



WOFIRE NEWS

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Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



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WOF RESPONDS TO THE CALL DURING DISASTROUS NORTH WEST FIRES

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's Working on Fire Programme assisted the North West Umbrella Fire Protection Association and the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti District Municipality in devastating grassland fires in the North West.

The fires started on 6 October 2022, in the Morokweng region, and moved over to Molopo and Ganyesa - under the Kagisano Molopo Local Municipality. It affected the South African Development Trust (SADT) farms in the area and spread to other communal areas and cattle posts, destroying an estimated 90 312 hectares of grassland.



"These fires in the North West represent a noticeable increase in the number and intensity of wildland fires in this region. There can be little doubt this is a clear indication the negative impacts of climate change is already with us. It is imperative that South Africa braces itself and prepares for more of these disaster wildland fires in the future," said Trevor Abrahams, Working on Fire Managing Director.

The disastrous fires spread and affected many places, including Vostershoop, Radnor, Alanwick, Terra-Firma, Phepane, Matonkomane, Coswald, Moghalaneng, communal areas, and privately-owned farms.

Head of the Disaster Management Centre for the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti District Municipality, Herman Buizendenhout, said loss due to the fire in the Morokweng region amounted to R22 million.



WOF responds to the call

The fires lasted nine (9) days prompting joint fire suppression operations between various organisations, including Provincial Disaster Management, Fire Protection Associations, local and district municipalities, and Working on Fire. Due to the magnitude of the fires, WOF also deployed teams from neighbouring provinces to beef up existing WOF North West teams.

Ground resources

A total of nine (9) WOF teams and 13 management personnel worked tirelessly and around the clock assisting in fire suppression operations. The North West teams of Boskop, Barberspan, Mamusa, and Naledi were joined by Roodeplaat (Gauteng), Kroonstad and Theuenessen (Free State), Cata and Joe Gqabi (Eastern Cape) teams. This brought a total of 160 WOF firefighters to these fires.



Aerial firefighting support

WOF also dispatched aerial resources to provide aerial firefighting support to the ground crews. Two choppers, a Spotter, and one Aviation Support Vehicle crossed provinces - KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape - to boost WOF resources.



Fires contained

The region experienced much-needed rain on Sunday evening, 16 October, and the 18 fires were declared contained on Monday, 17 October.

The cause of the fires was attributed to dry lightning. According to WOF Junior Researcher - Nothando Ngobeni - the lack of rain during winter and the predictable hot weather conditions in the latter part of the winter fire season lead to dry vegetation (fuel). "This contributes to dry thunderstorms which produce lightning strikes that ignite a fire."



WOF Resources at the North West Fires

FIREFIGHTERS	MANAGEMENT	VEHICLES	AERIAL RESOURCES
160	13	14	4

EXPECT MORE WILDFIRES AS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS GLOBAL TEMPERATURES

"Climate change is going to lead to more wildfires and our government needs to be prepared." This was the warning sounded by the Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams at the Western Cape leg of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's public hearings on the National Veld and Forest Fire Amendment Bill. They began at the Klapmuts Multi-Purpose Centre in the Stellenbosch on Friday, 21 October 2022. The Portfolio Committee conducted the last of its hearings in the Western Cape on

the Bill which seeks to, among other things, improve the administration of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, to ensure it is responsive in reducing the incidents of veld and forest fires nationally.

It seeks to achieve this by amending six broad key focus areas aimed at, among others, facilitating the establishment of fire protection associations (FPAs), compelling municipalities that own land to join these associations and afford them powers to search, seize and arrest those whose acts may contribute

to the eruption of veld and forest fires.

Speaking at the Klapmuts public hearings, Trevor Abrahams said the amendment to the bill is important in ensuring that amongst others, FPAs are empowered and make it mandatory for landowners such as municipalities to be part of these associations. However, Abrahams cautioned the Bill might not be enough as South Africa will be facing more frequent disastrous fires due to climate change, as recently experienced at ...**story continued on page 2**

the Morokweng fire in the North West. Abrahams said with global warming exacerbated through climate change, temperatures will rise over the next couple of decades which will lead to dryer conditions, and this will lead to more frequent fires.



Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams speaking at the on the National Veld and Forest Fire Amendment Bill public hearings.

Climate Change Bill

These remarks by Abrahams come in the wake of his presentation on Climate Change to the same Portfolio Committee in September this year, where stated that the threat posed by extreme wildland fires should be addressed by legislation intended to mitigate the impact of climate change.

