

The Working on Fire teams that were on home standby across the country during level 5 of national lockdown returned to their respective bases on 4 May as the country moved to level 4.

During level 5, our summer fire season teams still reported to bases while the winter fire season teams and functional staff were put on home standby or worked from home.

Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Barbara Creecy, affirmed Working on Fire, an Expanded Public Works Programme of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, as an essential service in a recent statement.

"To ensure that fires do not destroy forests and vegetation or threaten livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, Working on Fire ground and aerial teams will remain active for the rest of the summer fire season in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape," the Minister said.

The participants and management gradually returned to their bases and offices and underwent a series of workplace COVID-19 safety measures tailored to each province. These include screening and monitoring

WOF teams return to bases after national lockdown level 5 ends



KwaZulu-Natal eThekweni Buffelsdraai Team participants go through the screening process



The KwaZulu-Natal eThekweni Buffelsdraai Team have their shoes and hands sanitised before reporting for duty

(temperature checks and screening questions), ensured all participants and management have masks and wash hands, and sanitising equipment and surfaces in line with the government's coronavirus regulations.

These measures form part of the Working on Fire COVID-19 workplace plan implemented by provincial management to ensure that participants and management are safe from COVID-19 in the workplace.



The Western Cape Witfontein Team received masks on arrival at their base

MD MESSAGE:

WOF provides uninterrupted essential services amidst the Coronavirus pandemic

The 30th of April marks the end of what we now know as level 5 of the national lockdown announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in March to curtail the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. During lockdown, Working on Fire adapted to new methods of operating to adhere to the conditions of the national lockdown and ensure the continuation of WOF operations as an essential service. Our teams were initially in the summer fire season in the Western Cape and parts of the Eastern Cape. In



Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, who also leads the WOF National COVID-19 Incident Command

KwaZulu-Natal, which falls in the winter fire area, a full team was able to swiftly respond to fires while on home standby, giving us the confidence to be able to provide uninterrupted essential services during these trying times.

I would like to thank the Working on Fire National COVID-19 Incident Command (IC), for taking pro-active steps to ensure that WOF adheres to lockdown regulations while providing an essential service, to ensure that management, staff and participants are safe and adapt to the 'new normal' in order to mitigate against the spread of the pandemic.

With the phased in approach to lifting of the national lockdown, as the

COVID-19 IC, we worked on the 'Ready for Work' plan which was effective from 1 May 2020, looking at each province's risk for the coronavirus. We looked at various approaches to ensure all the provinces' functional and operational staff are protected from the Coronavirus, monitoring and screening of firefighters, especially targeting those who are ill and, where available, accessing flu vaccine to minimise the spread of COVID-19. We plan to have non-essential staff work from home.

We have the ABET and University of Cape Town graduation ceremonies on hold and had to postpone the Yellow Card Training (YCT) to start in the second week in May and extend the current Yellow Cards' expiry date to the end of July. Our firefighters have been preparing for the YCT, which is an annual refresher training that assesses the physical fitness and operational knowledge and skills of our firefighters as part of the Winter Fire Season Readiness. This year, the Yellow Card Training will be conducted base-by-base while observing COVID-19 protocols

and personal hygiene recommendations.

The outbreak of COVID-19 as a global pandemic has necessitated drastic measures as governments all over the world try to contain the spread of the virus. Some of these measures have created extreme hardship for many, especially the poor. As WOF, our management has made donations amounting to some R490,000 to the Solidarity Fund, which has been set up to address the extreme socio-economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 regulations. Now is the time for us to show solidarity with those less able to withstand the hardships brought by COVID-19. The true character of our society will be determined by how we treat those most in need in such trying times.

I urge our participants, management, partners, stakeholders and South Africans to do our part to comply with our government's efforts to minimise the spread of coronavirus and play your role in your own community.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The coronavirus is a large family of viruses that includes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). In 2019, a new virus similar to SARS emerged named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (shortened as 'SARS-CoV-2'), which was eventually identified as the cause of the disease outbreak that began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

The novel coronavirus disease was called 'COVID-19' by the World Health Organisation, which declared it a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. Within five months of its appearance in Wuhan, it was present in almost every country and territory in the world, with 4,2 million reported cases of people infected with COVID-19 and 285 000 deaths.

