to suppress a fire at Syferfontein in Vanderbijlpark which burnt 10 hectares of grassland.

Written by Editorial Team



Castello Team hard at work suppressing a fire



A fire in the Eastern Cape was quickly brought under control by our firefighters



Cradle of Humankind Team on the frontlines of raging flames in Krugersdorp



Eastern Cape firefighters on the fire line at a recent fire



Live To Tell Campaign: Raising Awareness and Reducing Mortality

The International Day for Disaster Reduction was founded in 1989, after a call by the United Nations General Assembly for a day to promote a global culture of risk awareness and disaster reduction. Held annually on 13 October, the day highlights how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in the risks that they face. The day provides an advocacy platform for all governments, local governments, disaster

management agencies, UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, civil society groups, businesses, academic and scientific institutions, and other interested groups, to demonstrate support for the implementation of disaster risk reduction and life-saving measures.

Working on Fire partnered with various provincial and local authorities, stakeholders, as well as communities to commemorate this important day.

Editorial

Dear Readers

In our October edition of WOFire News we report on our firefighters' participation in several events commemorating International Day for Disaster Reduction, with the theme being 'Live to Tell'.

We feature fires in different provinces that have been effectively suppressed by our teams without damage to property or loss of life.

Our participants tell their stories about how the programme has helped them fulfil their dreams, whether it's building a beautiful home for their families or furthering their studies. We also feature the launch of the Western Cape Fire Awareness Campaign in preparation for the upcoming summer fire season.

We dedicate this edition of WoFire News to all our unsung heroes.

Happy reading!

MD Message

Llewellyn Pillay



Since my last message we have experienced a number of fires in Limpopo. However, we were able to mobilise resources from our ground crews in Limpopo.

We received high praise from landowners for bringing these fires under control and I want to commend the provincial management team and participants in Limpopo for having done an excellent job during these fires.

We are now at the end of the winter fire season and from all accounts this has been a very successful year for us as we have seen a significant drop in reported veld and forest fires. This can be attributed to our Fire Awareness teams who educate our communities about fires. Our teams have also been working with landowners to put in place fire prevention measures.

I urge all our participants to remain vigilant over the next month or so as our country is experiencing a severe drought in several provinces which may exacerbate the prevalence of runaway veldfires.

As the Western Cape gears up for its summer fire season with the launch of the Fire Awareness Campaign early this month, I urge all firefighters to adhere to our occupational health and safety policies as safety remains our number one priority.

In conclusion, let me thank all of you for having participated in the International Day for Disaster Reduction activities throughout the country. We are proud that our integrated fire management activities throughout the year contributed significantly to disaster risk reduction across South Africa.

Introduction of Editorial Team

Editor-in-chief

Linton Rensburg
Cell: 082 508 0990
Email: linton.rensburg@wofire.co.za
National Communications Manager

Deputy Editor

Olwethu Mpeshe
Cell: 073 847 3291
Email: olwethu.mpeshe@wofire.co.za
Communications Coordinator

Parapara Makgahlela
Cell: 073 871 9350
Email: parapara.makgahlela@wofire.co.za
Province: Gauteng

Matema Gwangwa
Cell: 073 732 1344 • Fax: 086 569 7419
Email: matema.gwangwa@wofire.co.za
Province: Limpopo

Nthabiseng Mokone
Cell: 073 831 5936
Email: nthabiseng.mokone@wofire.co.za
Province: Eastern Cape

Nompilo Zondi
Cell: 073 775 6465 / 082 570 1572
Email: nompilo.zondi@wofire.co.za
Province: KwaZulu-Natal

Patricia Maanelo
Cell: 079 035 5732 • Tel: +27 18 290 8512
Email: patricia.maanelo@wofire.co.za
Province: North West

Lauren Howard
Cell: 071 115 5843 • Tel: 021 761 1992
Email: lauren.howard@wofire.co.za
Province: Western Cape

Wayne Mokhethi
Cell: 073 894 7689
Email: wayne.mokhethi@wofire.co.za
Province: Free State

Lebogang Maseko
Cell: 062 365 9978
Email: lebogang.maseko@wofire.co.za
Province: Mpumalanga

WOF TV Unit

Christalene de Kella
Lead Video Journalist
Cell: 082 767 7489 • Fax: 086 519 7554
Email: christalene.dekella@wofire.co.za

Siyabonga Duma
Video Journalist
Cell - 082 255 8571
Email - siyabonga.duma@wofire.co.za

Rethabile Selepe
Video Journalist
Cell - 072 722 3149
Email - rethabile.selepe@wofire.co.za

Kylle Benjamin
Video Editor
kylle.benjamin@wofire.co.za

General contacts for WOFIRE NEWS

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

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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.