“Extreme weather events characterised by flooding, droughts, and extreme wildland fires are already being experienced on an increasing regularity. Of concern is the projections in the developed world, which are likely to experience the brunt of these negative impacts of climate change”.

South Africa has not and will not be spared these impacts of climate change. The recent catastrophic and unprecedented flooding experienced in KwaZulu Natal has been widely attributed in part to its impact.

The 5,000 firefighters in the government-funded Working on Fire Programme have been called out on an increasing basis to “major fires”. Increasing incidents of these fires are taking place outside the traditional seasonal boundaries for fires in South Africa’s Winter vs Summer “fire seasons”. These developments are a clarion call for a concerted approach to mitigating this aspect of the negative impact of climate change. These are actions that should happen now.

“Such legislative provisions should be aimed at addressing the institutional, mandate, and resource basis of this aspect of South Africa’s response to the threat of Wildland fires”, Abrahams said.

Abrahams added the Climate Change Bill should include specific provisions for developing mitigation strategies and initiatives for addressing the negative impacts of climate change already evident.

“This should include more effective disaster management response, community preparedness, community education, and communication. The constraints on the fiscus would also point to a public-private-partnership framework as the current WOF Programme’s aviation capacity is evidence of private sector investment and knowledge of this specialised area of wildland fire management.

To focus primarily on the fire suppression capacity - as critical as this aspect is in combating wildland fires - would fail to address the comprehensive response which the UNEP calls for and which WOF has practiced through its Integrated Fire Management approach to wildland fires.”

The Portfolio Committee was briefed on the fire awareness education programme of WOF, which can also be repurposed to play an effective role in community education around the broader issues arising from climate change. “Working on



The WOF contingent with Faith Muthambi (Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment) at the public hearings.

Fire has determined that South Africa needs some 17,000 firefighters to effectively address the wildland fire threat across all the jurisdictions within South Africa”.

The Climate Change Bill should include specific provisions for developing mitigation strategies and initiatives for addressing the negative impacts of climate change already evident. This should include more effective disaster management response, community preparedness, community education, and communication.



Working on Fire representatives at the public hearings.

CELEBRATING 19 YEARS OF WOF

MPUMALANGA BASES TURN 19!



Nelspruit.



Warburton.



Graskop.

As the Working on Fire Programme celebrated the nineteenth year of its existence in September, its first-ever bases - Nelspruit, Warburton, and Graskop - in Mpumalanga also turned 19!

Nelspruit was the first base to be opened in the Programme, is currently stationed at the Head Office, and turned 19 on 2 September. Warburton, who is now partnered with Msukaligwa Fire and Rescue and stationed in Lothair, turned 19 on 16 September. Graskop, who is partnered with the Thaba Cheu Local Municipality, turned 19 on 6 October.

“We are extremely proud to have these three bases right here in our province. They are pioneers of this Programme and we celebrate them for their longevity. It is equally special that

within our senior management, we have a former participant who was a part of the Graskop team since its inception,” said Martin Bolton, the General Manager of Mpumalanga.

The aforementioned manager is Ground Operation Manager (GOM), Walter Khoza. The former participant began his journey at the Graskop base in 2003 and worked his way up the ranks. Firstly being a crew leader Type 1 at the base and then a driver at the Lydenburg and LEFPA bases. He became an assistant regional manager in 2010 and a regional manager for the Lowveld teams in 2011. Khoza was also the Project Coordinator for the Structural Division of Kishugu in 2015. He was appointed GOM in 2019.

“It is one of our bragging rights here in Mpumalanga that we

laid the foundation and the rest followed. Congratulations to these three teams, we celebrate them,” said Khoza.

Former participant and current base manager for Graskop, Lucas Mahlke echoed the senior manager’s words. He is the Fire Chief of Thaba Cheu Local Municipality and the longest-serving partner in Mpumalanga.

“I am a proud product of the WOF Programme because I was also a participant. The partnership between Thaba Cheu Local Municipality and WOF spans a total of 19 years and has always been great and is still fantastic. We appreciate the hard work the Graskop team has done throughout the years when implementing and assisting us in Integrated Fire Management Services,” said Mahlke.

JS MOROKA IS THE BUSIEST GAUTENG TEAM

The JS Moroka team in Gauteng is having a busy fire season because it battles multiple fires concurrently. The team responded to 43 fires out of the 239 recorded in the whole province this season.

Surprise Kgwedi, the crew leader Type I attributes the busy fire season to some land owners being not associated to a fire protection association. Kgwedi said during the bad days the team will be split into stick teams to respond adequately to fire callouts. "The team was not able to burn fire breaks at fire hotspots because landowners are not protected," he explained.