South Africa's first COVID-19 case, a traveller who had returned from a visit to Italy, was confirmed on 5 March 2020. By 10 May, there were more than 10 000 South African cases of people infected with the virus, 206 deaths and 4 357 recorded recoveries.

Coronaviruses cause respiratory infections in humans, with effects ranging from flu-like symptoms to more severe problems in the lungs, heart and other organs that result in breathing difficulty, chest pain and loss of movement, leading to death in very severe cases. The most common symptoms of the COVID-19 disease are fever, dry cough and tiredness. A wide range of less common symptoms have been observed such as aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of taste or smell, a rash on the skin or discoloration of fingers or toes.

People 60 years old and above, and those with co-morbidity (underlying medical problems or damage from previous problems) of high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes, tuberculosis or cancer are at higher risk of developing serious illness than younger, healthier people. However, anyone can catch COVID-19 and become seriously ill.

To be safe, it is important to understand how the disease works:

- * The virus is a parasite that needs to be inside a host organism to survive. When viruses cannot find hosts they die.
- * The virus cannot move by itself. People move the virus.

4 PRECAUTIONS TO FOLLOW TO AVOID BEING INFECTED

- 1 WASH YOUR HANDS**
Wash your hands with soap thoroughly. Wash the back of your hands, between the fingers and under the nails. Always wash your hands with soap before you eat and after being out in public.
- 2 GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE**
Cover your mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your face with dirty hands at all times. If you have to, be sure to wash your hands with soap thoroughly first.
- 3 DO NOT SHARE FOOD AND UTENSILS**
Bacteria, viruses and infection can be transmitted onto knives, forks, spoons and straws. Only use clean utensils and do not share drinks. Always clean your hands before eating.
- 4 SEE A DOCTOR IF YOU ARE UNWELL**
Typical symptoms include cough, runny nose, fever and shortness of breath. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, seek medical attention promptly. Call the clinic or doctor ahead of your visit and inform them of your symptoms and travel history.

24HR NICD HOTLINE 0800 029 999
REMAIN VIGILANT AND ADOPT GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE PRACTICES
The situation is evolving, check updates on www.health.gov.za and www.nicd.ac.za

- * People can catch COVID-19 from contact with the droplets released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is believed that the virus can survive on SURFACES where the droplets land for a short time.
- * The virus is thought to enter the body through the mouth, nose and eyes, either through the air as we breathe or from our hands after touching a contaminated surface.
- * The virus usually takes 2 to 14 days to incubate (grow in a person) before symptoms appear – when an infected person is said to become SYMPTOMATIC. Some infected persons may not exhibit symptoms (ASYMPTOMATIC) or their symptoms may be mild yet they are just as infectious as an obviously sick person. We therefore can't tell who has been infected by looking at a person. That is why it is important to maintain a physical distance (social distancing) from everyone all the time.
- * There are no medicines that have been shown to prevent or cure the disease. Medical treatment can only

support a patient while the body naturally produces antibodies that kill the virus.

- * The WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. If you become sick, rather get help from qualified healthcare professionals.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19:

1. Social distancing.

- * Maintain a distance of at least 1,5 meters from others. No personal contact like handshakes, kissing and hugging. Avoid crowds and don't join groups in the workplace.
- * Even when eating, ensure you comply with social distancing and don't share cups, glasses, plates, knives and forks.

2. Maintain hygiene.

- * Clean your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

- * Cover your mouth when you cough with the bend of the elbow or a tissue. If a tissue is used, discard it immediately and wash your hands.
- * Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose.
- * Ensure your home is always clean, especially surfaces in areas used by more people, such as the toilet and kitchen.
- * Reduce the number of shopping trips by buying in bulk if possible. Avoid going to shops when there are crowds of people and always wear your face mask.
- * Avoid going to funerals as a lot of infections have occurred at funerals.
- * Wear a cloth face mask while at work.

