CELEBRATING 17 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

BETWEEN WORKING ON FIRE, KISHUGU AND PARTNERS

Working on Fire

FIRE AWARENESS

CELEBRATING 17 YEARS OF FIRE AWARENESS EDUCATION

environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

WORKING ON FIRE

EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

FOREWORD

Working on Fire has endeavoured for over 17 years to create communities resilient to wildfires, through implementing Integrated Fire Management principles.

Our national footprint, partnerships and FireSafe methodology are the core of our success.

More than 98% of the qualified and experienced facilitators and assessors in the Fire Awareness and Education programme are former wildland firefighters.

They, in turn, have trained and empowered firefighters and High Altitude Team (HAT) members to conduct and facilitate lessons aligned to the CAPS curriculum for learners and educators, as well as community outreach activities.

We conduct frequent research to ensure our content, methodologies and techniques are current and relevant to our communities.

The Fire Awareness Department has produced numerous educational materials and resources to supplement our training and workshops over the past decade and a half.

Our sound partnerships and collaborations with communities, the public and private sectors over the past 17 years are pivotal to the success of our impact and reach.

In light of the COVID-19 restrictions, we are bolstering our online platforms to ensure we can maintain and expand our FireSafe efforts to communities and stakeholders.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my Fire Awareness team, who have shown heart and dedication in all they do. Their ability to show creativity, adapt to challenges and innovate has enabled us to always offer the best programme to our stakeholders.

Luthfia Cader
Executive: Fire Awareness & Social Development

Fire Awareness Department Overview – Strategy

The Fire Awareness Education Programme is a component of the Working on Fire Programme.

Fire awareness education is a key principle of Integrated Fire Management considering that over 90 percent of unwanted fires are caused by human negligence.

Not all fires are bad – a fire that is required to maintain ecosystem function can be used, under controlled conditions, as an efficient land management tool in most of South Africa.

The Fire Awareness Education Programme combines environmental education, fire and life safety education and disaster risk assessment and mitigation. In the past, different organisations undertook separate interventions in these areas. Our Fire Awareness programmatic goals are aligned to the manifestos and goals of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries. They are also aligned with the CAPS curriculum of the Department of Basic Education.

School awareness in North West

School debate in Limpopo

Our programme develops fire awareness educators, builds resilient communities and develops and implements Fire Awareness campaigns, while distributing valuable information to address myths, change negative perceptions and alter behaviour patterns.

Well-trained Fire Awareness Officers key to successful advocacy

The Fire Awareness Department evolved from the Advocacy Department, which was made up of Communications, Social Development, Fire Awareness and Community Fire Awareness units.

Following a restructuring of the Advocacy Department in 2013, the Fire Awareness Department emerged, with eight Fire Awareness Training Officers (FATOs) and eight Community Fire Awareness Officers (CFAOs) led by two National Coordinators. Firefighters were recruited and promoted to these positions.

The Department has since grown from 16 to 24 officers and two coordinators.

Fire Awareness Team during a training session

Wildfires impact on our communities

Wildfires often affect communities economically and socially. Wildfires result in direct costs associated with firefighting, the loss of income, land, shelter and food resources, as well as damage and repair to properties. Damage or destruction of infrastructure such as buildings, roads, disrupted electricity or water supply can also have a negative effect on local businesses and tourism, which can contribute to poverty in the community.

Wildfires can also destroy natural resources in our communities such as communal grazing land, indigenous forests and wetlands. After the fire, the land is exposed to soil erosion which causes further damage. Because some communities depend on these natural resources for income and survival, they can be affected for years after the fire, as natural resources slowly recover.

Smoke, ash and debris from wildfires result in air and water pollution and poor water quality. These can cause longer-term threats to humans and the ecosystem.

Fire education and awareness are the key elements in assisting communities to prevent unwanted wildfires. Communities are encouraged to participate in fire awareness education and fire-risk projects like fuel load reduction in preparation for the fire season. They also need to take ownership of the responsibility to reduce fire risks and hazards and educate landowners and community members through FireSafe projects.

Zanele Nxumalo,
Community Fire Awareness Coordinator

Fire Awareness Materials and Content Development

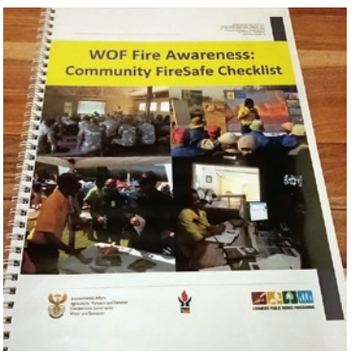
Appropriate fire awareness education materials and content needed to be developed and utilised for each relevant audience.

The Department has developed, among others, Z-folders in five official languages for door-to-door distribution in communities.

The development of A-frame Visual Charts to use as aids in workshops and at school awareness activities is ongoing, as learning through seeing takes place 75 percent faster than other methods. The Department has developed school curriculum-aligned (CAPS) lesson plans for the Foundation, Intermediate, Senior and FET phases, to meet the educational needs of all learners. This has yielded great results, as educators are reporting seeing the difference these lesson plans are making in learners.

"Climate change is exactly what we are doing in class and I am happy that Working on Fire is teaching our learners too," says one educator, commenting on the CAPS-aligned lesson plan on climate change for Senior Phase.

Pictured are the four school phase lesson plan booklets



FireSafe checklist and manual

The Department has also developed Community FireSafe Workshop booklets to train community members and various EPWP groups.

FIRE AWARENESS ACTIVITIES 2011 - 2020

Over the past nine years the Fire Awareness Programme in Working on Fire has been essential in ensuring that communities and schools are equipped with knowledge on how to reduce their fire risks and also what to do in the event of a fire.