The leader added that some of the major

fires have caused massive harm to livelihoods and properties. Through the help of the local municipality, the team was able to respond to fires.

A participant, Sidney Magolego, echoed Kgwedi's words. "We are grateful because we helped the landowners. Our tasks are to save lives and protect the environment and we are still strong," said Magolego.

According to Provincial Coordinator, Metse Maitisa's report, JS Moroka has had 43 call-outs compared to the rest of the other teams. The Heidelberg team trails behind JS Moroka with 35 fire call-outs.



The JS Moroka team is the busiest team in Gauteng, having been called to the most fires in the province.

LAST LAP OF THE WINTER FIRE SEASON



KwaZulu-Natal firefighters tackle a fire after being dispatched.

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal was kept busy during September battling veld and forest fires. A total of 17 teams across the province were dispatched to suppress 47 fires that burnt 1 149,768 hectares. This is an increase compared to the last month's 72 fires, which burnt 6570.554 hectares.

Acting General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, said: "We are in our last lap of the winter fire season and we continue to foster partnerships and conduct FireSafe presentations and workshops. This is to ensure communities are educated on how they can stay safe in and around their homes."

According to Dyantyi, it is imperative for households to have an emergency plan in case of a fire. All family members must be aware of this plan because it will minimise the risk of the destruction of property, the loss of livelihoods, and the loss of life in many households.

"Over 700 firefighters are trained to operate and implement a range of integrated fire management products and services, including fire management planning, fire detection, prevention, suppression, and community fire awareness," said Dyantyi.

EARLY FIRE SEASON FOR WESTERN CAPE

Six teams from Working on Fire Western Cape spent four days camping in the mountains of Cederberg and assisted Cape Nature with fire suppression operations in a fire that broke out on the Maltese Cross, in the Cederberg area.

Cape Nature and the Greater Cederberg Fire Protection Association requested the teams to set up camp in the area so they are close and able to render effective 24-hour support. The teams included Limietberg from Paarl, Vlorijkheid from Robertson, Hottentots

Holland from Grabouw, and Walker Bay from Hermanus, Porterville, and Vredenburg.

The fire was eventually contained after four days and the WOF teams were demobilized after extensive mop-up operations to eliminate any possibilities of flare-ups. When the fire broke out, most of the teams were dispatched straight from the yellow card training camp that was in progress. Even though the province is off-season, WOF Western Cape assisted in fighting and suppressing nine fires in October.

NORTH WEST DECLARES FIRE SEASON THE BUSIEST



Firefighters battle the Morokweng fire.

The North West fire season is proving to be one of the busiest in the history of the province, with a total of 143 fires fought with 172 171,03 hectares of land burnt. September was the busiest month, with teams attending to 32 fires.

WOF worked tirelessly when assisting the Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti District Municipality in the Morokweng fire in Ganyesa, Kagisao-Molopo, which raged on for nine days.

"Thank everyone that helped to get all our fires under control in the Molopo area, especially Working on Fire," said the chairperson of the Molopo Fire Protection Association, Nicol Muller.

The Joe Morolong team in the Southern 2 region was the busiest team throughout the season and attended to the highest number

of fire suppression operations. "I would personally describe the season as one that brought the most out of each and everyone one of us. We collectively worked with landowners and stakeholders to ensure that disastrous fires are averted," said Ground Operation Manager, Eric Makube.

General Manager, Noluvuyo Mashologu, echoed Makube, adding: "This year's season is a very busy one compared to the previous. It has an extremely High Fire Danger Index (FDI) on most days, however, it does not keep our firefighters from ensuring the safety of our wildlife, properties, and the environment.

Our teams worked very hard and still continue to do so when implementing various Integrated Fire Management activities aimed at reducing the risk of unwanted fires."



The Vredenburg team battles the Maltese Cross fire.