3. Maintain travelling safety.

- * Wear a cloth face mask when you are in public places or moving between places.
- * Drivers and passengers in WOF transport MUST wear cloth masks.
 - Drivers MUST ensure that passengers wash/sanitise their hands before entering the vehicle.
 - Drivers MUST ensure that the vehicle is properly sanitised after EACH trip.
 - NO eating, drinking or smoking is allowed inside vehicles.

What to do if you feel ill:

Since many of the mild symptoms are also symptoms of harmless conditions, first self-isolate if you begin to experience symptoms. Do not leave your home. Do not have unnecessary contact with others in the home. Wear your mask all the time and practice strict personal hygiene. Inform your work supervisor of your absence.

If your symptoms worsen, inform your work supervisor that you need to be tested for COVID-19.

For information on how to get assistance with testing, contact the COVID-19 24-hour hotline number at 0800 029 999 or the COVID-19 National Crisis Helpline at 0861 322 322. Or WhatsApp "hi" to 0600 12 3456.

For general information about the fight against COVID-19 in South Africa, go to: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>

(Sources: WHO, NICD and NDoH)

WOF's response to the national lockdown



The Eastern Cape Tsitsikamma Team was one of the teams that remained on standby at their bases

President Cyril Ramaphosa's call for a 21-day national lockdown (later extended) to help limit the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak had an enormous effect on every person and business in South Africa. Working on Fire, as an essential service, set up a National COVID-19 Incident Command (IC) team, led by WOF Managing Director Trevor Abrahams, to determine how WOF would deal with the pandemic.

"The IC was established after the President declared a national state of disaster to deal with the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. It oversees how WOF manages issues concerning the pandemic. We meet daily to assess and advise on any additional measures that are needed in order to adhere to the health regulations related to COVID-19. We also adapted our operational procedures following careful assessment of possible risks," says Abrahams.

Before the lockdown was announced, WOF took decisive actions to prioritise

the health and safety of all its staff and participants. WOF Executive for Occupational Health and Safety and Transport, Jacob Singo says, "We made sure that all our offices and bases had hand sanitisers, hygiene was observed and that our toolbox talks raised awareness about coronavirus."

After the lockdown was announced, WOF had to make a number of adjustments but was able to remain operational and support its summer fire season partners in the Western Cape and southern parts of the Eastern Cape.

"We placed staff and teams on home standby while teams in the summer fire season remained on standby at their bases. Teams and management in summer fire season regions embraced heightened health and safety measures and continued to report to bases. The teams who were on standby at bases were transported to and from their bases in small groups in line with coronavirus restrictions," says the MD.

Teams swiftly contain fires despite the lockdown

Working on Fire's National COVID-19 Incident Command (IC) has worked tirelessly since the national lockdown was announced to adapt normal operational procedures to adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures and ensure that WOF continues to provide firefighting services.

The Witelsbos and Tsitsikamma teams, which had been on standby, successfully put the adapted procedures to the test when they responded to three fires in the Eastern Cape during the national lockdown. The fires occurred in the Eersterivier and Woodlands areas. The swift response of the teams assisted the local fire authorities to contain the fires.

WOF Eastern Cape General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, thanked the teams for their commitment to their duty during the lockdown period. In terms of government COVID-19 regulations, firefighting is deemed an essential service.

"Being able to provide an unhindered service proves that our adapted operational procedures are working. We will continue to provide firefighting



Working on Fire Eastern Cape teams responded to three fires during the national lockdown

services while protecting our participants and adhering to coronavirus prevention measures. I must also thank our management who ensured that all our firefighters were issued masks and gloves as part of our coronavirus prevention measures," she says.

Western Cape teams fight seven fires during lockdown



The Vredenburg Team mops up after an underground fire earlier this year

Western Cape teams were declared essential workers during the lockdown that was imposed on the country to manage the spread of COVID-19. So far, Western Cape WOF teams have already assisted in suppressing seven fires during the lockdown.