- School Activities: 10 216
- Learners and Teachers Reached 1, 7 Million .
- Community Activities: 10 754
- Community Members Reached: 1, 3 Million.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

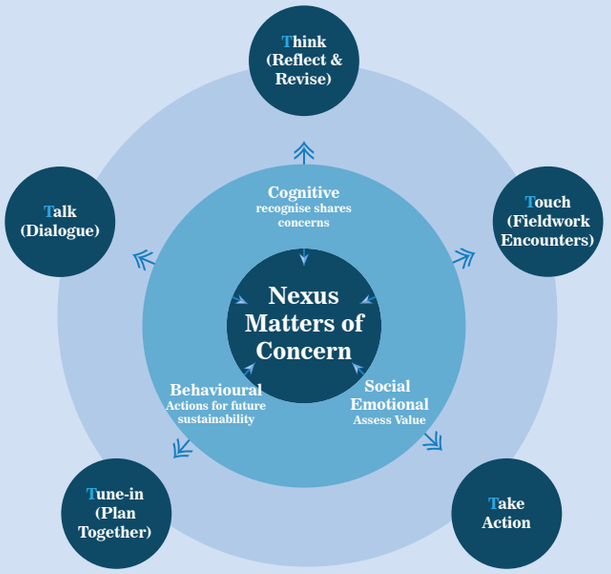
The WOF Fire Awareness Department has grown its impact and influence through community-driven initiatives based on sound stakeholder engagement with organisations pursuing similar goals. When the Department began in 2013, stakeholder relations were not good, as the officers could not engage well with stakeholders at all levels. Over the years, the Department has worked tirelessly at stakeholder management to build its reputation and has been accepted and become one of the pillars in communities and the disaster management sector as a whole. This was confirmed by the Fire Awareness Impact Study of 2018–2020. Various stakeholders have partnered and contributed to the Department's goals, including through the partnership with Shoprite in ECD educator workshops, and municipalities sponsoring venues, catering and materials for our FA Campaigns and FireSafe workshops. Other noteworthy stakeholder partners include the KwaZulu-Natal Disaster Prevention staff, Western Cape Community Development Workers projects, Mpumalanga SANDF project and Environmental forums. WOF's contributions to the partnerships include supporting partners' events in various ways and providing educational materials.

Fire Awareness Action Learning Approach

Working on Fire's Fire Awareness Department focuses on fire prevention by educating communities and schools with key fire safety messages.

In March 2019, the Department attended a workshop conducted with the Wildlife Environmental Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) on the use of action learning in teaching fire awareness.

The aim was to revise the learning content to make fire awareness education fun, interesting, engaging and interactive, and to include hands-on examples and real-life opportunities for experiential learning. The action learning approach is a process of interlinking activities – find out what we already know, talk about it, use touch and real-life encounters, think about what is happening, and take action. Action learning has the potential to increase the positive impact of environmental education for school learners and community members.



The learners face a real situation, which is a starting point for acquiring skills, while the participants learn through experience and stay motivated, due to the relevance of the learning process to their working practice.

TOP TEAMS IN FIRE AWARENESS EDUCATION

Loskop Team shines in Fire Awareness performance assessment

The Fire Awareness Department conducts workshops every month aimed at equipping firefighters to deliver fire safety messages at schools and communities.

This is part of the WOF mandate from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and each team is expected to spread the key messages of fire prevention to create communities that are fire resilient and to influence individual behavioural change.

Each team is assessed on their performance throughout the year, by measuring the number of schools and communities and audiences reached.

The top team in 2019/2020, out of 210 WOF teams, was the Loskop Team of Mpumalanga, which secured the top spot after conducting 74 school and community awareness workshops.

Gauteng participants enjoy Wetlands Workshop

Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) Jabulile Shabalala conducted a workshop on Wetlands and Fire at Suikerbosrand Base in Gauteng on 4 February 2020.

The workshop aimed to train Working on Fire participants to deliver successful awareness presentations to their communities and schools.

Shabalala demonstrated how to build a wetland, explaining the link between wetlands and fire.

"Wetlands play a huge role in purifying water and this was demonstrated during the practical exercise," she said.

Shabalala used active learning to help participants understand how wetlands work. The participants responded positively to the workshop and are now looking forward to saving lives and protecting the environment by educating their communities and school learners on the importance of wetlands in the environment.

Gauteng FATO Jabulile Shabalala educating the Suikerbosrand Team

"The new lesson plan is different from the old one as we use more visual aids, which will help us deliver good presentations to our audience," says Bafana, a firefighter.

Teams clean wetlands

The Riversdale Team during the wetlands clean-up campaign

The Riversdale Team in the Western Cape commemorated Wetlands Week by collaborating with Cape Nature, Working for Water and the Department of Environment, Forest and Fisheries to clean up a wetland in Heidelberg.

This wetland was used as an unauthorised community dumping site for years and it posed a serious fire hazard to the community and nearby properties. The participants cleaned the wetland area by removing the litter and rubble.

NW Kgaswane team celebrating wetlands day with stakeholders

WOF firefighters took the opportunity to educate the community about the importance of keeping the local wetland clean and the benefits of a conserved wetland which could play a role in reducing the risk of runaway fires. In areas where there is a lot of vegetation, rather than use valuable land, wetlands are burnt annually in the winter season to form good fire breaks.

Western Cape FATO Team demonstrating during action learning

NMU students learn about Integrated Fire Management

The Witfontein Team in the Western Cape engaged with 30 first-year Fire Management students from Nelson Mandela University, about the importance of Integrated Fire Management (IFM).