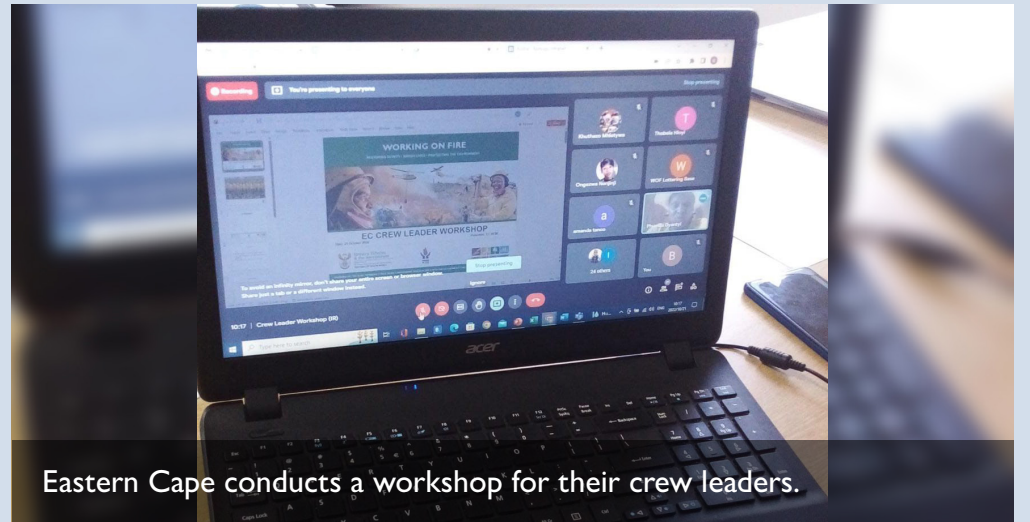
REFRESHER TRAINING FOR CREW LEADERS

Working on Fire Eastern Cape conducted a workshop aimed at equipping crew leaders on how to be better leaders and mentors. This was also meant to strengthen the relationship between the employer and employee.

This workshop was done virtually on 21 October to accommodate all crew leaders around the province. The objective of the workshop was to guide the leaders on a standard way of submitting documents,

improve their performance at the base level and operate at their full potential, which will take the province to another level. It was also to empower the leaders so they can improve on their day-to-day work.

The General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, said these leaders play a major role in leading the teams and they really are an asset to the organisation. Prior to the session, they were given the opportunity to share their expectations from all managers.



Eastern Cape conducts a workshop for their crew leaders.

SPREADING FIRE-SAFE MESSAGES

More than 30 students from Fort Cox College were equipped with fire safety techniques during a FireSafe education workshop conducted by the Fire Awareness Cluster in Working on Fire Eastern Cape on 13 October 2022.

Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans said the objective was to educate students on how to be fire-safe under the topics: Fire causes and prevention, Fire dangers, Fire Danger Index (FDI), and the National Veld and Fire Act.

Students were encouraged to identify fire risks in their areas and find ways to mitigate them. Mapipa Lazola, a Forestry Technician at Fort Cox Agriculture and Forestry Institute

thanked WOF for the good work, saying the information received will be used wisely by everyone. "We really appreciate it and are committed to using what we have learned to minimise fire risks in our communities," said Lazola.

The cluster also demonstrated how to use the fire tools. The Knapsack was filled with water to show the students how it works during the fire suppression and how a fire beater is used.

WOF protects the environment through Integrated Fire Management, which includes fire prevention, suppression, and fire awareness. FireSafe education is part of WOF's community awareness strategy.



Eastern Cape Fire Awareness cluster equips Fort Cox College students with fire safety techniques.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION



Eastern Cape and various stakeholders equipping communities on how to be FireSafe during International Day for Disaster Reduction.

Working on Fire Eastern Cape, in partnership with the Alfred Nzo District Municipality and various stakeholders, commemorated the International Day For Disaster Reduction (IDDR) in Bizana on Thursday, 20 October.

IDDR celebrates how people and communities are reducing their exposure to disasters. Fire Awareness Facilitator, Sinawo Mkhosi, said the objectives for this day are to create fire-resilient communities, to reduce the number of unwanted wildfires, and to make sure communities take ownership in reducing fire risks.

"Working on Fire is committed to reducing risks of fire disasters by implementing Integrated Fire Management Strategies

throughout the province," said Mkhosi.

All stakeholders were given a chance to share key fire messages with the community. This event brought insight to many people as most disasters are caused by a lack of knowledge within the communities.

WOF worked hand-in-hand with Alfred Nzo Fire and Rescue and conducted build-up activities in preparation for the official event. These included a clean-up campaign in one of the clinics at Bizana and a door-to-door activity in nearby communities.

"The winter fire season continues and we have experienced a lot of veld fires. We advise the community to always be vigilant and not start unwanted fires," said Mkhosi.

STUDENTS SOAK UP FIRE EDUCATION

Working on Fire Limpopo Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sello Matlhare conducted a Fire Awareness Workshop with Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Nursing Students from Rhaidi School of Health.

The workshop took place at the Provincial office boardroom and the topics discussed included an understanding of fire and its dangers, why fire is a friend and an enemy, and the causes of the fire.