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

Sri Lankan Invasive Species Tour to South Africa

A group of Sri Lankan stakeholders involved in invasive species projects in their country recently undertook a tour of South Africa. They were hosted by the Department of

Environmental Affairs to learn more about how South Africa is dealing with invasive species. The delegation visited the Working on Fire Newlands base where they were briefed about

the successes of the WOF programme and the HAT Newlands Team did a demonstration on how they remove invasive species from mountainous terrain.



Visiting Sri Lankan delegation with participants from the Newlands Team



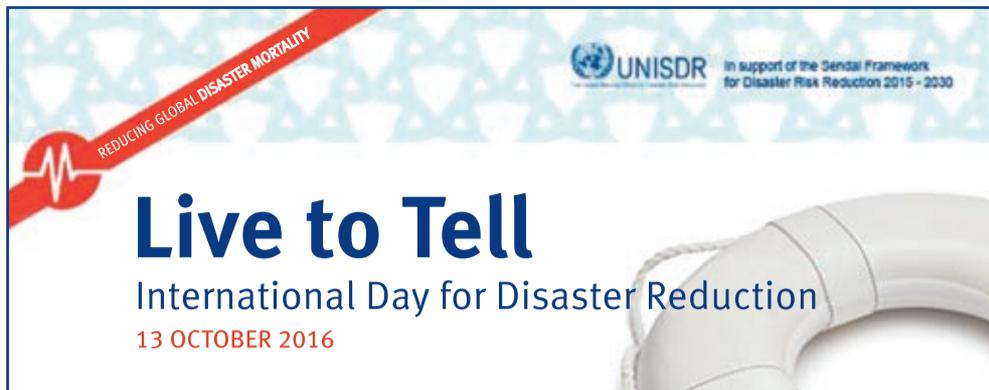
Delegates briefed about the the Lighthouse which has been made from woodchip cement fibre board



Susan Henn , HAT Regional Manager, briefing the delegates about the HAT programme

International Day for Disaster Reduction

Creating awareness on how communities can reduce disaster risks



Free State

This year, the Free State Provincial Disaster Management Centre hosted the IDDR event in the Kaiser Sebothela stadium in Botshabelo and invited various stakeholders to the event. These stakeholders included Working on Fire, Eskom, Centlec, Mangaung Fire and Rescue, Free State Emergency Medical Services, SAPS and Operation Khanyisa.

In the days leading up to the IDDR the Working on Fire Free State Communications Cluster held a fire awareness campaign in Botshabelo, which included a two-day fire awareness workshop with over 30 Botshabelo community members. The team also visited Batjha Primary School and Thari ya Tshepe Primary School to conduct fire safety presentations and assessments, teaching the learners how to identify fire risks and how to mitigate these risks in and around their home.



At the Working on Fire exhibition stall, members from the Bloemfontein Base, accompanied by the Free State Fire Awareness Training Officer and the Community Awareness Training Officer, showed visitors how to identify fire risks around their schools, homes and communities and how to protect their homes and properties from the impact of fire.



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Eastern Cape

In the Eastern Cape the IDDR was celebrated by Working on Fire in partnership with stakeholders such as Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Elundini Local Municipality, the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform, community members and school learners at Esiqhunqgwi Village last week.

Addressing the audience, Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans, explained that WOF prioritised the reduction of risks of fire disasters by implementing Integrated Fire Management strategies. Hans said Working on Fire educates communities and school learners around the

province on fire causes and fire prevention to help reduce fire disasters and keep people fire safe.

“Smokers must not throw cigarettes all over, children should not play with matches and people should not start fires on windy days as this may cause unwanted fires which may destroy property,” explained Hans.