Type 1 Crew Leader Bredon Classen explained that IFM entails a series of actions that include fire awareness, fire prevention activities, fire detection, fire suppression, fire damage rehabilitation and research.

The team annually engages with new students studying fire management courses at the university and introduces them to the WOF organisation and how it renders IFM services.

"We thank WOF because we have learned how IFM principles assist in managing fires and we will implement these practices when we are employed," says Tsepo Gqeze, a student from NMU.

Learners discover Fire Danger Index

The Free State Thaba'Nchu Team conducted a school fire awareness presentation on the Fire Danger Index (FDI) for Foundation Phase learners at Seroki Primary School in Botshabelo Section M on 15 November 2019. The FDI is presented to Foundation Phase learners every school term.

The team introduced the topic by linking it to the traffic light, which learners learned about in relation to personal safety. On the A-Frame flip chart, which is one of the Fire Awareness training visual aids, the colours of the FDI and the traffic light colours have similar meanings, with the only difference being that the FDI chart has more colours.

The team explained the colours of the FDI to the learners for them to understand the impact weather patterns have on fires. The team placed five different colours of the FDI in different locations at the school, pointing out the weather conditions, and asked the learners to run to the relevant colour.

The learners had opportunities to discuss their experiences, share ideas, as well as find possible solutions.

"We are grateful as the team to have been chosen to use visual aids like A-Frame charts and traffic robots, which made the presentation more interesting and effective to the learners," the crew leader said.

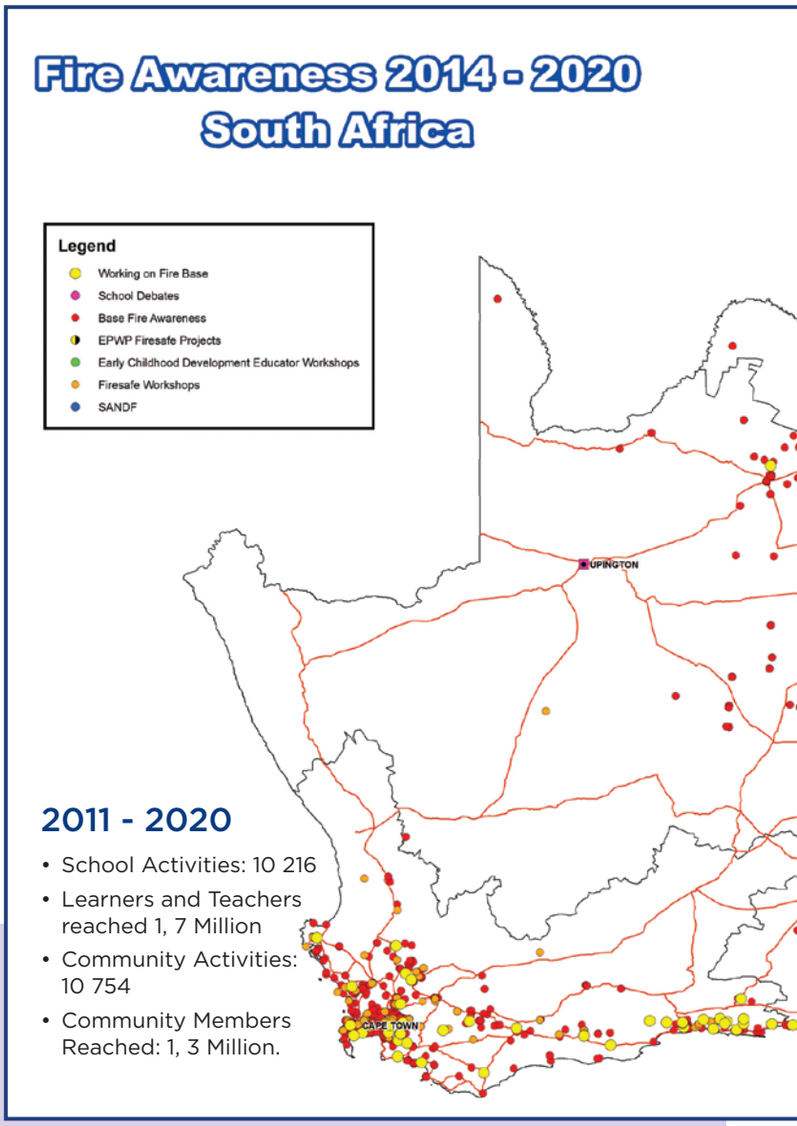
WOF team tours Intaka Centre

The Western Cape's Helderberg Team attended a tour of the Intaka Environmental Centre at Century City on 13 March 2020.

The team was exposed to the structure of a sustainable classroom, which had an earthworm farm, recycling bins and a natural compost heap.

The team learned how to use recycled water effectively and gained innovative ideas on how to use recycled materials at their base.

The team soaked up valuable information that they will be able to share in their fire awareness initiatives at schools. They aim to construct a similar sustainable classroom at their base, which will be used to conduct fire awareness with surrounding schools.



