



# WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

OCTOBER 2020



Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



@wo\_fire

## RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

South Africa moved to Alert Level 1 of our lockdown from 21 September 2020, as a result of the steady decline in our COVID-19 cases over the past weeks. However, the battle against this pandemic is not yet over.

At the time of writing this Memorandum, nationally, the collective number of detected COVID-19 cases was 667 084 and the death toll was over

16 866. The recovery rate stood at 90% percent, after more than 600 000 patients had already recovered.

Over the past 6 and a half months, Working on Fire has been very proactive in ensuring that we prioritise the health and safety of our staff and our participants, while still serving the country as an essential service.

## How Working on Fire approached COVID-19 Health and Lockdown challenges

In order to achieve the above objectives, a National Working on Fire COVID-19 IC Team and Provincial IC Teams were established in March. This took place under the leadership of the WOF Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, who serves as the Incident Commander.

The National and Provincial IC Team have been meeting on a weekly basis with several workstreams such as: Operations, OHS, Social Development, Communications and GIS Mapping (Tracking the spread of the virus).



Through various COVID-19 Communication and Awareness campaigns – using videos, posters, newsletters, role playing and intensive awareness education sessions at bases and provincial and regional offices – we were able to spread the message about how our employees can contribute towards a safer and healthier workplace.



Our communication and awareness messaging was based on information supplied by the National Department of Health and various related government departments and agencies.

In addition, we also acquired the necessary COVID-19 personal protective equipment, such as masks and hand sanitizers for all our employees. We also brought in Infrared Thermometers, which was in line government's instructions.



### WOF COVID-19 Education, Awareness and Communication since March 2020

- More than 500 activities at our bases and provincial and regional offices
- 53 Daily COVID-19 Messages via WhatsApp and [wellness@wofire.co.za](mailto:wellness@wofire.co.za)
- 58 Kishugu Coronavirus Online Newsletter Updates
- 26 Memos and Notices relating to managing COVID-19 in the WOF workplace
- COVID-19 Communication and Awareness Toolboxes to all bases and offices
- 17 WOFIRE Weekly's focussed on COVID-19 updates and messaging
- 10 WOF TV Video productions on awareness and education.

As of today, the total amount of our employees who tested positive for COVID-19 stands at 90 and we unfortunately lost one participant in KwaZulu-Natal. We also had 819 employees go into quarantine and isolation. Since such a large part of our operations (geographically) fell in COVID-19 hotspot areas, we are grateful that our COVID-19 cases were so low compared to what was initially anticipated.



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# WE WANT TO SAY “THANK YOU”

This low COVID-19 infection rate in Working on Fire can largely be attributed to the hard work of the National and Provincial IC Teams and the measures implemented since March 2020.

But also, without a change in behaviour patterns of employees, all our efforts would have been in vain. To this end, we would like to extend a word of gratitude and thanks to all our staff, who worked together and helped to create a safe and healthy workplace environment.



Throughout these months, we were still able to perform our mandate as part of the essential services sector and our winter fire season provinces remained on active duty. We were still able to provide a fire prevention and suppression service to landowners. And, throughout this period, we managed to keep our rate of infection low in Working on Fire.

## Going forward

We, however, need to understand that COVID-19 has NOT disappeared, and no vaccine has been developed yet. People are still being infected and even dying. We want to make the following points clear:

1. We have adapted our WOF COVID-19 Workplace Policy, specifically regarding employees who are over 60 and those with comorbidities will be required to again work from office under specific conditions.
  - Special care must be taken to ensure a safe and healthy return to work for these categories of employees.
2. We have also amended the COVID-19 Workplace Policy with regard to the limitation on the number of people attending our events and activities and have aligned it with current protocols. Event/activity attendance will be limited to 50% of the venue capacity, to a maximum of 250 for indoor events and 500 for outdoor events.
3. Our WOF COVID-19 Workplace Policy is still active and anyone who is found to be breaching this policy will be subjected to disciplinary procedures.
4. Staff should continue to wear masks and we must still ensure that social distancing is maintained.

In order to prevent a second COVID-19 infection surge, as currently experienced in the USA and Europe, we need to remain vigilant and continue to comply with our COVID-19 Workplace policies and protocols. Thank you that we can rely on you to help us maintain a #HealthyWOFWorkplace.

WOF COVID-19 National Incident Command



### MOMENT OF UNITY AND REFLECTION

Working on Fire will be hosting a nationwide WOF COVID-19 Moment of Unity & Reflection. The aim of this is to acknowledge the work of our frontline workers and those affected by COVID-19. We recognise there is a need to unite as humanity to fight COVID-19 pandemic together.

The WOF will observe a moment of silence to:

- Recognise & honour the frontline workers for their commitment;
- To ask for protection against COVID-19 & give thanks;
- To ask for healing & relief for those who are affected and
- At the same time pay respect to those who have succumbed to the disease.

Practicing social distance doesn't mean we cannot be united!

Friday, 28 August 2020 @ 10am

Be creative in your speech, poem, prayer, reflections, meditations, lighting a candle, poster, etc.

#COVID19

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### PROTECT OTHERS FROM GETTING SICK

When coughing or sneezing **cover your mouth and nose** with a flexed elbow or tissue.

**Throw the tissue into a closed bin immediately after use.**

**Clean your hands** with alcohol-based sanitizer or soap and water after coughing or sneezing and when caring for the sick.

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### Coronavirus prevention toolbox- the new normal!

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### MYTHBUSTERS

**FACT: COVID-19 CAN SPREAD IN HOT AND HUMID CLIMATES**

You can catch COVID-19, no matter how sunny or hot the weather is. The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by maintaining physical distance of at least 1 meter from others and frequently cleaning your hands. By doing this you eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

**Exposing yourself to the sun or temperatures higher than 25 °C DOES NOT protect you from COVID-19.**

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