He encouraged people to identify and minimise fire risks at home so that they can avoid unwanted fires.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Working on Fire participates in International Day for Disaster Reduction

North West

To mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR), the North West Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, the Fire Awareness Training Officer, Martha Tepo, and the Fire Awareness Facilitator attended the 2016 Provincial Women in Disaster Management event at the OR Tambo Community Hall on 7 October 2016. The objective of the day was to raise awareness of actions community members can take to reduce risks of disasters.

On the day community members were encouraged to get involved in activities that could reduce disaster risks, such as making sure

hazardous materials are kept in a safe place out of children’s reach. Residents were urged to stop making fires in risky areas where they could start a wildfire and damage property.

The North West Provincial Disaster Management Centre, in collaboration with the municipalities and other sector departments—including the Working on Fire programme—provide support to strengthen disaster risk reduction.



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Western Cape

Working on Fire Western Cape joined the Stellenbosch Municipality, Cape Winelands District, and the Western Cape: Provincial Disaster Management Centre, at the Klapmuts Sports Complex near Stellenbosch. The Limietberg and Stellenbosch High Altitude Team

performed a drill and conducted a Community Fire Awareness for more than 1400 learners from the Klapmuts Primary School.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Firefighters educating learners how to be FireSafe



Briefing participants about fire safety at IDDR event

Limpopo participants stretched fighting multiple fires across the province

More than 175 firefighters from WOF were dispatched to various fires over two days, supported by two choppers and two spotter planes which were dispatched by Letaba FPA. These firefighters were joined by local farmers, FPA members and the landowners.

The biggest fire occurred at Triangle just outside Tzaneen. This fire started on a Thursday morning and burned until the Saturday morning. It was totally contained after four teams, with two choppers and

one spotter plane, put in more hours and effort in suppressing it. After a long battle the teams managed to suppress all the fires. Due to the Fire Danger Index being high in the province, with Limpopo being one of the provinces that have been badly affected by drought, the fires become uncontrollable and spread rapidly as the grass is dry and burns easily.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



An aerial view of the fire that had WOF participants on their toes this fire season in Tzaneen



WOF participant suppressing one of the raging fires at Tzaneen in Limpopo

They are ready for the upcoming fire season

A Yellow Card training camp was held in Witelsbos for two weeks, attended by 112 firefighters from the eight teams in the West District of the Eastern Cape.

The Ground Operations Manager (GOM) for the West District, Mxoli Cabela, says the objective of the training camp was to issue competency cards to all the participants that passed the required fitness test and examinations.

"We assessed the readiness of the firefighters by testing their fitness in order to see if they are mentally and physically fit to face fires during the fire season," explains Cabela.

Cabela says that the Yellow Card training camp is a good opportunity for firefighters to refresh their firefighting skills as they get ready for the fire season.

"The Eastern Cape province has two fire seasons; the winter fire season that runs from May to October for the East District, and the summer fire season for the West District teams

that starts in December as it's closer to Southern Cape," he explains.

He says that all the firefighters worked very hard to obtain their yellow cards as they passed their 2.4km run, push-ups, sit-ups and pull-ups tests as well as passing through a fire wall.

Firefighters face very hot weather and heat while fighting fires and they need to be fit in order to survive such situations.

Londeka Blouw, a female firefighter from the Jansenville Team, says she was happy to get her yellow card because it qualified her to fight fires during fire season.

"The tests we went through during the Yellow Card training were very tough but through hard work and dedication we succeeded as a team," she explains.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



District firefighter attend the Yellow Card Training Camp



Western Cape prepares its firefighters

Working on Fire Western Cape has been hard at work as it prepares its participants for the 2016/17 summer fire season.

Just over 650 participants stationed at 28 bases within the province attended a Yellow Card training camp during 19–30 September

to refresh their firefighting skills and test their physical and mental fitness in preparation for the coming fire season. These participants have been deployed across the province to reduce the personal and economic harm caused by unwanted veld and forest fires.