Foundation Phase school educators empowered in Middelburg

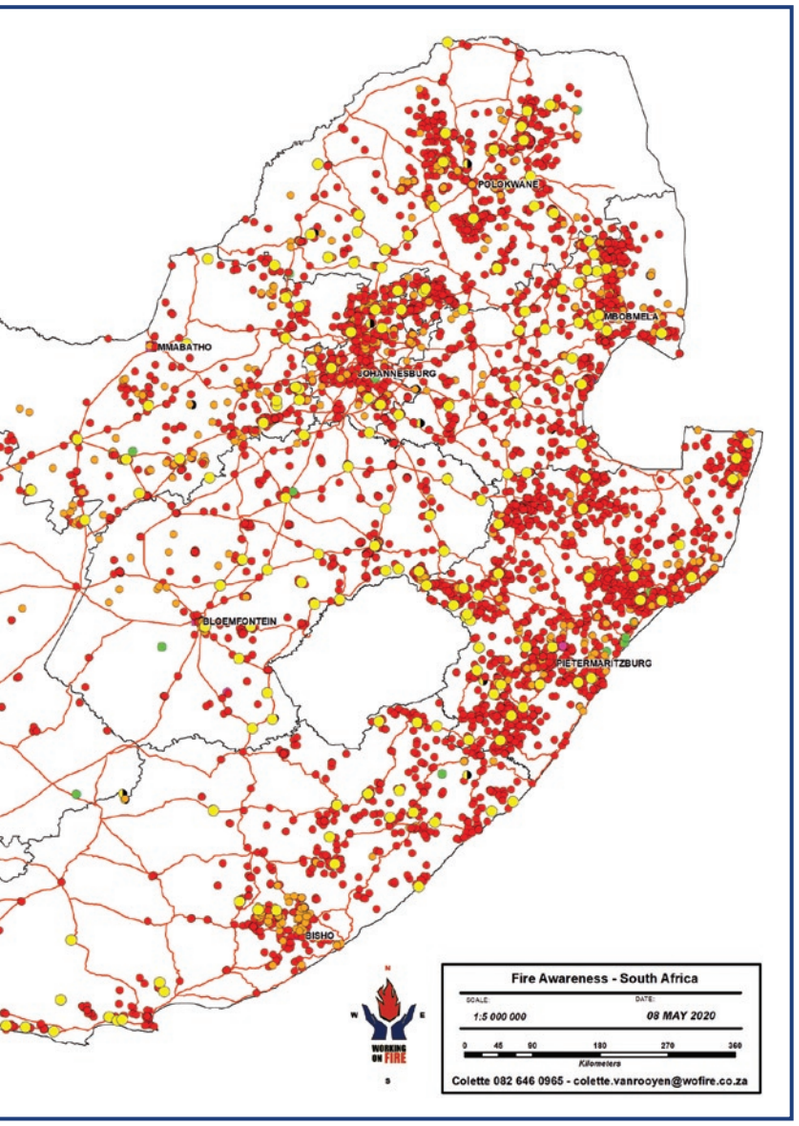
WOF Mpumalanga partnered with Shoprite to host an Early Childhood Development (ECD) fire safety workshop in March at the Bethel Preparatory School aimed at promoting fire awareness in Foundation Phase school educators in Mhluzi, Middelburg.

Eighteen educators from the Shoprite-sponsored ECD centres participated in the workshop.

Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) Elliot Nyathi explained to the educators what fire safety knowledge their learners were expected to have during the fire season. "We covered several topics, from 'Stop, Drop, and Roll', 'Crawling low under smoke', 'Fire escape plan', 'Fire cause' and 'prevention'," Nyathi says.

Representatives from Shoprite were present and acknowledged the tremendous work done by the WOF Fire Awareness team and said they looked forward to continuing the working relationship.

Sibasa Circuit schools debate environment issues



WOF works with environmental stakeholders to annually host school debates in school circuits and districts around the country, to raise fire awareness among the youth. The school debates assist learners and their educators to identify environmental hazards and apply prevention measures.

The WOF Limpopo 2019 school debates were held at John Marupini Primary School, where six schools from the Sibasa Circuit competed in a debate about environmental issues.

The topic was 'This house believes Wildfires fuel Climate Change'. Each school had a team of five Grade 8 and 9 learners with only three learners in each team allowed to debate.

Mbilwi Secondary School's team was head and shoulders above the rest, securing first place.

After the debate, the WOF Phiphidi Team was invited to visit the schools to conduct Fire Awareness presentations.

Gauteng ECD workshop a success

Working on Fire conducted an Early Childhood Development (ECD) workshop on 14 March 2020 at Tamboville Daycare Centre in Wattville in the Ekurhuleni District Municipality.

The workshop facilitators, Fire Awareness Training Officer Jabulile Shabalala and Community Fire Awareness Officer Lerato Mokwena, aimed to educate educators at Shoprite-sponsored ECD centres about fire safety.

"Our objective is to ensure safety is provided to everyone in the community," Mokwena says.

Shabalala says it is important to educate ECD educators since they interacted with children on a daily basis.

"The workshop is quite interesting and useful to all of us as educators and it has given us fire safety tips, which will assist in preventing unwanted fires and protecting our children and homes," says Lebelo Penny, one of the educators. Penny says she learned a lot about how to cool a fire burn.

"I did not know that when you get burnt, you need to run cool water onto the burnt area for at least 20 minutes and cover it with a clean cloth," says Penny.

Early Childhood Development 2015-2019

Schools Reached	Educators Reached
450	950

SCHOOL DEBATES 2015-2019

Schools Reached	Learners
192	1152

QUOTES FROM PARTNERS

Western Cape

"The Community Development Worker Programme values the partnership with Working on Fire immensely. By empowering people and growing awareness we are saving lives." – Heinrich Magerman, Director: Community Development Worker Programme, Western Cape Department of Local Government.

"The FireSafe workshop I attended enabled me to spread fire awareness messaging in the community and place emphasis on the importance of reducing unwanted risks in our community, as we border the Cape Nature Driftsands nature reserve." – Charlotte Wallaby, Blue Downs community member.

Gauteng

"Working on Fire, through the leadership of Lerato Mokwena, has brought tremendous impact in the West Rand and their awareness and education interventions have improved lives, protected properties and the environment. The programme that was implemented in the West Rand assisted the communities of the area to respond appropriately to the requirements of the standard. Veld fires, informal settlement and formal dwellings fires have decreased." – Paul Motsepe, Chairperson of West Rand PIER (Public Information Education and Relations).