Three of the fires were extinguished in the Southern Cape with the assistance of the Hottentots Holland, Bredasdorp and Concordia teams and a Hotshot crew. The Tulbagh, Kluitjieskraal and Vredenburg teams as well as WOF aerial resources assisted in putting out four other fires

In the western parts of the province. Vredenburg Base Communication Representative Keletso Mosito says the team enjoys being in the field as fighting fires provides a different atmosphere during lockdown.

"Working during lockdown is a privilege because instead of sitting and doing nothing at home we do not get that bored. When we are at work we come up with various ideas to keep the day going and educate ourselves as well," he says.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

KZN Mbazwana Team battles the first fire during the national Lockdown



The Mbazwana Team suppresses a fire at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries plantation

In the midst of the national lockdown due to the global COVID-19 epidemic, the Working on Fire Mbazwana Team was called out to attend a fire in the community, just before the official start of the winter fire season.

KZN Acting General Manager Bongani Nhlabathi says, "As Working on Fire, it was not unusual for our Zululand coastal teams to receive fire call-outs as early as January this year."

WOF has suppressed 10 fires since 4 January, mostly in the Zululand area. Communities are urged to be vigilant and report fires to the authorities as soon as they see them. This will help reduce the damage to properties and the environment and save lives. "Community members must please

trim overhanging trees near their homes, create a firebreak around their property and practice candle safety in their homes. As we are in a national lockdown due to COVID-19, parents must also be reminded to lock flammable substances away from their children's reach," says Nhlabathi.

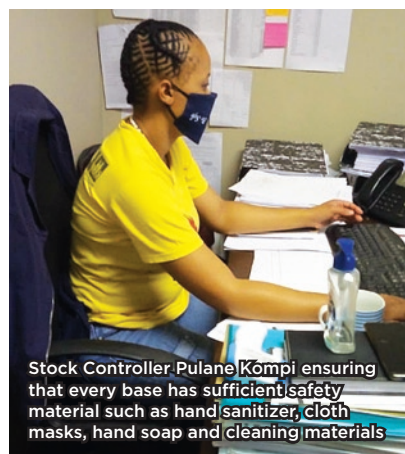
It is imperative that community members only start a fire if weather conditions permit and fires must not be left unattended. Working on Fire participants returned to their bases after the lockdown moved to the level 4 status and are ready to tackle any fire emergency.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

WOF implements policy to combat COVID-19 in the workplace

The Working on Fire National COVID-19 Incident Command (IC) formulated the Prevention of Spreading of COVID-19 in the Workplace Policy to ensure daily



Stock Controller Pulane Kompi ensuring that every base has sufficient safety material such as hand sanitizer, cloth masks, hand soap and cleaning materials

compliance to COVID-19 prevention measures as per government regulations and workplace safety measures related to COVID-19.

To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, Occupational Health and Safety Officers were trained and appointed to be Compliance Officers (COs) to carry out health and safety inspections in the workplace and review screening conducted in the workplaces for any irregularities, among other duties.

The COs then trained operational staff, including Social Development Practitioners and Fire Awareness Training Officers, to roll out the policy at workplaces, and Regional Managers to train crew leaders to conduct screening and complete screening registers at the base level on a daily basis. The screening and monitoring process includes checks



The Mpumalanga Breyten Team and other teams across the country received masks and sanitisers on arrival at their bases

for temperature and possible contact with infected persons.

This effort ensures that all WOF workplaces are COVID-19 ready and that all participants and management who continue to provide essential services during level 4 of national lockdown are safe from the virus.