This year, 131 High Altitude Team (HAT) participants from 12 teams across the Western Cape successfully completed a five-day refresher course at the Wolwekloof Training Academy. This training aimed to refresh their rope access skills as well as their knowledge on the clearing

of alien invasive plant species. The workshop focused on health and safety, team building, fitness as well as search and rescue.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Western Cape participants partake in various activities at the Yellow Card training camp



HAT teams completing their search and rescue refresher course

Newlands stack burn

In preparation for the 2016/17 Western Cape fire season, the Working on Fire Newlands Team, together with the Cape Peninsula Fire Protection Association and NCC Environmental Services, conducted a

stack burn along the Oudekraal property in the Bakoven-Camps Bay area.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Protecting the environment by eliminating invasive alien plants

A great deal of South Africa's water is used by plants that do not belong here. They are called "invasive alien" plants. These plants are invasive because they spread and displace our natural trees and plants. They have invaded large areas of good agricultural land and some of our most scenic areas.

Limpopo is one of the provinces that have been declared as one of the provinces that have been affected by drought. Due to the less rainfall the province has had, there has been a huge challenge of water for the people, plants and animals to survive on a daily basis. The Tzaneen High Altitude Team (HAT) used the special skills they have been trained on by WOF and embarked on a project to remove invasive alien plants at Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve.

"As we are committed to the protection of our environment, we have identified the invasive alien plants at Lekgalameetse as a threat to our country's plants and also to the wealth of our country," said Alek Mkansi the Base Communication Representative for HAT Tzaneen.



Tzaneen High Altitude Team (HAT) clearing invasive alien plants at Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Early Childhood Educators taught to be FireSafe

The Working on Fire programme implements fire prevention measures which involve educating communities about fire dangers and how to escape fires in their home, schools or any other fire situation.

More than 25 Early Childhood Development (ECD) educators from around the Eastern Cape were equipped with fire safe techniques during a workshop presented by Working on Fire's Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans, and Community Fire Awareness Officer, Wongama Copiso.

The workshop was held in Butterworth on 29 September. Copiso says that this workshop was presented to ensure that educators understood the basics of fire safety indoors well so that they could implement what they had learnt at their centres.

"They practised the fire drill and we assisted them with drawing up fire escape plans which can be used in the event of a fire. We also encouraged them to go back to their centres



Early Childhood Development teachers now FireSafe

and teach the children what they have learned," explains Copiso.

Copiso says that it was important that an educator should be able to identify and rectify items and situations that could start fires at their centres. It was hoped that they would teach the children so they could pass the information on to their parents at home.

One of the educators, Yoliswa Mnwana from Elizwe Daycare Centre at Nqamakwe, praised WOF for the informative workshop, saying that the information they got will aid them at their centres and in their communities. All educators were awarded with certificates after the workshop.

WOF will host these ECD workshops annually to refresh educators on the fire safe training they were given in the previous year.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Western Cape Fire Awareness Campaign kicks off

On 7 October 2016, Working on Fire Western Cape hosted its annual Fire Awareness Campaign launch at the Loben Hall in Mamre, to launch the series of upcoming fire awareness, door-to-door and risk reduction campaigns that will take place across the Western Cape in preparation for the 2016/17 summer fire season.

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, says, "We brought together close to 200 community members from around the West Coast region as well as key stakeholders. It was evident that we have

established good relationships with stakeholders and communities. Our stakeholders' support was helpful in our campaign with various fire safe messages that came from each fraternity. The community members could see the importance of being fire safe."

In an ongoing effort to address the scourge of fires within the Western Cape, particularly in communities in informal settlement areas, Working on Fire and various stakeholders are running a series of fire awareness and door-to-door campaigns across the province. The purpose of the campaigns are to increase

the awareness of fire risks and to educate communities about how they can mitigate these risks. The awareness drives were initiated by Working on Fire in cooperation with CapeNature, City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Services, Disaster Risk Management, Fire Protection Associations as well as SANParks.

"Together we can do better. Together we will save lives with this campaign. Because fire is everyone's fight."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Participants from the Mamre Team and close to 200 community members conducted a door-to-door campaign in the Mamre community

Community Development Workers trained to be FireSafe



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, explaining the risk assessment task to the group and the purpose of the exercise

The Working on Fire programme mandate includes conserving the environment through conducting FireSafe awareness workshops and fire awareness campaigns in the provinces while also alleviating poverty and improving skills. The Fire Awareness department has rolled out a project of environmental education and awareness transfer of skills and knowledge.