"Fire Awareness education has played a pivotal role in our communities, especially in the informal settlements. Community members now understand what to do when fire begins and what not to do. Working on Fire plays a key role in every aspect of wildfires." – Sarah Kekana, Community Development Worker in Region 5, City of Tshwane.

"Thank you Working on Fire for giving my learners an opportunity to participate in this educational experience. They learned a lot about the different impacts fire has on the environment. The school debate competition was tough and us coming from a farm school, we have not been as exposed to all the great interactions with other local schools." – LN Sosibo, educator from Kudung Middle School.

QUOTES FROM PARTNERS

North West

"The Disaster Management section would like to thank and express appreciation for the cooperation and support Working on Fire is giving to the department. Thank you to Ms Dinko and Ms Tepo. Keep up the good work." – Tsholofelo Moumakwa, Public Awareness Officer from JB Marks Local Municipality Disaster Management Centre.

Limpopo

"The total number of fires has definitely decreased after fire awareness workshops were conducted in Vaalwater and Modimolle. These workshops, specially tailored for their respective audiences, had a great impact on landowners and children because most of these fires were caused by human negligence." – Mariette Nicholson, Operations Manager of Modimolle FPA and base manager of three WOF bases.

"Thanks to Working on Fire for educating the community of Lekhureng. Our community is a great distance from the fire station and there is a lot of vegetation around us. These fire awareness workshops have been beneficial to the community as a whole." – Lizzy Matlala, Community youth development leader.

"Working on Fire had a very positive impact on my career and my fellow colleagues. As educators in the subject of Life Skills, we incorporate in our teaching the information provided by Working on Fire. Our learners come from rural settlements and regularly use fire as they go about their daily house duties. From the information presented our learners are now self-aware and cautious. We thank WOF and appreciate the work that WOF is doing for our staff." – DM Thoka, Limpopo.

Eastern Cape

"The Jongile Nompondo Secondary School accepted the challenge which was presented to us by the Working on Fire, to participate in their annual school debates. As the winning school, we would love to nurture our partnership with the Fire Awareness team. We thank the Fire Awareness team and WOF management for the invitation" – ME Blakie, Jongile Nompondo Secondary School, Eastern Cape.

Fire-prone community armed with safety knowledge

The community of Tshepong in the Free State was equipped with knowledge and skills to remain safe from fires in their area.

This was done during a FireSafe workshop facilitated by Glodinah Mofokeng, a Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO) in the province.

The community was selected because it is located in a fire-prone area, in Verkeerdevlei, where there is a long history of wildfires.

"I taught them how to protect the environment by identifying and reducing fuel loads that would ignite wildfires, as well as protecting themselves and their properties," Mofokeng says.

During the workshop, the attendees were encouraged to take ownership of identified fire risks, by implementing what they learned and sharing the information with the community at large.

Incema changing women's lives

Women from all over KwaZulu-Natal gather at the Mtunzini Wetland Heritage Site to collect incema and ikhwani, plants used for crafting mats and rugs.

This initiative is part of Mtunzini Ezemvelo's community-based Natural Resource Harvesting Programme which has seen the employment of 3 500 participants in the mat-making business.

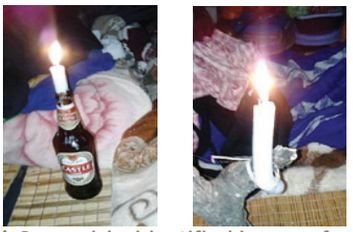
The Mtunzini Wetland is opened to the public once every two to three years and is one of a few areas where incema can still be collected as the natural resource has been conserved to allow harvesting only in recent years.

Working on Fire (WOF) partnered with Mtunzini and conducted a Fire Awareness workshop for the women who camp there for a week during the harvest. The talk included the relationship between wetlands and fire, and the great impact and severe damage fire can cause to wetlands.

According to KZN Community Fire Awareness Training Officer, Makhosi Dladla, who conducted the workshop, the women excitedly received all information presented at the workshop and expressed thanks to KZN Wildlife for organising an educational talk.

One of the potential risks identified at the Mtunzini Wetland is that runaway veld fires could ignite the vast incema fields.

"We wake up very early and come back very late, exhausted from the day's work, so anything can happen," one of the ladies from Msinga said.



Some risks identified in one of the tents at the ladies' camp during the fire awareness talk

Gauteng conducts FireSafe workshop

WOF Gauteng Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO), Lerato Mokwena, conducted a FireSafe workshop at the Majaneng Tribal Office in the City of Tshwane on 22 February 2020.

The workshop aimed to educate the elderly in the community to be fire safe. The District Disaster Management Centre participated in the initiative by sending a representative, Nkhensani Siwela, and Community Safety Officer, Grace Moeketsi.

Topics ranged from Fire Behaviour, Fire Causes, the Fire Danger Index, Personal Safety, Impacts of Fires, and Conducting Risk Assessments.

According to Siwela, the area suffered 20 fires before the implementation of Fire Awareness. Despite the fact that the Majaneng area had experienced the loss of two lives and property in a disastrous fire in 2019, the majority of fires in the area were due to human negligence.

"The causes of these fires were candles, cigarettes and members of the community constructing firebreaks without checking the Fire Danger Index," Siwela says.

The workshop was well-received by the large number of enthusiastic community members who attended.

"This workshop assisted in raising awareness about the negative impacts of fires and the people of Majaneng saw the need to be fire safe," says Joyce Kekana, a community member.

Since the workshop, only 15 fires were recorded in the area.

"Members of the community showed and exercised caution by being responsible and continuously conducting fire awareness activities and door-to-door campaigns," Mokwena says.