Teams across the country that returned to their bases after being on home standby during the level 5 national lockdown stage are attending workplace safety workshops which focus on the safety measures to be taken in the workplace and raise awareness about the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Getting workplaces COVID-19 ready

As the coronavirus pandemic statistics have reached alarming levels, the workforce has had to accept the new normal as they report for work after national lockdown level 5. Clocking



A Western Cape Witfontein Team member sanitises the bus's door handle and interior

symptoms and answer screening questions related to recent travel among other risk factors. Staff at the stations ensure all participants and management have sanitised their hands and are wearing masks. All personal protective equipment, workstations and transport buses are sanitised daily. Other measures put in place to protect all workplaces from COVID-19 included ensuring that all workplaces have sanitisers, rearranging workplaces to enable social distancing and conducting development risk assessment related to the pandemic.

A major part of getting workplaces ready for the coronavirus entails educating participants about the coronavirus



The Bavianskloof High Altitude Team sanitises equipment and personal protective equipment

devices are no longer in use, but screening stations have been set up at the entrances of all WOF workplaces across the country. Individuals go through a sanitisation process prior to screening.

At these screening stations, participants are screened for COVID-19



Mbazwana Base screening stations are equipped with thermometers, screening questionnaires and sanitisers

and the WOF COVID-19 policy and encouraging employees who are sick to stay home or seek medical assistance.

The WOF COVID-19 awareness education followed a participatory methodology with participants actively participating and being part of solutions. All questions were addressed as they were asked. Furthermore, a back-to-work survey was conducted and participants were also given evaluation forms to give feedback about the process.



The Western Cape Regional Manager demonstrates how to wash hands during the back-to-work induction

Participants satisfied with WOF COVID-19 measures

The Working On Fire programme has embarked on the screening of its participants for the COVID-19 virus, to secure the safety of participants and staff members. The outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus has affected more than 187 countries, including South Africa.

Crew leaders from the North West Castello Team are screening and sanitising participants every morning before parade as well as other people entering the base. Early detection helps to reduce the risk of this disease spreading while detecting the infection early ensures that it can be treated more effectively. Crew Leader Type 1 Ofentse Marope says he

is happy and satisfied with how WOF responded to the virus by putting safety measures in place to ensure the safety of the employees.

"I was in the Western Cape to assist with the summer fire season and I was a bit scared. Because, at that time, the WC was the second province with a high rate of infection. Now I am back in my province where it's my responsibility to ensure the safety of my crew by sanitising and screening them," says Marope.

Marope says he also wishes to thank the provincial management for its vital role in providing transport for participants to travel home every day to maintain social distancing at the base.



Daily workplace compliance checklist

- * Are water and soap available?
- * Has the work area been cleaned?
- * Has the transport vehicle been cleaned?
- * Has everyone been issued masks?
- * Has everyone been trained on COVID-19?
- * Is social distancing in place and observed?

Daily employee checklist

- * Did the employee wash or sanitise his/her hands?
- * Is the employee wearing a clean face mask?
- * Has the employee's temperature reading been taken?
- * Is the employee showing any symptoms of COVID-19 or flu?
- * Has the employee had contact with a COVID-19-infected person in the past 14 days?
- * Has the employee visited a place in the past 14 days where a COVID-19 case was confirmed?

WOF COVID-19 Awareness Drives

To ensure our Working on Fire management and participants remain safe in spite of the alarming COVID-19 statistics, WOF COVID-19 Awareness Teams have been conducting workplace

safety workshops and WOF COVID-19 policy inductions at bases throughout the country.

The COVID-19 Awareness Teams are made up of operational staff, includ-

ing Social Development Practitioners, Fire Awareness Training Officers and Regional Managers. The teams have been visiting bases and educating participants about COVID-19 symptoms, how the virus is transmitted, the importance of personal hygiene and how to wear a mask correctly.

To ensure regular education at bases, First Aiders and SHE Reps

were trained to conduct toolbox talks on COVID-19 topics, as per the company-provided information.

Crew Leaders were trained by Regional Managers to conduct screening at bases and complete screening registers. They will share the data with their Regional Managers and also report any irregularities.



WOF Management donates to Solidarity Fund

Working on Fire employees strive to live by the company value of 'Making a Difference'. The Working on Fire family is donating to the Solidarity Fund as a sign of respect to needy fellow South Africans after Managing Director Trevor Abrahams issued a plea earlier last month to all WOF employees to voluntarily contribute to this fund according to their means.