Matlhare also gave safety tips on how to safely make use of fire extinguishers using the "PASS" method - Pulling the pin at the top of the extinguisher, Aiming by approaching the fire standing at a safe distance, Squeezing the handles together to discharge and Sweep.

The Rhaidi School of Health students thanked Matlhare for the insight he gave on all the fire-related aspects because they will



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sello Matlhare, equipped the students with fire-safe education.

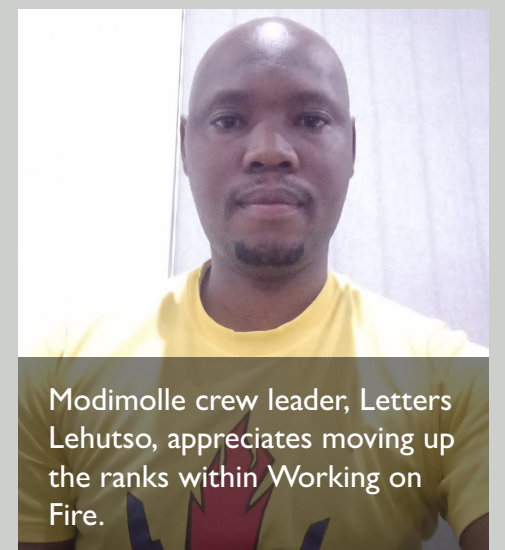
be the emergency responders and need to be experts on it all after completing their qualifications. The students are also looking forward to more follow-up workshops so they too can make a difference in saving lives.

SUCCESS IS BEST WHEN SHARED

Letters Lehutso joined the Working on Fire Limpopo on 24 May after being recruited as a participant at the Leseding base. He was promoted to crew leader Type 2 in 2011 and transferred to Vingerkaal Base in 2012, where he carried out his duties. It was in 2012 that he climbed the ladder and served as a Type 1. He transferred to the Modimolle base two years later, to date.

"Before I joined WOF, I had completed a learnership through the South African Wildlife College and also obtained a National Certificate in Natural Resources Management in Conservation and Terrestrial. I showed an interest when I heard about the WOF recruitment taking place because I knew I had to make a living," says Lehutso.

Apart from being a leader at his base, Lehutso enjoys reading, follows current affairs, is a soccer player, and prefers



Modimolle crew leader, Letters Lehutso, appreciates moving up the ranks within Working on Fire.

outdoor activities. Lehutso believes working as a team leads to better outcomes. "Team spirit encourages personal growth, increases job satisfaction and assists with stress relief."

SAVING COMMUNITIES WITH FIRE AWARENESS EDUCATION

A collaboration between Santam and the Working on Fire Programme is creating fire-resilient communities through fire awareness education. This is in the form of a Fire Safe Project rolled out by the Fire Awareness Department in July 2022, will be running for six months, and will end in December 2022.

The objective of this collaboration and project is to address the need of mitigating the risk of unwanted wildfires caused by the dire effects of climate change, which results in an increase in wildland fires.



Head of the Department for Community Fire Awareness, Zanele Nxumalo, said the desired outcomes for the project are to reach out to communities in focus areas determined by Santam. Through the fire awareness education, they want to reduce home or property fires because homeowners are empowered to assess and mitigate the identified fire risks, and lower home insurance fire claims.

"We need to sensitise our communities to this burning issue of climate change. Working on Fire remains an essential service and will always be ready to save lives and protect the environment. Now we want community members to take ownership of their safety and we are arming them with vital life-saving education and how they can be proactive in protecting themselves from its devastating effects," said Nxumalo.

WOF's Fire Awareness Officers are currently hard at work educating community members in identified district municipalities in all the eight (8) provinces WOF operates.

Alfred Nzo and Sarah Bartman District Municipalities (Eastern Cape)



WOF Eastern Cape Fire Awareness Facilitator, Sinawo Mkhosi partnered with Alfred Nzo Fire and Rescue and conducted a presentation for the Colala community members. He delivered lessons on vital fire safety messages, which included educating the community members about fire causes and prevention, the dangers of fire, and the impact of fire.

"As Working on Fire, we are committed to ensuring community members mitigate the risks of unwanted fires in their areas. Community members should clean all the dry leaves around their houses, make fire belts around their properties and defensible space around their homes to prevent unwanted runaway fires," added Mkhosi.

The Colana community promised to put these measures into practice.

Sedibeng District Municipality (Gauteng)



To ensure maximum reach, WOF Gauteng and Santam targeted the Pilis farm, which has a squatter camp.

Fire Awareness Officer, Jabulile Shabalala, said the campaign is on track and significant progress is being made with stakeholders to educate them about ways to prevent unwanted fires.