Gauteng CFAO Lerato Mokwena conducts a FireSafe workshop with members of the Majareng community

OR Tambo communities benefit from Good Deeds

WOF teams participated in the Green Deeds Clean-Up Campaign in April 2019, an initiative of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

This initiative aims to change people's behaviours towards responsible management of waste and keeping their neighbourhood clean, green and safe. The event also helped WOF cement partnerships with other participating stakeholders, included the OR Tambo District Municipality, local leaders and community members.

The Nqadu, Langeni and Mhlahlane teams from the OR Tambo region represented WOF in the campaign. "Activities of this nature add value to communities," says WOF RM Ongezwa Nonjinj.

"The event was important to assist the community in fuel reduction and we showed them ways to dispose of their waste responsibly," says WOF CFAO, Thulani Mkhosi.

SANDF gets fire safety tips

WOF Mpumalanga Community Fire Awareness Officer, Mbuso Siwela, visited the Macadamia Military Base during the soldiers' six-month rotational deployment around Nkomazi, the Oshoek border post and the Skukuza Game Reserve, which are fire-prone areas.

Siwela presented the causes and prevention of fire to the audience of 208 soldiers and demonstrated how chemicals, including glycerine and potassium permanganate, could start fires. The military personnel were reminded to appropriately store the chemicals confiscated at the borders. "We are very happy and want to continue working with Working on Fire in preventing fire and protecting the military and our border posts from unwanted fires," says Captain Sifiso Mthethwa.

The SANDF has prioritised fire safety since 2019, when two soldiers were trapped and injured in a grass fire.

Decade of partnership with King Cetshwayo Disaster Management

Working on Fire (WOF) has established strong partnerships with communities and various stakeholders through the years, through FireSafe workshops, fire awareness presentations and door-to-door campaigns.

King Cetshwayo Disaster Centre Manager, Sibonisile Kunene, speaks of the journey and some of the highlights that came out of the partnership with WOF.

"Our district is made up of five local municipalities, namely the uMfolozi, Mhlathuze, Umlalazi, Mthojaneni and Nkandla Local Municipalities, which have their own disaster risks and are all in fire-prone areas," Kunene says. "That is why it was imperative to establish a good relationship with WOF, to reduce the number of unwanted fires we were likely to have."

The relationship with the King Cetshwayo Disaster Management Centre spans 10 years and, due to budget constraints within the district, the partnership has been compelled to work in phases, which led to the Centre establishing FireSafe volunteers. "WOF, and especially Makhosi Dladla, championed this project and we were enabled to work with the volunteers closely during numerous workshops," says Kunene.

"Makhosi was relentless and also made sure that whatever plan she came up with, belonged to the volunteers, since they know the area very well and can easily identify the fire risks," Kunene adds.

Umfolozi Local Municipality Management, District Municipality Management, the Ward Councillor, KwaMbonambi Team and volunteers during the launch

Mrs Sibonisile Kunene is one of the dedicated leaders heading the King Cetshwayo Disaster Centre, who has changed and saved many lives through fire prevention programmes done in partnership with WOF

Community volunteers, the WOF Nkandla Team, Nkandla Fire & Rescue and King Cetshwayo Disaster Management Fire Chief burn a firebreak for a local community

KZN WOF makes impact at Royal Agricultural Show

Working on Fire in KwaZulu-Natal (WOF KZN) made a strong showing at Pietermaritzburg's Royal Agricultural Show, the largest mixed agricultural exhibition in KZN.

This annual ten-day event is well-known for displays of livestock and agricultural equipment and also for its wide range of activities, which includes live music concerts and a funfair for the young visitors.

The Royal Show attracts more than 200 000 visitors from across the province, including school learners and educators.

Every year since 2013, WOF has used the show to raise awareness of the importance of fire safety, preserving the environment and preparing for the fire season that begins in May in the province. "In this period, we have raised awareness with the large number of schools attending and the Royal Show community at large," says KZN FATO Khulani Zulu.

Zulu says WOF had great success this year and an estimated 4 900 learners have been educated and new relationships with various stakeholders established.

Learners attend the KZN FireSafe presentation during the Royal Show

Morojaneng home-based caregivers learn about fire safety

Free State Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO), Glodinah Mofokeng, conducted a special project workshop for thirteen Department of Health home-based caregivers, in Morojaneng.

The group of caregivers learned how to assess their community's fire risks and draw up a fire management plan to prevent unwanted fires.

Mofokeng aimed to empower the group to educate and share information with the members of the community they interact with on a daily basis. "I chose home-based caregivers as my special project, in the hope that they will be our fire awareness ambassadors, as they work with the community and know all their problems," Mofokeng says.

Mofokeng says the home-based caregivers play a big role in assisting with profiling and identifying communities that ought to be the first priority for fire awareness intervention.

"Today I have learned how to assess fire risks and I am going to put it into practice and share the knowledge with my community, as I have seen their vulnerabilities. We are happy and appreciate this training," said one of the caregivers.

Community takes ownership through FireSafe workshop

WOF North West Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO), Sophy Dinko, conducted a FireSafe workshop for the community of Moruleng in Rustenburg on 7 November 2019.

The community is situated near the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve and was identified by the Reserve's community development worker.

The workshop aimed to educate the community on how veld fires can negatively impact on their lives, and how they can protect themselves against runaway veld fires. During the Fire Risk Assessment activity, the community learned of the risks they face in the event of a runaway veld fire. The assessment revealed they were at a high risk as the nearest fire station was more than 80 kilometres away.

The workshop helped community members to take ownership of their risk and come up with a suitable fire management plan to address the issues.