Employees have responded positively by volunteering set amounts to be deducted from their salaries on a monthly basis for the period that they choose to contribute to the fund.

Some 127 WOF managers, from executive to junior managers, have thus far expressed their solidarity with the poor in our country in this challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Managers who indicated that they could not make a contribution in April expect to be able to do so later.

Thus far, WOF has raised R491,650. "I am proud to announce that we have had a warm response to our appeal to management to contribute to the Solidarity Fund," says WOF MD.



WOF Managing Director Trevor Abrahams says management has responded well to his plea to contribute to the Solidarity Fund

WOF manager makes a difference during lockdown

Many Working on Fire employees apply the company value of 'Making a Difference' and go beyond the call of duty. One such example is Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, Nkululeko Willies Mlanjeni. With the help of his family, Mlanjeni donated food parcels to those in need in the community of KwaMlungisi Location in Stutterheim.

"This has been a custom in our family to support those who are less fortunate because we know most of them depend on social grants, which are often not enough," says Mlanjeni. "As a lot of families spend time at home during the lockdown, this has taken a toll on those who are less fortunate, as they run out of essential food items. My family donated food parcels to two families. We are proud that, as a young family, we play our part in the community during these trying times."



Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, Nkululeko Willies Mlanjeni, delivers food parcels to those in need in his community

Mlanjeni hopes to continue providing relief during the lockdown to those

suffering economically in his community, with the help of local supermarkets.

Nkomazi participant does her bit to flatten the curve

Lydia Sono, a participant from the Nkomazi Base in Mpumalanga, is doing her bit to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by making and distributing face masks for the vulnerable elderly in the Schoemansdal community.

According to Sono, she and her friends saw a need for this initiative after realising that the elderly were not getting the necessary education and help needed about the novel virus.

"Most of the elderly in my area had no face masks or tools to use as precautionary measures for this virus and we wanted to help them," Sono says.

Sono, a renowned youth activist and LGBT advocate, asked her large following on social media for donations to buy materials to construct the masks. Her followers donating the funds and the young group approached a local dressmaker, who volunteered to sew the masks.

"The Department of Health has also given our masks the stamp of approval as there are specific requirements when making masks that improve the ultimate safety from viruses," says Sono.

To date, the group has made and donated close to 2 000 masks to the elderly in Schoemansdal.



Lydia Sono is on a mission to distribute as many face masks as possible to the vulnerable elderly in Schoemansdal



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Participants find creative ways to keep bases hygienic

Working on Fire participants across the country have embraced the WOF COVID prevention measures put in place across bases and offices, which include daily screening, wearing of masks and maintaining a high standard of hygiene.



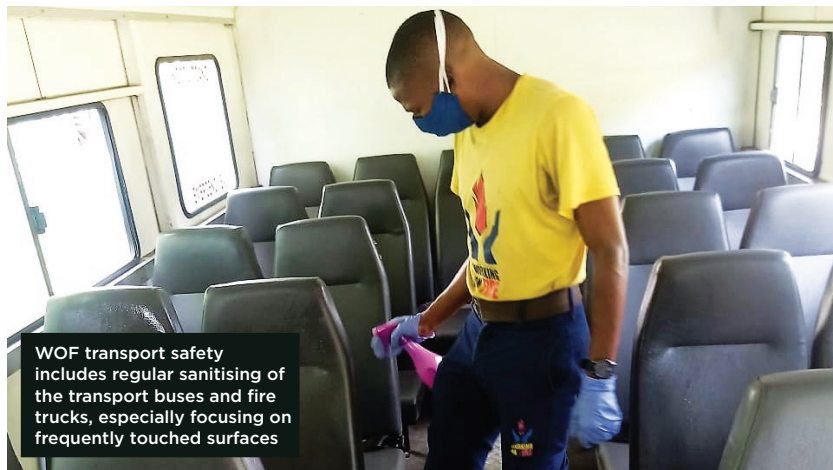
Silas Moreroa, a chainsaw operator at the Limpopo Modimolle Base, washes his hands at the water dispenser that was made by one of the team members

Firefighters across the country have found creative ways to make hands-free water dispensers that use less water than ordinary taps, which they place outdoors for easy access to all team members.