On 26 September 2016 the Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, conducted a FireSafe workshop with 17 Community Development Workers (CDWs) from Moses

Kotane Local Municipality at the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve.

The Community Development Workers Programme, funded by the Department of Cooperative Governance, is aimed at improving government's capacity to fight poverty and foster development within communities.

The participating CDWs help to educate their communities to identify and lessen fire risks in their homes and teach them to take responsibility for managing local fires.

The CDWs were taught how to construct an evacuation plan and conduct a fire risk

assessment, and the importance of reducing fuel loads within the community. The Community Fire Awareness Officer included the importance of personal safety and the dangers of fires among the topics discussed at the workshop.

The CDWs are expected to assist WOF in spreading fire education messages, conducting FireSafe workshops and assisting in forming fire forums in communities.



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Early Childhood Development teachers now FireSafe

The Western Cape Communications Cluster conducted a FireSafe workshop for 25 Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers from the Stellenbosch and Franschhoek communities. Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, and Fire Awareness Training Officers, Rudi Lucas and Androlene Killian, covered a number of fire safe messages during the workshop which took place at the Franschhoek Town Hall.

The aim of this workshop was to educate and empower the teachers with knowledge to understand and identify fire risks in and around their schools. The teachers were also taught how they could conduct their own training in their different schools with their learners. It is important that children learn from an early age about the dangers of playing with fire and that this could cause destruction, injury or loss of lives.

"It is important that we maintain a close working relationship with our various stakeholders, especially our ECD workers, as they can then go back to their schools and communities, and implement what they have learnt at the FireSafe workshop," says Rhoda.

Ingrid Leopards, the principal of the Lapland Day Care Centre at La Motte says, "I enjoyed this session. We were given information we can use within our schools and community. It's nice to see that people care about us, about our centres and our children. This workshop taught us how to keep our children and our schools safe from fires. Thank you to Working on Fire and the Stellenbosch Disaster Management volunteers."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



FATO Androlene Killian assisting ECD teachers as they complete their task on what objects to be aware of within their schools

Participant uses stipend to start a business

Thabo Kabai, a Type 2 Crew Leader for the Heidelberg Team, is an entrepreneur who runs a printing business from the back room of his home.

"I started this business because I needed to fight poverty as a young emerging entrepreneur," he says. Kabai's business prints T-shirts, caps and cups, and provides general printing services.

He says that the job opportunity within the programme gave him the chance to turn his dream of becoming an entrepreneur into a reality. He bought screenprinting equipment while on crew leader probation. "I used my monthly stipend to kick-start my business. I bought a huge stock of plain T-shirts to put my label on and then sell them. Business is growing," he explains. Thabo says that he produces stock

part-time and markets and sells his products over weekends. "I design, lay out and print products on my own. On the T-shirts I print my own labels, Blackout and Makasana," says Kabai. "I am able to produce 20 to 40 T-shirts every evening. Hard work is paying off."

He sells the T-shirts at R150 each. Kabai hopes to one day have his T-shirts sold at leading retail shops and to have his own store in the long run.

The General Manager of WOF in Gauteng, Stephen Boyes, says that WOF encourages the spirit of entrepreneurship among participants to unlock new opportunities.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Eager to finish Matric



Elsie Molathegi is one of the matriculants preparing for their first ever matric exams



Nolufefe Mafukulwana of Wedela team is eager to complete grade 12

"It takes courage, dedication, hard work, commitment, passion and tenacity to study while working. I wish our participants who are writing both matric and tertiary examinations well," says Assistant General Manager (AGM), Mthandeni Malinga.

Malinga says the examinations were an important milestone for the participants and it was encouraging to witness participants taking ownership of their lives and shaping their future through education.

"As provincial management we support and congratulate participants for their efforts. We wish them all the best as they are about to write their final examinations," he says.

Malinga says participants understand that they cannot remain participants in the

programme forever. "One of the participants who came through the female parolee initiative and is now a Crew Leader passed her matric in June. That is a great achievement," he says proudly, adding that some participants are using their stipends to fund their education.