After the workshop, the community formed a fire forum that will work closely with local stakeholders, including the local Disaster Management Centre, the municipality, and Fire Protection Associations, to help the community with some of the identified challenges.

Zola Hans's journey through WOF

Zola Hans joined WOF in February 2011 at the Ukhahlamba Base. He became a Type 2 Crew Leader in May 2012 and was promoted to Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) after the restructuring of the Fire Awareness Department.

"I was fortunate to acquire skills in facilitation, project management and facilitated learning because these courses helped me to excel and also mature, in and out of the workplace," Hans says.

He says FATOs Thulani Mkhosi (WC) and Bongumusa Nyathi (KZN) are a big influence on him and he enjoys mentoring Base Communication Representatives.

Hans says, "I have always been purpose-driven, but the position has catapulted my desire for success and has given me skills to professionally interact with communities and stakeholders.

"I am keen to learn and give more to the WOF programme, as it has transformed my life for the better. I am studying towards a formal education while keeping a healthy balance between school and my work."

Teko Mooki's journey of success

According to Eastern Cape Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO), Teko Mooki, "Good things come to those who wait and work very hard."

Mooki joined WOF as a firefighter in 2012 at the Boskop Base in North West. In 2016, he was promoted to Fire Awareness Facilitator in the North West and later promoted to FATO in the Eastern Cape.

"Being a part of the Fire Awareness Department has equipped me with various skills as I have been developed through various courses, including Facilitator and Community-Based Risk Reduction courses," Mooki says.

He is now able to conduct workshops for different audiences, to identify and analyse the risks in communities and to build stakeholder relations with different sectors.

"I also conduct training for Base Communication Representatives on Fire Awareness and manage them on a daily basis."

Mooki's goal is to make the world a better place and he credits his life's experiences for driving him to achieve more in life.

"I hope to further my education and develop myself further within the WOF programme," says Mooki.

Phenny Phukubye's journey as a FATO

I joined the WOF Mapungubwe Team on 11 February 2011 as a firefighter.

During my time at Mapungubwe, I was chosen to attend the First Aider and SHE Rep course and after that, I became a Type 2 Crew Leader.

Due to my dedication and discipline, I was appointed as a Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) in the very same year.

This new position came with a lot of challenges but I managed to adapt and deliver.

As a facilitator, I was part of the 'Train a Trainer' project and it was challenging because I did not have any professional skills whatsoever. WOF assisted me by developing my skills and I studied Community Risk Reduction and Fire and Life Safety with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2015, where I learned more about the different methods of delivering the right message to the relevant audiences.

WOF continued to support my growth, taking me on a Project Management course at Twasa Training. As FATO, I have to coach and mentor firefighters and work with different stakeholders, which has opened my eyes to all new opportunities open for me. The trajectory of my life has changed as I was able to obtain my SAMTRAC certificate at NOSA, and I am currently studying Environmental Management ISO 14001:2004.

From Health & Safety to Fire Awareness

My journey at Working on Fire (WOF) began at ground level, being a firefighter for five years and going through the ranks.

I was a Health and Safety Administrator for a year before I joined the Fire Awareness Department. It has been a great seven years which has seen me grow from strength to strength.

I recall being nervous when I joined the Department. However, my colleagues went out of their way to make me feel welcome.

I was trained by WOF, which developed my skills and equipped me with all the necessary tools to fulfil my mandate, which includes working with various communities and stakeholders.

I am now fully armed with problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence and good work ethics, which includes keeping to deadlines, compiling reports and statistics, teamwork, self-discipline and professionalism.

I am happy to be a part of this department, which ensures I learn something new each and every day and look forward to my journey ahead.

Fire Awareness Training Officer Khulani Zulu

Khulani Emmanuel Zulu joined WOF on 11 November 2011 after being recruited at the Nkandla Base, in the King Cetshwayo District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

I completed a 21-day basic firefighting course as well as videography training in 2012 and reached Type 2 Crew Leader that same year. I furthered my training with a Type 1 Crew Leader course in 2013, which I cut short due to being appointed as a Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) in KwaZulu-Natal.

In my seven years of service as a FATO in KZN, I have gained communication, computer literacy and typing skills. I have also learned to write reports and capture statistics. I have attended and completed various courses, including Community Risk Reduction Fire and Life Safety, and Fundamentals of Project Management Level 4. I am currently awaiting certification for a facilitation course that I recently completed.

Being a FATO has impacted my life greatly and those of my family. My proudest moment was when I secured the Bargaining Council for Contract Cleaning Services programme which is SAQA accredited and offers various courses to WOF firefighters.

However, the biggest fulfilment I get in this job is assisting firefighters who are Base Communication Representatives in their daily duties at bases, in their personal lives and empowering them.

QUOTES FROM PARTNERS

Free State

"As a local government support official working for the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, I mainly work with municipalities, communities and different stakeholders in the environmental sector, to promote environmental care and management. Working on Fire is one of the most valuable stakeholders we work with in various projects throughout the year. I must commend them for their dedication and teamwork in ensuring they strengthen stakeholder relations and service the community." – Lefu Mofokeng, DEFF Local Government Support, Thabo Mofutsanyana District.

"I am one of the community members that was trained in a Working on Fire FireSafe workshop and I never knew how much we are at risk of fires. I learned that one has to conduct a fire risk assessment in order to be fire safe. I practice what I learned in my home and also share with neighbours. Working on Fire is indeed doing a great job, raising awareness about fires as my community of Marantha in the Free State faces a lot of fires." – Mrs Moleboheng Makae, community member, Kroonstad, Fezile Dabi District.

"Having been trained by Working on Fire to be fire safe, we understand that homes need to be fireproofed. We are grateful for Working on Fire's intervention as we can now play our part to help our clients and our community to be safe from unwanted fires." – Innocent Mokhosi, home-based care worker, Motheo District, Free State.