"We demonstrated to the community members how to use a bucket of sand system to extinguish fires while waiting for fire and rescue people. This was accompanied by a fire awareness presentation on the dos and don'ts of fires," she said.

In order to heighten the message in all the communities, Shabalala said they are doing fire awareness activities with the municipal disaster management unit. She added that stakeholders and communities are responding positively to the awareness campaign.

Capricorn and Mopani District



Municipalities (Limpopo)

The WOF Limpopo Lepelle-Nkumpi team educated the Grade 5 and 6 learners of Huelereng Primary School about inside-the-house fire safety.

The educators at the school extended their gratitude to the WOF team for making an effort in ensuring the learners are well-educated and will be prepared in the event of a fire.

Subsequently to the fire awareness presentation at the school, the team saw it fit to extend the awareness presentation to the community members around the Huelereng area - through a door-to-door awareness campaign to educate the senior citizens about the dangers and impacts of fire.

Ehlanzeni District Municipality (Mpumalanga)



The Lydenburg team and the Fire Awareness cluster worked with various stakeholders and conducted a fire awareness presentation for the community of Skhila, in Lydenburg. Community members soaked up information about climate change and how wildland fires will be on the increase due to its effects, the dangers of the fire to livelihoods and the environment, and the Dos and Donts.

"We have reached quite a number of communities and schools in the Ehlanzeni region with this project and it will definitely benefit the community at large. I must also note that partners and stakeholders have readily come on board and ensured we have one voice in spreading the Fire Safe message throughout the region," said Community Fire Awareness Officer, Estella Cossa.

Cape Winelands and Overberg District Municipalities (Western Cape)



The Overberg and the Cape Winelands regions have been experiencing an increased amount of fires recently and communities and schools were earmarked for FireSafe education activities.

Since August, the teams and Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, have been out and about in these regions teaching community members to take ownership of their safety.

In the Overberg, fire-prone communities targeted are Grabow, Kleinmond, Suurbraak, Swellendam, Zwelishle, Montague, and Barrydale. In the Cape Winelands, communities in Breede Valley, Drakenstein, Langeberg, Stellenbosch, and Witzenberg Municipalities are targeted.

"Funding for this project enabled us to develop and produce additional fire awareness resources needed to enrich our awareness messages. Our key messages have been well-received and hopefully decrease the number of wildland fires in the province," said Rhoda.

Umgungudlovu District Municipality (KwaZulu-Natal)



Kwa-Zulu Natal has reached over 2 744 community members, teachers, and learners, through presentations and workshops done by their Fire Awareness Officers and teams to reduce home or property fires.

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Makhosi Dladla, said: "Santam has assisted us in this social and needed responsibility to build strong fire-resilient communities in the areas they operate in. We are addressing the need of mitigating the exacerbated wildland or veld fires brought about by climate change and the need to protect our communities - humans, properties, and ultimately the economy. This was achieved through the passion presented by the KwaZulu-Natal Albert Falls, Karkloof, and Wessa teams, who operate under the uMgungundlovu District Municipality."

Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality (Free State)



Since the beginning of the project, the Free State Fire Awareness cluster has conducted 39 workshops and presentations, reaching 1 696 audiences in the province.

Fire Awareness Training Officer, Moipone Motaung shared the impact they have done in their communities. "We are striving to meet the set target from the identified District Municipality and are still on track. We can see the difference by the positive feedback we receive from communities at large and their commitment to taking ownership of their safety."

Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality (North West)



Fire Awareness Officers conducted a fire safety awareness workshop at the Tsweleng location in Wolmaranstad, North West on personal safety and Fire Danger Index weather rating.

WOF KIDS AWARENESS DAY IN VRYHEID



The boys gear up for their friendly soccer game at the end of the awareness day.

The KwaZulu-Natal Vryheid team hosted a WOF Kids Awareness event, aimed at gathering boys who are sons of participants and their friends. This was to raise awareness on issues such as drugs, alcohol abuse, peer pressure, rape, and human trafficking.

The team invited speakers from the South African Police Services - Mr. Magubane, local social worker - Ms. Simelane, community leader and former police officer - Mr. Nxumalo, Working on Fire (WOF) alumni - Mr. Mthembu, and WOF provincial management staff.

Vryheid crew leader Type 2, Thulani Mkhonza, said: "It was imperative for us to host a WOF Kids awareness day for

boys because the community is experiencing an increase in male rape cases, reportedly perpetrated by young boys."