One such team is the KwaZulu-Natal Cathedral Peak High Altitude Team, who created their own hands-free hand washing device after the team received their 'Back to work' induction. The induction included familiarising participants with the WOF Prevention of Spreading COVID-19 in the Workplace policy, to ensure that participants know how to keep themselves safe from the virus while at work.

With the help of Regional Manager, Henry Nene, and Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu, participants created the device to minimise the risk of spreading the virus in the workplace. The team has also received sanitisers, hand soap, all purpose cleaner for the floor and frequently used surface cleaner.

WOF transport COVID-19 safety measures



WOF transport safety includes regular sanitising of the transport buses and fire trucks, especially focusing on frequently touched surfaces

Working on Fire has pulled out all the stops to ensure the safety of firefighters during this coronavirus pandemic. WOF has put in place measures that will ensure that firefighters can safely provide essential firefighting services during the coming winter fire season.

WOF arranges and supplies transportation for firefighters from their homes to their bases and back home at the end of the day. This was implemented after a WOF risk assessment highlighted of firefighters' commuting to work on public transport as a risk due to exposure to crowds.

"The safety of our participants is always a priority in our line of work and

that is what formed the basis of the decision to transport firefighters. This means that they will not be in crowded places where the virus can spread. We are proud of how provinces have been managing this process and keeping our firefighters safe," says WOF Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Jacob Singo.

Measures put in place to ensure that WOF transport is safe include regular sanitising of the transport buses and fire trucks inside and out, with special focus on frequently touched surfaces such as doors, handles and windows. Participants also observe social distancing and wear masks while travelling and sanitise their hands before getting into the vehicles.

WOF adheres to COVID-19 regulations during Yellow Card Training



Firefighters observe social distancing as they undergo their personal protection equipment inspection during the Yellow Card Training at bases

Working on Fire firefighters throughout the country have begun the Yellow Card Training (YCT) which forms part of WOF's annual winter fire season readiness.

Due to COVID-19, which has temporarily changed our way of living, WOF has adjusted the YCT to ensure smaller groups are being trained at their bases to minimise the spread of the virus. The previous YCT camps hosted up to five teams per camp. This adjustment reduces the risk of teams travelling and gathering in large groups. During the YCT, the firefight-

ers are assessed on their physical fitness and operational knowledge and firefighting skills while adhering to coronavirus health and safety guidelines, such as wearing masks and face shields and maintaining social distancing. The new regime includes washing of hands and sanitising of equipment.

So far the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Free State, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West teams have started the YCT at their respective bases. All teams are expected to have completed their YCT by the end of July.

Team helps FPA with winter fire season preparation



Castello Team members worked for two days on the block burn project

WOF teams returned to work after lockdown to begin integrated fire management activities in preparation for the winter fire season while also observing the coronavirus prevention measures WOF has implemented at all bases and offices.

The Working on Fire North West Castello Team successfully completed a two-day controlled burn project in Roodekraal, assisting the Potchefstroom Fire Protection Association (Potch FPA). This project was done in the second week of the team being back at their base following the month-long national lockdown during which our teams across the country were on home standby to adhere to the level 5 restrictions.

The controlled burn was done to reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires and to promote the beneficial use of fire. Controlled burns are vital for our biodiversity and agricultural ecosystems and essential for the propagation of many indigenous plant species.

Potch FPA chairperson Kobus Roux acknowledged the team's good work. "The Potch FPA, with the help of the Castello Team, has done a very successful block burn for a very satisfied client of 230 hectares over a two-day period. It consisted of nine kilometres of 30 metre-wide firebreaks before we started with the two block burns," Roux wrote in a post on social media.