"I would like to thank Working on Fire and Shoprite for arming us with the knowledge and skills as this has helped us as the Thuso Imdaad Centre." – Mampho Thaele.

"I would like to thank the Bethlehem Working on Fire Team for all the knowledge they shared with us and our learners at my school during a FireSafe workshop." – Dieketseng Moskidi, Kgodisong Day Care Centre, Free State.

"Everyone present understood and enjoyed the Early Childhood Development workshop Working on Fire conducted. I believe that, due to that training, educators now know the different types of fires. Thank you for giving us that knowledge." – Susan Jaers, Department of Social Development.

QUOTES FROM PARTNERS

KwaZulu-Natal

"Working on Fire has been of great assistance to our school and community as we have worked with them since 2017, when we did clean-up and door-to-door campaigns as part of the Good Green Deeds project and hosted an Eco-Fashion show on Environmental Day." – Ms Buthelezi, Khethindlelenhle Primary School, Pietermaritzburg.

"Working on Fire capacitated all our municipalities with fire prevention activities, as they all have different challenges and are in fire-prone regions. The relationship has progressed with EPWP projects, where we managed to establish Disaster Volunteers. We have reduced and mitigated fire occurrence and WOF's Makhosi Dladla conducted numerous workshops with our trained volunteers." – Sibonisile Kunene, Manager, King Cetshwayo District Disaster Management Centre.

"Working On Fire had a great impact on our department as they have done something that has never been done before in Pietermaritzburg. Our relationship has been elevated as they work beyond the call of duty, partnering with us during garden projects called 'Vegetable garden begins at home' and giving some of our ex-offenders a second chance in life by employing them." – Pamela Smith, Department of Correctional Services.

"Working on Fire's presence during our incema harvesting opened my eyes because ever since we arrived, fire safety has never been a concern. But after they identified fire risks, we see how we can lose our lives and how candles we use in our tents can put our lives at risk." – Participant at incema harvest.

Mpumalanga

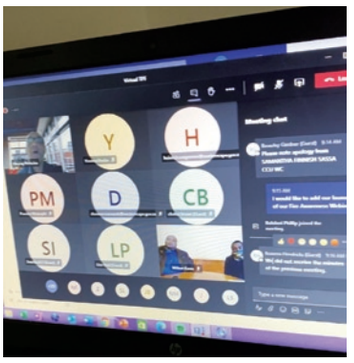
"Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Disaster Management Centre has a good working relationship with Working on Fire as we have conducted several awareness campaigns together. This has saved many lives as we have seen a decrease in fires." – Mr Moima, Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Disaster Management Centre.

"The Working on Fire annual school debate was a well-organised initiative and our learners welcomed the exposure and experience they gained in participating. As the winning school, we thank WOF for the opportunity given to our children. Our learners are so proud of being crowned champions of the Msukaligwa Circuit." – AL Hadebe, Reggie Masuku Secondary School, Ermelo, Mpumalanga.

"The Steve Tshwete Local Municipality appreciates Working on Fire's Fire Awareness Department for the fire workshop they conducted in our region. We thank you as the workshop was very beneficial and we learned a lot." – Nancy Mabelane, Karabo Pre-school, Mpumalanga.

Adaptability in the face of COVID-19

Working on Fire prides itself on five key values that distinguish it as an organisation. One of our values, "adaptability", was put to the test with the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. As the Fire Awareness Department, we have been used to certain methods of educating communities, but now have been forced to adapt to the new normal to remain relevant and progressive. The spread of COVID-19 has resulted in measures being taken by the government to avoid physical contact. The Fire Awareness Department had to abandon face-to-face physical methods to exercise social distancing. We have since learnt to intensify the use of social media platforms like webinars, Zoom and Google Hangouts to reach out to stakeholders. For the communities, we have since adapted to online awareness



on Facebook. We have also employed videos on WhatsApp to upskill our BCRs to share with their team members, as part of driving the workshops.

Radio presentations have always been used but we recently increased them, seeing that radio reaches a lot of people. In all this, fire awareness has remained relevant and delivers

on our mandate to educate communities to be fire resilient. We believe all things are possible with technology as long as our mind-set shifts to adapt to the situation.

Understanding COVID-19

Following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Working on Fire Programme in the Eastern Cape is doing all it can in adhering to

COVID-19 precautionary safety measures to ensure that all its participants are safe.

The Fire Awareness cluster and Social Development conducted Information and Awareness workshops across the province to educate participants about the virus that has affected the globe. The team informed the participants about the virus, its symptoms and actions one could take if one was affected.

The workshops concluded with participants demonstrating how to wash their hands to curb the spread of the virus.

Limpopo FATO equips firefighters with COVID-19 information

Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO), Kgwadi Kgamane, was able to conduct COVID-19 awareness and information training on 24 March 2020, at the Modimolle Base in Limpopo.

He explained that COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus that was first discovered in Wuhan in China in December 2019.

Kgamane added that the virus could be transmitted from one person to another through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes without wearing a face mask.

"Those droplets land on the eyes, nose or mouth of the other person, and the symptoms will appear as a fever, cough, sore throat, redness of the eyes, short-

ness of the breath, tiredness, fatigue, body aches, and loss of taste or smell," Kgamane said.

He encouraged team members to abide by the measures advised by the Department of Health to prevent the spread of the disease, including washing hands with soap for 20 seconds and using alcohol-based hand sanitisers regularly.

"We are thankful for the information we have received and we are now fully equipped with information on how to prevent the spread of this disease," Type 1 Crew Leader Letters Lehutso said after the workshop.