Mkhonza said the community is also experiencing an increased number of underage drug abuse, which is also sold by teenagers working for drug lords. "This awareness was very beneficial because it assisted single mothers, who struggle in being relatable to their sons. It also helped other parents because most of us do not touch on such topics at home, and even if we do, we do not have much information and this is why we had to engage relevant professionals."

The team donated R1 400 and raised R856.50 towards the event. They also reached out to stakeholders to support

the initiative. "We appreciate and thank Wimpy, Spur, Toyota, Engen Petrol Station, and the Vryheid Taxi Association because they understood the importance of our initiative and supported it. We made a step in alleviating many social ills affecting our youth in our community."

Employee Assistant Practitioner, Njabulo Mabaso, is proud of the team and said: "Well done to the Vryheid team because this was truly a great and successful initiative. The gap between parent and child was bridged."

The WOF Kids concluded the day with a friendly soccer game.



The WOF Kids with their parents after learning how to protect themselves against crime and drug abuse.

FIGHTING HUNGER

The Kameeldrift Drop Centre is harvesting the vegetables which were planted by the Working on Fire executive management (EXCO) during Mandela Day in July. Tshepo Moepe, a project coordinator for the centre, said the community is benefiting from the vegetable garden initiated by WOF.

"The WOF's Roodeplaat team has been maintaining the garden and we are grateful for the help," said Moepe.

The team went to assist the management of the centre to hand out vegetables in the community. Moepe explained the harvest helps mitigate hunger in the community. The Kameeldrift centre services the community

and gives meals to the vulnerable.

WOF Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, led his executive team to plant vegetable seedlings at the centre during Mandela Day. EXCO also provided party packs for the children who benefit from the centre.

Crew leader Type 2, Katlego Molapo, said the team is grateful for making a difference in the lives of the community. He added that this is the second harvest from the vegetable garden.

"WOF bought the seedlings and fertiliser, and we could not allow it to be wasted. Therefore, time and energy were invested to make it productive," he said.



The Roodeplaat team and Project Coordinator, Tshepo Moepe, proudly display their harvest.

LIVING THE DREAM

Thato Mokoena, who is a driver for the De Wildt team, has invested his stipends in buying livestock for farming purposes.

“It has been difficult to start but there is progress. Thus far, I have nine cows, 15 goats, and 10 sheep. A chunk of my cost goes to buying medication for the livestock. However, it is worth it,” said the aspiring commercial farmer.

Mokoena was inspired by fellow participants

who are into farming. He used to depend on other farmers for bulls and rams. His intention is to start a feedlot for the cows and will use his four hectares of land where he keeps the livestock.

“I attend farmers’ days to learn about the modern ways of farming. I am looking into artificial insemination for cows and I need the best quality herd of cows to flourish commercially,” he said.



Thato Mokoena is a driver for the De Wildt team in Gauteng and is an emerging farmer.

AN 11-YEAR JOURNEY



Mafikeng base crew leader, Nthabiseng Maggy Marumagae, is celebrating 11 years of service.

Working on Fire has recruited the highest number of woman firefighters, with women comprising 33 percent of its firefighting force. WOF continues to empower women by appointing them in leadership positions and such is the case with Nthabiseng Maggy Marumagae.

Marumagae joined WOF as a participant at the Barberspan base in 2011. She was later selected to go through the crew leader Type

2 course in 2014 and is currently serving in that position at the Mafikeng base.

“Because joining WOF, life was so difficult because I was living in a shack. Today I can proudly say I have bought myself a house with my stipend and have a warm home for my family. I am physically and mentally fit because of the training and skills WOF has provided to me,” said the mother of one.

A SECOND CHANCE



Working on Fire's North West storekeeper, Lerato Madie.

Working on Fire North West participant, Lerato Madie is one of the many women recruited into the WOF Programme, whose life changed for the better.

Madie began her WOF journey 11 years ago when she was recruited for the Barberspan team. In 2014, her life changed when she got injured during fire suppression operations. Her injury was deemed permanent and affected her performance in carrying duties as a firefighter. She was transferred to the Naledi base to serve in her current position as a storekeeper.

“I was afraid of the challenge because it was a big change from fire fighting to a storekeeper. However, through the support of my team members and managers, I adapted to the position and consider store keeping as one of the best jobs I ever did,” said Madie.

Madie took an internal transfer from the Naledi team to her current base, the Molemane team, because she wanted to be near her family. “I am grateful to WOF for the many skills I have gained within the Programme, such as communication, computer, and life skills.”

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Rayno Stevens, a crew leader for the Vrolijkheid team, has served the Working on Fire Programme for 15 years.