According to matriculant Nomphele Magowa from the Roodeplaat Team, who is a mother of two, studying part-time can be taxing on finances and time.

Among the participants who are writing their examinations are Thomas Maphoka, Mafukulwana Nolufefe, Mtati Lolwabo and Elsie Molahlegi.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

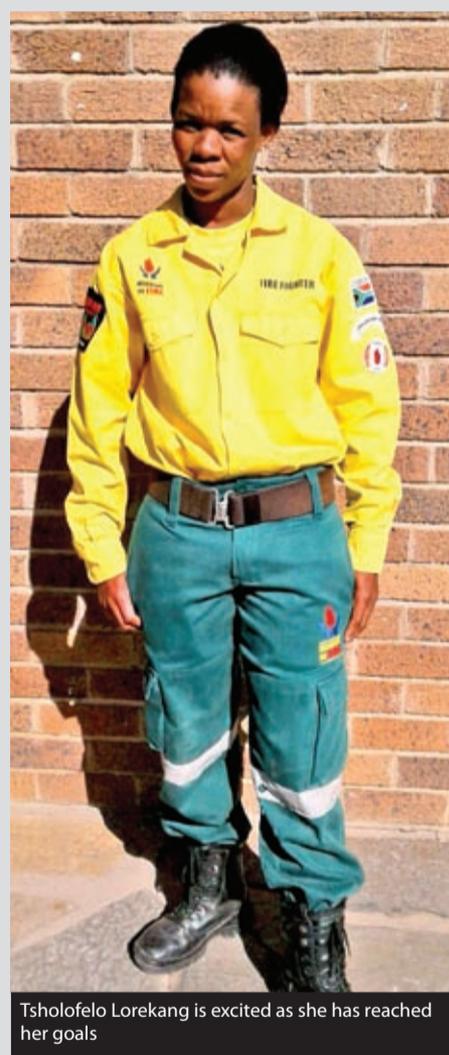
She built a house for her parents

Tsholofelo Lorekang is a 31-year-old firefighter and a mother of two boys from Heuningvlei in the Northern Cape. Lorekang joined the Working on Fire programme in July 2011 and is now at Naledi Base.

Lorekang was one of the participants who went to Canada in 2015. "The opportunity to go to Canada changed my life and that of my family. I gained a lot of experience in a different place and worked with different tools, extinguishing underground fires and uphill fires," Lorekang says.

She told WOFire News that she managed to save money over the past few years and she paid off her debts and enrolled her children at more advanced schools that offered a better education. It had always been her wish to build her mother a house and ensure that her family lived in a healthy environment.

"The reason I joined WOF is because I wanted to help my family financially and so far I have reached my goals," she says with pride. "I would really like to thank the Working on Fire programme for the great opportunities they give us and wish WOF continues to do so with other participants."



Tsholofelo Lorekang is excited as she has reached her goals



The house Tsholofelo Lorekang built for her parents



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



Compassionate firefighter buys school shoes for learner

Christmas came early for nine-year-old Toellelo Mohlomi from Mafika Disiu Primary School after WOF firefighter, Disema Leanya, bought the learner new school shoes.

Leanya says that about a month ago when the team went to conduct a fire awareness exercise at the school he noticed the boy wearing torn shoes.

No stranger to financial hardship himself, Leanya dropped out of school in 2008 and was without a job until 2010, when he joined the Ongeluksnek Team. "Watching that boy reminded me of my childhood when I didn't have school shoes and was about to get kicked out of school," explains Leanya.

Leanya asked the teachers about Mohlomi's shoe size and bought new shoes, socks and pencils for the boy. Leanya says that it cost him about R300 to buy everything and adds that he would have done more if he had the means.

"When I arrived at the school to deliver the shoes, the little boy was speechless," Leanya says. The boy's mother was very happy and thanked him for what he had done for her son.

The principal of the school was impressed and thanked the Working on Fire team for coming to conduct the awareness at their school.

"If it was not for the awareness that they came to conduct, Disema would not have seen

the little boy so we are glad for everything," she says. "It's really amazing how something as small as shoes can make a difference in someone's education."