"I'm happy and satisfied with how WOF responded to the coronavirus and how the programme put measures in place to ensure the safety of its employees. We have sanitisers to wash hands, we do screening and make sure that the base is clean and free from germs. I would like to say thanks to the provincial office of North West for arranging and supplying daily transport for firefighters from home to bases to ensure they avoid crowded places," says Castello Base Type 1 Crew Leader Ofentse Marope.

Team prepares for fire season

Working on Fire teams throughout the country are now focused on implementing fire prevention measures in fire-prone areas to prepare for the coming winter fire season, after work was placed on hold when teams were on home standby during the national lockdown level 5 stage.

The Eastern Cape Lottering Team conducted a fuel load reduction by

means of a controlled stack burn along the N2 national road. Stack burning involves the controlled burning of dead, dry vegetation that can fuel wildfires.

To ensure firefighters' safety, a First Aider trained in the WOF COVID-19 prevention measures was tasked with monitoring compliance during the activity.



When teams are deployed, the First Aider is responsible for ensuring firefighters maintain social distancing and wear their masks

WOF POLICY: PREVENTION OF SPREADING OF COVID-19 IN THE WOF WORKPLACE

This policy is APPLICABLE TO all Working on Fire management staff and programme participants, as well as visitors to our offices or bases, and its PURPOSE is to ensure that the transmission of the COVID-19 virus is mitigated at WOF workplaces. The policy is summarised as follows:

1. COMMUTING TO WORK

Drivers should:

- * Keep the vehicle sanitised.
- * Leave windows open for ventilation.
- * Ensure that passengers comply with regulations.

Passengers should:

- * Wear face masks.
- * Wash hands before and after the trip.
- * Not eat, drink or smoke on board.
- * Keep their social distance and avoid physical contact.
- * Have their essential services permits and IDs with them.

2. AT THE WORKPLACE

* Screening and declaration

Upon arrival, all employees and visitors need to report for screening (where possible, with a thermo-scanner). They will also be expected to complete a Health Declaration questionnaire (e.g. Have you been in contact with a COVID-19-positive person? Do you experience any COVID-19-related symptoms?) If a person's temperature exceeds 38°C or the person answers "yes" to any of the screening questions, he/she won't be permitted on the premises and will be directed to make contact with the health authorities. If an employee starts experiencing symptoms while at work, he/she should immediately inform the line manager and go home.

* Offices/Base and personal hygiene

Housekeeping:

- Common areas, surfaces, electronic devices and frequently touched objects should be cleaned and sanitised regularly.
- Leave windows open for circulation.
- Hand tools and equipment should not be shared and should be cleaned after use.

Employees should:

- Keep their social distance and avoid physical contact.

- Avoid unnecessary movement and gatherings in common areas.
- Wear face masks at all times and avoid fiddling with the mask.
- Wash/sanitise hands regularly and avoid touching the face.
- Only smoke in designated areas and should not share cigarettes.

* Age and vulnerability

Staff are encouraged to disclose any pre-existing medical conditions so that they, along with those over 60 years of age, may be accommodated as needed.

* Feeling sick or showing COVID-19 symptoms

Any staff member who feels sick or notices symptoms related to COVID-19 should inform his or her line manager immediately so that the appropriate action can be taken:

- Go home (if feeling sick at work).
- Self-quarantine and seek medical advice (if COVID-19 is suspected).
- Self-isolate (if COVID-19 is confirmed).

3. POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE

- * An employee who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay at home. If he/she has been in the workplace in the last 14 days, the premises need to be cleaned by a professional service provider.
- * If an employee finds out that he/she has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (whether at work or elsewhere), he/she needs to inform the line manager, stay at home, consult medical authorities and monitor symptoms.
- * Social Development will offer assistance to COVID-19 cases where possible.

4. WOF EVENTS

- * Screening and Declaration apply to everyone attending a WOF event upon arrival, and daily if the event runs over multiple days.
- * The total number of attendees (visitors, management and participants) may not exceed 50 people.
- * If someone starts feeling sick or showing COVID-19-related symptoms, the line manager needs to be informed so that the steps described above can immediately be taken.