During a trip down memory lane, Stevens recalled some of the big fires he had the privilege to put out. He was on the frontline at the largest wildfire ever reported in South Africa - 2017 the Knysna fire.

In his early days as a participant, Stevens was a first aider and was once deployed to a fire in the Tulbagh area where he had to treat his colleagues who had minor burns.

“Over the years, I have fought countless fires,

small and big. I believe I have saved a lot of lives and what gives me great pride is the difference I have made, and continue to make, in my community.”

Drugs and gangsterism are rife in my community. I have encouraged many youngsters to join the Working on Fire Programme, and have mentored them. Many of them have risen through the ranks, while others are now permanently employed. Some have even started their own businesses. All of this has been possible due to the skills and training we receive at WOF and it always makes me happy to see people I have helped succeed,” said Stevens.



Rayno Stevens is proud to have been making a difference for the past 15 years.

SALUTING A VETERAN

Working on Fire Mpumalanga said goodbye to veteran crew leader, Petrus “PB” Makhubedu, in August. PB was the crew leader Type I for the Lydenburg team and is now a fireman and baggage handler at the Kruger Mpumalanga International (KMI) airport.

The WOF Programme celebrated 19 years of its existence in September and PB - as he is affectionately known - has been right there since the beginning. He was recruited at the Graskop base in 2003. Familiar with a strict fitness regime due to his part-time stint at the South African National Defence Force, he took to the WOF standard like a duck to water.

The veteran’s journey was a long and fruitful one, and he shared how the 2007 firestorm that took place in three provinces - Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo - was his most memorable highlight because he was a newly-appointed crew leader at the time. PB and the multiple crews worked tirelessly to contain what has been the biggest fire ever experienced in those regions.

His leadership skills led him to be deployed to various bases. “I led the Loskop and Graskop bases and trained as a structural firefighter. I left WOF to work on a project at KMI in 2011, however, our contract ended in 2018. I was very fortunate that WOF took me back and reinstated me as a crew leader for the Lydenburg team.”

PB exited the Programme on 4 August this year, when he got another opportunity to work at KMI. He sees himself being a Fire Chief at the airport, and also wants to further his education - with the dream of being a social worker.

“It will happen, trust me. I want my two boys to live a good life and I will make it happen. God has been good to me. Working on Fire has been good to me and I will miss the WOF Family.”

WOF Mpumalanga salutes this veteran and wishes him the best in his new job. Thank you for your service PB!



Former crew leader for the Lydenburg team, Petrus PB Makhubedu, bags a job at the Kruger Mpumalanga International airport.

GREENER PASTURES AT MTO



Witelsbos crew leader, Elereo De Boer, joins MTO as a driver operator.

Working on Fire Eastern Cape congratulated the former crew leader, Elereo De Boer, on his appointment as a driver operator at MTO Plantation.

De Boer joined the WOF six years ago as a participant at the Witelsbos base, and within three years, moved up the ranks to Crew leader Type 2 and Type 1.

“While I was in the Programme I made sure I use my stipend to do my license and that assisted a lot because I even assisted my base managers with the driving during busy days,” explained De Boer.

He said WOF equipped him with so many

skills, and as a crew leader, he also got many opportunities to lead a large group of firefighters during the Tsitsikamma fires, which raged on for more than five days.

The young man said it is not easy to lead a team during fires, but with the leadership skills gained at WOF, he managed to do very well and his team contained them.

De Boer advised all young people to believe in themselves, work hard and never give up. “Half a loaf is better than nothing. The little you get from WOF can help you get a better qualification, a driver’s license, or anything that might change your life for the better.”

ON THE MOVE



Former Leeuwfontein participant, Tidimalo Ralekoa, is a security officer in Pretoria.

A former participant for the Working on Fire Gauteng Leeuwfontein base, Tidimalo Ralekoa, is grateful to the WOF Programme for offering him a working opportunity. He has exited to become a security officer at the Fidelity Guard company in Pretoria.

“I used my stipend to do security training in December and I obtained a Grade C certificate. I have also done fire arm training,” he said.

Ralekoa was recruited in 2019 and shared how it was always his intention to exit the

Programme for greener pastures. “The Programme served as a stepping stone and I urge my former colleagues to up-skill when there is opportunity.”

Sabelo Kubheka (Regional Manager) said Ralekoa has been an ethical employee who worked hard to succeed. “It is interesting to see the success of our participants. I am grateful to have worked with him and he will remain close because he will service our base partner as a security officer. All the best to him,” said Kubheka.