She said that the programme helps them to ensure that their school and learners are fire safe. "I can see that firefighters do not prevent and fight fires only. They also give back to their community by conducting these fire awareness workshops," says the principal.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Making a difference in their community



Aganang participants donating vegetables from their garden to WF Knobel Hospital (Pictures by Elliot Mokobodi, Base Communication Representative for Aganang)

The Aganang Team is one of the teams that have made a mark in the community by always lending a helping hand. When they are not assisting with fighting a fire, clearing the hospital yard and removing unwanted fuel loads, the participants at Aganang keep busy by working in their garden.

The Aganang Team used the agricultural skills they've learned from their local Department of Agriculture to create a garden which is producing healthy vegetables for the participants.

Upon reaping their first produce from the garden, the team decided to donate the

vegetables to the WF Knobel Hospital to help to feed patients nutritious meals.

"There's a saying that the hand that helps is the hand that shall receive. We are proud to be making a difference to our society. We are planning to grow our garden to enable us to produce more vegetables that we can donate to the hospital and to other charity organisations," says Elliot Mokobodi, the Base Communication Representative at Aganang.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

North West introduces Dispatcher of the Month competition

The North West always prides itself in introducing competitions and themes aimed at improving the performance of the province and provincial staff. From 1 September 2016, the Dispatch department introduced a Dispatcher of the Month competition in the province.

Criteria were drawn up so that the dispatchers could be measured on their monthly performance, including general day-to-day activities and requirements at the office. Zeldo Matavela was selected as the first dispatcher of the month since the competition was launched. He received a certificate of recognition and his photograph has been displayed on the Wall of Fame in the boardroom and on the Wall of Fame in the dispatch office.

The dispatchers were judged by Provincial Coordinators on correct time frames, accuracy, observance of deadlines, accountability,

neatness, helpfulness and going the extra mile on duty.

North West Provincial Coordinator, Ezelle Vermaak, describes Matavela as the most deserving dispatcher.

"Zeldo Matavela complies with all the requirements and criteria for dispatcher of the month. We decided to introduce the competition so we could give recognition to hardworking and deserving people. This will encourage them to work even harder and be the best in what they do," says Vermaak.

Matavela says, "I'm very happy and honoured to be selected. It really is an awesome feeling to have my hard work recognised."



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



Dispatcher of the Month Zeldo Matavela (middle) with two dispatch coordinators, Louise Kruger and Ezelle Vermaak

Recycled material turned into cash



From left is Bokang Malebatso a stock controller with her assistant Ananias Motsepe displaying pillows made out of absolute stock

The Cradle of Humankind Team has established a project to fundraise for the team and make donations to children's homes. Nhlanhla Mthethwa and Resego Motsumi are among the firefighters who are sewing pillows, cushions and bags using recycled stock.

"We use cleaned old mattresses, sleeping bags, trousers and shirts in making the products," they explain.

Provincial stock controller, Bokang Malebatso, who leads the initiative, says that the initiative was undertaken by participants to avoid burning old and unused material and instead recycle it into usable products. In the future, Malebatso believes they can

help repair and stitch our uniforms in the province, which would help reduce the cost of purchasing new uniforms to replace uniforms with minor damage such as tears or missing buttons.

Malebatso says the project helps the participants to sharpen and nurture their sewing skills. "Participants can even use sewing skills to open their own enterprises," she says.

The funds raised will be used to purchase equipment such as printers and laptops for the use of the entire team at the base.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Empowering WOF participants with record management skills

Working on Fire programme is all about empowering its participants with skills that will make them marketable in the economy.

The great partnerships that WOF has with its stakeholders often impact positively on the participants with stakeholders often offering empowerment opportunities.

The Aganang Team members were fortunate to receive record management training from WF Knobel Hospital which accommodates their base. "It is not every day

where you get exposed to such opportunities. However we appreciate the efforts that WOF and its partners are making to empower us to be better in our lives," says Elliot Mokobodi, the Base Communication Representative at Aganang Team.

After receiving the training, the Aganang participants used the skills they had learned to file and store patients' records.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Aganang participants sorting and packing paperwork at WF Knobel Hospital (Pictures by Elliot Mokobodi, Base Communication Representative for Aganang)

Toughest Firefighter Alive Championship

Twelve Working on Fire (WOF) firefighters from the Eden WOF Team and the Hessaqua Structural Team participated in the South African Toughest Firefighter Alive Championship (TFA).

The national championship took place on Friday, 30 September and Saturday, 1 October, at the Rosemoor Sports Ground in the Eden District Municipality.

The WOF relay teams successfully completed the race and took 8th and 9th place out of the 24 teams who participated in the challenge. Phakama Sigwela, recorded the fastest time in completing the hose drag.

She said, "I managed to complete the hose drag. It was my first time competing and it was very difficult. I've learnt that it is very important to be well trained for such an event."

Over 100 firefighters from across the country competed in the 2016 Championship. The Toughest Firefighter Alive Competition originated in the United States of America, but now takes place annually around the world. Firefighters are measured in terms of their fitness, endurance and skill sets, and they compete on a national and international level.

Representatives for the World and European Championships are selected based on their performances at the national championship.



The Eden WOF and Hessaqua Structural Teams, together with the Team Leader and WC General Manager, Shane Christian, at the TFA 2016



Firefighter Paul Draai from the Hessaqua Structural Team completes the obstacle course at the TFA



Phakama Sigwela was the fastest hose drag competitor in the Relay Challenge

 Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Creating work opportunities for our youth

Working on Fire makes a difference in the lives of young South African men and women by providing them with much-needed job opportunities.

The youth of Modimolle in Limpopo had an opportunity to change their lives for the better when they were invited by WOF to take part in a recruitment drive event on 7 October. Over 100 male and female youth took part in the daily challenges that tested their fitness levels. The challenges included a 2,4km run, 40 push-ups and 40 sit ups. All the fitness activities were conducted in the open and for everyone to see.

"What WOF is doing for us and the youth is great because for youth with limited or no qualifications, it's not easy to find a job that will give you respect and restore your dignity," says Thabang Moremi, Base Communication

Representative at Modimolle Base in Limpopo. As they will be trained to become firefighters, the recruited youth will be taken for medical examinations to ensure that no health issues prevent them from working with fire.

"Fire suppression is one of the dangerous jobs, and at WOF we don't compromise when it comes to safety. That is why one has to be medically cleared before being taken for firefighting training," says Moremi.

Once they have been medically cleared for service recruits will be taken to the Nelspruit Training Academy, where they will be trained in basic firefighting as well as other skills required on a daily basis.

 Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Youth of Modimolle at the WOF recruitment drive held at Phagameng in Limpopo (Pictures by Thabang Moremi, Base Communications Representative for the Modimolle Team)

New recruits join HAT

The High Altitude Team (HAT) programme in the Western Cape has employed 27 new participants from previously disadvantaged communities who will be trained as rope technicians.

Over the past few months, HAT has rolled out a series of recruitment drives across the province to ensure that more opportunities are made available. The new recruits completed a 10-day training camp provided by High Angle at the Chrystalis Training Academy, which included rope access, fall arrest, search and rescue as well as map reading and navigation.

Together with other HAT members, the new recruits are already helping to protect the environment by clearing alien invasive plants across the province.

 Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Group photograph of the 27 new recruits

Recruitment process gets the thumbs up

Stephen Uwane, a Regional Manager in Gauteng, praises WOF's physical fitness recruitment process for firefighters. As it does not discriminate against those without tertiary qualifications or those from disadvantaged areas, the process allows unemployed people to compete for vacant positions on an equal footing irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds. As long as you are physically fit, you stand a good chance.

"I can affirm that the process accommodates every person who is able-bodied. I was also subjected to this process of physical fitness when I got recruited. The process is transparent during recruitment drives," says Uwane.

Uwane says whenever he tops up teams people come in numbers because they trust our processes of recruitment.

"Our process of recruitment is not stalled by fraud, complaints or discrepancies. That is important for me," says Uwane, noting that the physical fitness tests had added benefits of helping our young men and women to have healthy bodies.

Uwane, who hails from Mmakau outside Pretoria and started as a firefighter at De Wildt Base, says his own career proves the value of physical fitness. "My fitness plus firefighting skills are enabling me to earn a living," he says.



Stephen Uwane, currently a regional manager, lauds the recruitment process of participants into the programme

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng