



WOFIRE NEWS

— Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity —

June 2024



Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

Established over two decades ago, the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme, implemented by the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture, has emerged as a formidable force in combating wildland fires across South Africa and the world. It was only fitting that WOF, one of the South African government's most successful Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP) funded by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, participated in the EPWP Phase 5 Launch, on Wednesday, 24 April 2024, at the Buffalo City Stadium in East London, Eastern Cape.

WOF firefighters from the Dontsa team held a guard of honour and proudly escorted President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Eastern Cape Premier - Oscar Mabuyane and Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Sihle Zikalala in East London. President Ramaphosa also got to meet the WOF management team at the WOF exhibition stand, and conversed with

one of our female firefighters, Nomaphelo Mdayi, who was part of our historical Canada 2023 deployment.

During his keynote address, President Ramaphosa hailed WOF's global footprint for battling wildland fires and praised our teams as the best in the world. His acknowledgment validates the significant contributions and collaborations of the Working on Fire Programme to its much sought-after integrated wildland fire management and community resilience.

"Just very recently, we saw the great work done by the teams of Working on Fire in battling fires in the Western Cape. This is an EPWP environmental sector programme that has become so renowned across the world that the teams are called on by other countries to assist them with firefighting," said President Ramaphosa.

The president praised WOF's young men and women for exemplifying the intended objectives of the EPWP. "In the Public Employment Programme, these firefighting teams are fit, young men and women, who are the best in the world and who have put South Africa on a global map. Some of the young men and women of this programme have gone on to be trained as emergency response personnel, as members of the South African Police Force, and even qualified as pilots."

The Working on Fire Programme has and continues to fulfil the EPWP mandate. Over its 20-year history, it has developed a comprehensive model that goes beyond simply creating job opportunities. It focuses on providing development pathways out of poverty for South Africa's marginalised youth through a suite of social development and training initiatives.



WOF ASSISTS DFFE IN HISTORIC PLANTATION HANDOVER

The Working on Fire (WOF) Programme teams from Soekmekaar and Giyani took part in a ceremonial handover of a forestry plantation to the Mashamba Traditional Council in the Makhado Local Municipality, in Limpopo. The event was led by Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), Makhotsotso Soty.

Soty was welcomed warmly upon her arrival at Musanda's home in Ha-Mashamba, and the Giyani team stood resolute a guard of honour. The event began with a briefing session, followed by the symbolic planting of trees at the traditional council's home, highlighting the nationwide efforts towards food security and combating climate change. The WOF team also led the national anthem and performed a drill, demonstrating WOF's renowned discipline, dedication and commitment.

The ceremony marked a historical moment for the community, with the official handover of the 71.92-hectare Mabama plantation. Soty echoed our President's praises of WOF, showering our WOF teams with compliments for their fitness and dedication.

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture is committed to protecting the environment and saving lives from wildland fires through Integrated Fire Management Solutions. This is evident through its

implementation of the WOF Programme, one of South Africa's most successful Expanded Public Works Programmes that has thrived for over the past 20 years through collaborations and partnerships aimed at fighting wildland fires.

As Soty handed over the plantation to the Ha-Mashamba community, she highlighted the critical importance of cooperation and enhanced preparedness. She noted that the transfer of management of this plantation would significantly improve the livelihoods

of communities within the Mashamba Traditional Council. With over 100 of our own firefighters stationed across five (5) plantations in Limpopo, the WOF-Kishugu JV remains steadfast in rendering its world-renowned IFMS.

The event was further highlighted by the presence of the Executive Mayor of Vhembe Municipality, Cllr. Nkondo Freda, who officially welcomed the delegates to the ceremony. "Let us celebrate the triumph of this collaboration and partnership," she remarked.



A CALL FOR ACTION TO CURB WILDFIRES DURING CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICA WILDFIRE EXPO

The second annual Wildfire Expo for Central South Africa took place at Be Human in the Free State. The Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association partnered with the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture and collaborated with the Northern Cape Umbrella Fire Protection Association, to host the gathering to raise and increase awareness of wildland fire risks within the central parts of South Africa.

Deputy Director-General for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Nonhlanhla Mkhize, was in attendance and took to the podium to officially declare the second annual Wildfire Expo for Central South Africa open. Her speech highlighted the alarming statistics of the previous fire season: 6,779 fires impacting 721,000 hectares, with tragic human and animal casualties.

She noted how climate change exacerbates the threat, with rising temperatures fueling more frequent

and intense wildfires. She emphasised the need for collaboration and alluded to the 600 wildland firefighters in government programmes, including our Working on Fire (WOF) Programme and SANParks. “The government is committed to protecting lives, livelihoods, and the environment and we call for collective action to tackle this growing challenge head-on.”

Mkhize praised the WOF-Kishugu JV for its extensive ground and aerial resources and reiterated that DFFE’s funded WOF remains committed to supporting local authorities and communities, working collaboratively to mitigate the impacts of these devastating fires and protect natural resources.

WOF has 621 wildland firefighters stationed at 26 bases across the Free State, ready to be deployed if and when needed. These dedicated young men and women have undergone rigorous training through the

Kishugu Training Academy to save lives and protect the environment.

With global warming exacerbated by climate change, temperatures are expected to rise over the next decades, leading to drier conditions. The increasing risks and imminent threat of wildfires, especially in South Africa, are evident. The WOF-Kishugu JV estimates that 17,000 firefighters are needed in their ranks to face this threat head-on.

At the Central South Africa Wildfire Expo, WOF firefighters collaborated with the Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association and showcased their expertise in wildfire suppression tools in a demonstration. The WOF-Kishugu JV’s integrated fire management approach continues to set a global standard, highlighting the importance of collaboration and effective wildfire prevention and management.



LAST LEG OF SUMMER FIRE SEASON KEEPS WESTERN CAPE BUSY

As the Western Cape prepared for the close of the 2023/2024 summer fire season, things took a dramatic turn with three major fires erupting in the province. These were the Uitkyk fire in the Cederberg, Skeleton Gorge near Kirstenbosch in Cape Town, and the Sandies Glen fire in the Overberg.

The intensity of the Uitkyk fire necessitated the establishment of a base camp, for ground teams and management, in Porterville to ensure a swift response from the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV). This strategic move aimed to bolster joint-organisational fire suppression efforts led by Cape Nature and the Greater Cederberg Fire Protection Association.

The camp was established on Monday, 29 April 2024, when it became apparent that additional resources were required to combat the rapidly spreading fire effectively.

The WOF-Kishugu JV promptly mobilised 198 firefighters of the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme

from various teams - Vredenburg, Kluitjieskraal, Robertson, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Mamre, and Cape Town. These firefighters operated on rotating shifts, ensuring round-the-clock vigilance in containing the blaze.



Simultaneously, ground teams in the Cape Peninsula provided crucial support to SANParks at the Table Mountain National Park in extinguishing the Skeleton Gorge fire near Kirstenbosch. The fire, which burned in the urban interface, raged for multiple days as weather conditions prevented aerial resources, including Kishugu Aviation, from assisting on some days. Additionally, in the Overberg region, ground teams assisted the Overberg District Municipality in the collaboration suppression efforts of the Sandies Glen Fire, which also raged for multiple days.

These infernos erupted as the summer fire season drew to a close, following a relatively quieter period during February and March 2024.



INTEGRATED FIRE MANAGEMENT



LIMPOPO BATTLES 28 FIRES OUT OF FIRE SEASON

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture in Limpopo reported an overwhelming loss of over **1,153.528 hectares** of vegetation due to wildland fires since the beginning of the year, intensifying concerns over the winter fire season, which began on 1 June 2024.

Climate change has fueled an alarming escalation in wildland fire incidents around the world, with South Africa not spared.

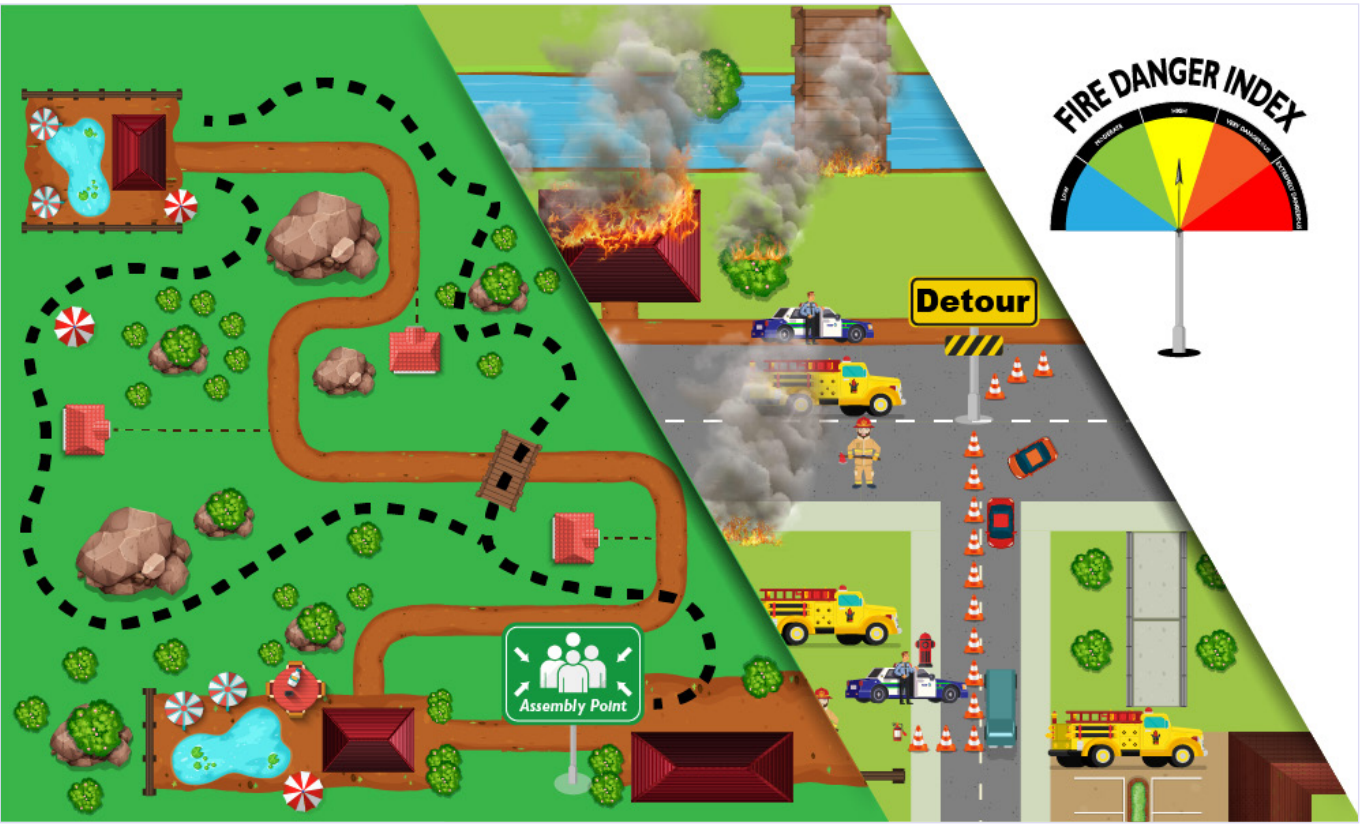
With April 2024 marking the hottest month on record, our natural ecosystems are under unprecedented strain, as confirmed by leading scientists.

The continuous rise in global temperatures, documented for the 11th consecutive month, underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate the risk of wildfires. Alongside the environmental consequences, these infernos pose significant threats to human lives,

property, and biodiversity.

In light of these challenges, the WOF-Kishugu JV emphasises the critical importance of community readiness and resilience. With winter making its entrance, several fire safety tips are imperative for safeguarding lives and property.

- Firstly, creating defensible space by clearing vegetation and combustible materials from around your home is essential to reduce the risk of fire spreading.
- Developing an evacuation plan, including establishing evacuation routes and communication protocols with family members, neighbors, and local authorities, ensures swift and coordinated action in the event of a wildfire.
- Staying informed by monitoring weather forecasts, fire danger ratings, and emergency alerts is crucial to stay abreast of changing conditions and evacuation orders.



NORTH WEST GEARS UP FOR SEASON

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture in the North West is currently equipped with 392 trained WOF Programme wildland firefighters. This includes 232 male and 160 female firefighters stationed at 17 different bases across the province.

The ground teams concluded their annual Yellow Card Assessment Camps at their respective bases recently. This was conducted by Kishugu Training Academy instructors and the assessments included practical exercises, which included simulation activities and theoretical knowledge.

Kishugu Fleet Solutions and the WOF-Kishugu JV Transport Department have ensured the province has a ground fleet ready for any callout during the season, with a fleet of five transport buses, two high-altitude buses, two strike unit buses, seven management personnel vehicles, and two water trailers.

Teams have been conducting manual fuel load

reduction activities, assisting stakeholders and partners by removing alien plants and overhanging dry tree branches to reduce the risk of fires. Since the beginning of this year, the teams have been ensuring the safety of communities by conducting such services, with a total of 183.95 hectares recorded under manual fuel load reduction activities.

Despite being out of fire season, teams have already attended four different fire suppression operations since the beginning of the year, with a total of 308.05 hectares of fuel burnt.

The fire awareness department has also been actively engaging with fire-prone communities through radio and print platforms, providing vital fire awareness education on how to protect themselves and their properties against runaway veld fires. The department will also be rolling out fire awareness campaigns for these communities.



LAUNCH OF AMAJUBA DISTRICT DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE TO HELP COMMUNITIES

KwaZulu-Natal joined the provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and various stakeholders in the launch of the Amajuba District Disaster Management Centre in Newcastle. The disaster management contingent also used the opportunity to raise awareness about the winter fire season.

The dignitaries were welcomed by the Working on Fire Programme Normandien 1 & A team, who held a guard of honour. Stakeholders such as the Red Cross, South

African Weather Services, SASSA, and traditional leaders were also present. MEC for COGTA, Bongive Sithole-Moloi, stated, “The department prioritised the construction of the Amajuba Disaster and Fire Centre following a series of floods and fire disasters, particularly in the areas of Madadeni, Osizweni, and Utrecht.”

She encouraged community members in attendance to be vigilant this winter fire season and to check the weather forecast before starting a fire, ensure

safekeeping of flammable substances, and never leave an open fire unattended. The new centre boasts all the necessary features, including a call centre, fire engines, storage facilities, and a control room where disaster teams can monitor disasters, mitigate risks, and respond promptly to emergencies.

“Disaster Centres are critical facilities that should be open 24 hours to the public. This is a government facility built to assist communities,” concluded Sithole-Moloi.



INCEMA HARVESTERS PREPARE FOR POTENTIAL FIRES

KwaZulu-Natal partnered with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to raise fire awareness at the biannual Incema Harvest at Umlalazi Nature Reserve.

This initiative is part of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife’s community-based natural resource harvesting programme, which provides tangible benefits to approximately 3,500 participants, many of whom are women who are breadwinners and involved in the rug-making business.

Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture’s Makhosi Dladla, the Community Fire Awareness Officer, said, “The Mtunzini wetland is one of the areas that opens once every two years for Incema harvesting. Despite the drought, Incema in Mtunzini has been conserved and continues to grow and the harvesting of this resource has been allowed for several decades with the Incema collected by people from all over the province.”

Dladla provided fire awareness education for the women who camped at the wetland for a week while harvesting Incema. The educational sessions were conducted daily before bedtime or when they returned from harvesting. “They sit around the fire to cook so they make use of fire daily. This is where our fire awareness education

comes in and becomes relevant. They also use candles, sometimes in unsafe candle holders and I have seen a lot of improvement due to the Fire Safe Talks with some women now using ring lights instead of candles.”

Dladla adds that educating these Incema harvesters will prevent accidents because they often return tired from working all day, increasing the likelihood of negligence due to fatigue. Topics included discussions on the relationship between a wetland and fire, the potential impact of fire entering the wetland where the harvest is done, and the dangers of leaving open fires. as they often make fires outside their tents and leaving them burning is possible.

“There is a quote that says when you teach a woman, you teach a community. They will go back home and share the knowledge learned from our sessions at camp with their families,” Dladla said.



GAUTENG IS READY TO ASSIST

Gauteng is equipped with 289 wildland firefighters, organised into 15 teams, who are all prepared to assist partners and stakeholders this winter fire season. The WOF Programme ground teams participated in Yellow Card Assessments at their respective bases and are mentally and physically fit to tackle any runaway wildland fire.

The Working on Fire-Joint Venture in the province will be utilising four (4) management personnel vehicles bakkies, four fire trucks, and two strike units to attend fire callouts.



The ground teams have battled and suppressed 18 fires since the beginning of the year, with fires erupting out of the official fire season.

Teams have also been conducting fire prevention activities, with the Magaliesberg team burning firebreaks to mitigate the risks of runaway wildland fires in their area. This fire-prone region experiences more fires during the fire season and Frank Maseko, the base manager of the team, encourages landowners to contact local fire protection associations to collaborate with his team on burning firebreaks. “These firebreaks would aid in saving the lives and livelihoods of landowners and workers.”.



Fire awareness education is a central pillar in WOF-Kishugu JV’s integrated fire management solutions and the Abe Bailey team recently conducted fire awareness sessions in schools and early childhood development centres. They also initiated a door-to-door campaign to educate community members about the dangers of fires. The fire awareness cluster has also been hard at work and organised action learning workshops with various teams of firefighters on topics to cover during presentations. Community Fire Awareness Officer Lerato Mokwena is conducting fire awareness workshops with various communities prone to wildland fires across the province.

KOKETSO PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS RECEIVE FIRE AWAREMESS EDUCATION

North West continues to execute the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture’s commitment to protecting the environment and making a difference in people’s lives by spreading the fire-safe message and raising awareness at schools and in the communities.

The Fire Awareness Officers, with the assistance of WOF Programme participants, have been hard at work conducting fire awareness campaigns and presentations.

The Wolvespruit team visited the Koketso Primary School to educate learners and

educators on how to be fire-safe. Their topic addressed “how to prevent fires inside and outside the school environment.” The learners were taught about the different factors that impact fires and how climate change has an impact on our daily lives and in the future.

The team urged the school to ensure they conduct fuel load reduction and create a defensible space at their houses and properties to create a barrier against unwanted runaway fires.



HLABENI COMMUNITY HOSTS FIRESAFE DAY

The community of Hlabisa in KwaZulu-Natal hosted a Firesafe Day on 24 May 2024 facilitated by the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture, who collaborated with Merensky and various stakeholders. This day aimed to share information on fire safety tips, how to protect homes and properties against wildfires, and how to reduce unwanted fires.

Sifundo Sithole, Community Fire Awareness Officer, said, “We were well received by the community, with the local and district municipalities’ various departments attending in large numbers. The traditional leaders were also present invited us to return and educate other wards in the community.”

Among the stakeholders present were various representative from the different departments of Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Local Municipality, Harry Gwala District Municipality, Animal Pounds, the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC), and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment.

“The community plans to create a task team and subsequently request additional

training of skills for them to assist in the event of fires. This community has taken ownership of its safety this winter fire season,” added Sithole.

Community members had the opportunity to ask questions about how they can get assistance in their community regarding unwanted fires or conducting fire breaks and managing disasters.

The WOF Dargle team conducted a fire break around the Tribal Court to ensure its safety this winter fire season.



RAISING AWARENESS OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

National Child Protection Week is commemorated annually from 28 May to 4 June and is aimed at raising awareness about the rights of children which are stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children’s Rights Act (Act No. 38 of 2005).

The WOF Programme’s Castello team, in the North West, began the week by visiting Asjassies Pre-Primary School to educate the learners on what to do in case they are trapped in a fire, and also remind them about their rights and responsibilities as children.

Additionally, the learners were taught the importance of reporting abuse and were provided with contact details of the relevant authorities. The team also entertained the learners by singing with them and conducting a drill.

“It was overwhelming for us to see the little faces full of excitement and joy. The learners cooperated and participated in all our activities. I was even more proud to see the little ones so eager to learn more about fire safety tips because it will help them create a safer environment around and outside the school,” said Castello team Peer Educator, Isaac Madito.



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



NURTURING WOMEN LEADERS

Nonkosi Dube, a participant from the Kromsriver team in the Eastern Cape, exemplifies the talent and dedication found in abundance within the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture. This young and dedicated woman was recruited in 2017, and her journey has been nothing short of transformative.

“Joining this Working on Fire Programme was a blessing in disguise as it has changed me to become a better person in many ways since then,” she explained.

Dube recently completed the Crew Leader course with outstanding results. She expressed her gratitude for the opportunity, stating that being entrusted with a leadership role highlighted the organisation’s commitment to empowering young people and supporting them in achieving their goals.

She currently serves as a Crew Leader Type 2 at her

base and she acknowledges that being a leader is challenging and requires commitment, hard work, and the ability to lead by example.

“I have acquired many skills, including leadership, advanced firefighting, and communication since I joined the organisation. I also managed to start and sustain my business, which I began a few years ago with my stipend,” added Dube.

The woman leader started her own business as a nail technician in 2019, which has been thriving ever since.

“During matric dance season, I assist matric girls who come from struggling families by doing their nails.”

She shared that helping these girls makes her proud as it is part of giving back and making a difference in her community.



FNB ARMING FIREFIGHTERS WITH FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

North West ground teams received valuable education on financial literacy through workshops organised by the Social Development Department and conducted by First National Bank (FNB) consumer educator, Miranda Daly.

Daly visited all 17 teams across the province, educating participants on financial literacy topics including budgeting, savings, and investments. She emphasised that effective budgeting is possible regardless of one’s salary.

The Barberspan team was among the 17 provincial teams taught about the importance of investment and saving and was awarded workshop competency certificates. Daly also highlighted indigenous ways of being financially literate and explained how inflation and the high cost of living impact financial stability today.

Additionally, she stressed the importance of knowing your budget and having a monthly financial plan before and after payday.

“I thank the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture for always supporting and providing its employees with the necessary skills and support. This workshop has had a significant impact on our lives, both personally and professionally. I can now manage my financial budget better than before and I can look at my budget positively without fear, plan accordingly, and differentiate between my basic needs and my luxurious wants.” said Barberspan Crew Leader Type 2, Bongane Botswe.



PEER EDUCATION GIVES NEW PURPOSE

The skill of being a peer educator has immense value in my life. It benefits me and the people around me and through this skill, I can share knowledge and provide support, not just at work but beyond the fireline.”

These are the words of Ongezwa Mbongonya, who was appointed Peer Educator for the Libode team in Eastern Cape. Mbongonya was recruited in January 2020 and was presented with the opportunity to attend a five-day peer educator course at Kishugu Training

Academy in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. “Being a peer educator enhanced my communication skills, leadership abilities, and, most importantly, my empathy.”

She added being a peer educator has also helped her grow both as an individual and as an employee. “I am grateful that I am a better person now through this skill and the other skills I have acquired since joining WOF.”

Her role involves supporting the provin-

cial Social Development Department and assisting her team in organising events related to the Employee Assistance Programme such as “Move for Health.”

“We know unemployment continues to be a problem in our country, and the WOF provides opportunities and training to the youth. It allows room for improvement by giving us extra skills within the WOF-Kishugu JV and also provides emotional support through it all,” Mbongonya concluded.



KISHUGU TRAINING ACADEMY



THE VITAL ROLE OF KISHUGU STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTING

In the realm of public safety, structural firefighting stands out as one of the most critical and demanding disciplines. It involves a range of tactics, equipment, and expertise aimed at combating fires within buildings, structures, and urban envi-

ronments. From towering skyscrapers to residential homes, structural firefighting teams are the frontline defenders against fires, a persistent and formidable threat.

A TRUSTED LEADER SINCE 2009

Established in 2009, Kishugu Structural Firefighting (KSFF) has developed into a reliable leader in structural firefighting training and consultation services. Their mission focuses on delivering effective firefighting solutions while prioritising safety, professionalism, and community well-being. Serving South Africa and beyond, KSFF offers a range of services tailored to various clients' needs, whether residential, commercial, or industrial.



SAFETY A PRIORITY

At KSFF, safety is a core value. The organisation adheres to rigorous fire safety protocols and procedures, prioritising the well-being of both personnel and the communities they serve. This commitment is ingrained in their culture, ensuring a high level of preparedness and proficiency. Continuous improvement is key, with KSFF constantly refining skills, exploring new technologies, and adapting to evolving threats to stay at the forefront of structural firefighting.



TRAINING PROGRAMMES

KSFF's training programmes are designed to equip personnel with the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to handle challenging fire scenarios. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, from basic firefighting techniques to advanced tactics for high-rise buildings and hazardous materials incidents. KSFF's accreditations, in partnership with Kishugu Training Academy, include that of QCTO, SAESI, and LG Seta, with courses such as:

- **Occupational Certificate: Firefighting**
- **NFPA1140 Wildland Firefighting (1 & 2)**
- **NFPA1140 Wildland Fire Officer (1 & 2)**
- **NFPA1072 Hazardous Material / WMD Awareness**
- **Consulting and Management Services**



KSFF provides structural firefighting consulting and management services across South Africa. These services aim to enhance firefighting capabilities, protect lives, safeguard property, and reduce risks. KSFF offers:

- **Training and Project Management**
- **Risk Assessment and Fire Prevention Strategies**
- **Emergency Response Planning and Preparedness**
- **Infrastructure and Equipment Evaluation**
- **Regulatory Compliance and Standards Adherence**
- **Firefighting Vehicle Supply and Delivery**
- **Firefighting Equipment Supply and Delivery**
- **Personal Protective Clothing Supply and Delivery**
- **Emergency Response Capabilities**

KSFF's emergency response capabilities are central to their operations. Their approach to firefighting is informed by years of experience, state-of-the-art equipment, and a highly skilled team. KSFF has developed strong partnerships with metros, district municipalities, local municipalities, and commercial ventures, enhancing their ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES AND AGENCIES

Collaboration is crucial in emergency response. KSFF works with local fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and emergency services to ensure a coordinated approach to firefighting. Through joint training exercises, communication systems, and mutual aid agreements, they strengthen partnerships and enhance collective emergency response capabilities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For partnership opportunities or to discuss potential collaborations, contact: **Lynne van der Vyver** at +27 13 744 9328 or email lynne.vdyvyver@kishugu.com or contact **Kagiso Manota** at +27 73 273 2812 or email kagiso.manota@kishugu.com



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KISHUGU AVIATION DAZZLES AUDIENCES AT LOWVELD AIRSHOW

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV) dazzled audiences with its aerial firefighting prowess at the Lowveld Airshow, held on Saturday, 11 May 2024. This annual event, under the theme “30 Years of Aerial

Extravaganza,” was eagerly awaited by aviation enthusiasts nationwide and provided a platform for Kishugu Aviation, to demonstrate its cutting-edge capabilities in combating wildland fires from the skies.



Spectators witnessed firsthand the skill, precision, and dedication that define Kishugu Aviation’s aerial firefighting operations. With 30 years of aviation excellence, the Lowveld Airshow has solidified its position as a cornerstone of the local flying community, with Johan Heine, one of the founders of the Working on Fire Programme, steering its committee. Exhibition stands catered to attendees of all ages, making the event a delightful experience for everyone.

Kishugu Aviation, a trailblazer in the industry, showcased its prominence with a fleet of over 40 owned and operated aircraft nationwide. Its participation was a highlight of the airshow, demonstrating the dedication of its pilots and fleet in safeguarding communities and protecting the environment from the devastating impact of wildland fires. The timing of this airshow was particularly poignant, arriving on the heels of a strenuous summer fire season that tested Kishugu Aviation’s extensive resources in the Western Cape and the western region of the Eastern Cape.



As wildland fires continue to pose significant threats to communities and ecosystems worldwide, the role of aerial firefighting services remains indispensable and Kishugu Aviation leads this critical field, working hand-in-glove with ground resources of the Working on Fire Programme. Through meticulous aviation maintenance and

comprehensive training programmes, it bolsters its capabilities, equipping itself to effectively combat wildland fires while minimising risks to both personnel and property.



GOING BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY TO HELP A COLLEAGUE

Thandile Joseph, a Base Manager on probation, is an exemplary figure of going above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference. He was deployed twice to Canada last year to assist in fighting fires in Canada. During one of these deployments, a crew member shared a touching story about wanting to make a difference at home after his family had faced significant hardships.

“I remembered him telling me about the dynamics of his family, and I was very moved by his story,” Joseph recalled.

Upon returning from Canada, Joseph asked the firefighter to meet him at the Department of Home Affairs. There, he surprised the firefighter by giving him the money needed to obtain a passport.

“I didn’t give him much, but with a passport, he could be deployed too and achieve his dream of building a decent home for his parents,” explained Joseph.

The recipient has put in an application for deployment this year and has his fingers crossed for this opportunity of a lifetime.



CREW LEADER CHAMPIONS COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

William Matlhatse Mbewe, Crew Leader Type 1 for the Sondela base in Limpopo, shares his journey of growth and impact since joining the Working on Fire Programme in 2015. Renowned for his dedication to presenting fire awareness education at schools and within the community, Mbewe’s efforts have extended beyond firefighting, resonating deeply with the local community.

During his engagement at schools, he recognised a prevalent issue among the learners - the lack of proper school shoes. Moved by this observation and drawing from his own experiences, he initiated a project to provide shoes for less fortunate learners.

Beyond his community initiatives, Mbewe’s recent triumph at the Hlongwane Burial Soccer Tournament 2024 further highlights his impact. Representing the Bela2 United, Mbewe’s team emerged victorious, defending their title from the previous year. The tournament, held annually on Good Friday at the Bela Bela Zone 14 soccer field, not only provides entertainment during the Easter holidays but also

serves as a platform for community cohesion.

“I am immensely proud of our team’s victory. It is more than just a game, it is about bringing our community together, especially during festive seasons like Easter,” expressed Mbewe.

Supported by sponsors including Haval, Hyundai, Brass Band, and KFC, the tournament exemplifies the collaborative spirit of community engagement. The crew leader’s role extends beyond the soccer field, his commitment to fitness, nurtured by the WOf-Kishugu JV’s fitness training regime, enables him to play a fundamental role in his team, showcasing his athleticism and dedication.

“As a Crew Leader Type 1, my responsibilities extend beyond firefighting. It is about making a tangible difference in the lives of those around me, whether through community initiatives or sporting events like the Hlongwane Burial Soccer Tournament,” Mbewe concluded.

RANDFONTEIN FEMALE TEAM TRIUMPHS IN FIT TO FIGHT FIRE COMPETITION

The Randfontein female team in Gauteng secured third place in the second annual Fit to Fight Fire competition and Expo, held in Meyerton.

Palesa Maphanga shared that the competition was tough, as they were up against some of the most seasoned firefighters in the country.

“We had to adapt and work as a team to complete all the necessary activities. It was not easy, but it was doable. That is why we managed to secure third place. We were rookies in this competition,” explained a jubilant Maphanga.

She described the experience as a significant learning curve that helped them build confidence to perform even better in the future. Maphanga further noted the competition enabled crew members to participate and assess their physical and mental fitness.

A major challenge was climbing the stair steps up and down within a short time. “We are grateful for this achievement as we enter the winter fire season. This competition has boosted our morale and allowed us to acquire skills in structural firefighting,” she said.



ALUMNI



DEDICATION FUELS POSITIVE CHANGE

Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture's newly appointed Grounds Operation Manager (GOM), Khulani Zulu is excited to start his new chapter in the Western Cape.

Zulu is a living example of one of the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme's objectives of Restoring Dignity. His career began in 2012 at the Nkandla Base in KwaZulu-Natal when he was recruited as a firefighter. The numerous skills obtained over the years and his commitment propelled him to his current position at GOM.

"My journey has been very fulfilling and rewarding. I come from humble beginnings, from being a firefighter to Crew Leader, Fire Awareness Officer, and Regional Manager, to my current position. Nothing but the support of all my managers could have prepared me for this big role and its responsibilities."

The former firefighter is one of many who occupy management positions within WOF, and his contributions have been significant. He counts his pioneering role in securing the BBCI deal for WOF-Kishugu JV in KZN as one of his proudest moments. "That deal allowed our provincial participants to receive free training in Basic Firefighting Level 1, First Aid, and Health, Safety, and Environmental Principles."

Zulu says he will miss his beautiful, diverse culture and his friends back home but is also looking forward to a healthy relationship, growing, and learning more in the Western Cape.

"To my Crew Leaders back at home, always do your best whether people are looking or not. Carry yourselves with integrity, be loud and bold about representing WOF, and be proud of the little or big difference you are making," concluded Zulu.

A STEPPING STONE FOR WOMAN LEADER

Former Crew Leader for the Libode team in Eastern Cape, Bukeka Mgxabayi says that Working on Fire Programme was a stepping stone for her. This, she says, is because of the growth she gained within (WOF) since she joined in 2010 and the impact it has made in her life that changed her to be a better person today.

This hard-working lady exited the programme as a firefighter in 2023 to take the reigns as Base Manager for the same team. "The experience and skills I acquired opened up this opportunity for me," she explained.

Mgxabayi climbed the ranks since her recruitment, occupying positions of Crew leader Type 2 and Type 1 in two years. "I then worked with different teams in the province which also empowered me as a young woman leader."

She says she enjoys every moment of being the Base Manager and advises all young women to work hard, be positive, and never allow anything to stop them from what they want to achieve.

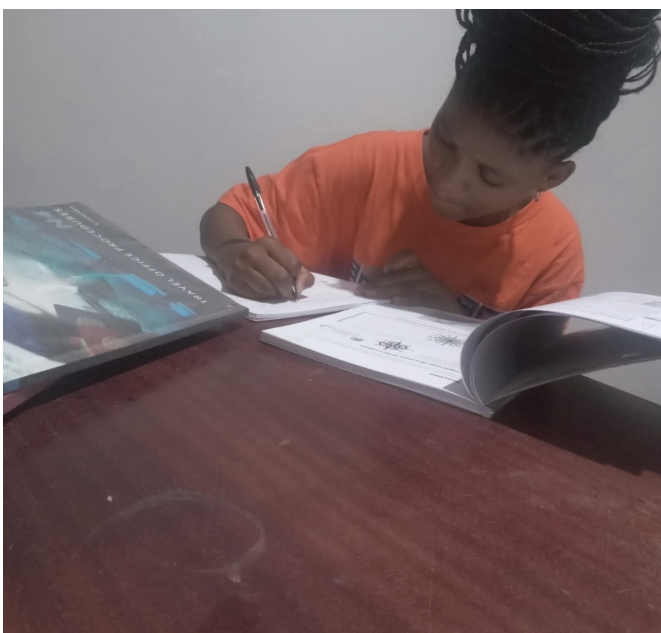


EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Lesego Kgabo, a firefighter from the Christiana team in the North West, recently exited the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme to become a full-time student and further her studies. She firmly believes that education is the key to success and a crucial weapon for breaking the shackles of poverty and pursuing her dream career.

Kgabo is pursuing a Diploma in Tourism through the Northern Cape Urban TVET College at Phatsimang. "My motivation for pursuing this course and furthering my studies is to take a step towards achieving my dream career as a Tour Guide Specialist."

She joined WOF in February 2023 as a recruit firefighter. "I am grateful to WOF for giving me the opportunity and trusting me to become one of their family members. The stipend I received assisted in registering for the course and I take the discipline and independence in this new educational venture."



ALUMNI

YOUNG FIREFIGHTER PURSUES AMERICAN DREAM

Thabang Alex Teffo is a former Working on Fire (WOF) Programme firefighter with a passion for community service and is pursuing his dreams and furthering his studies in the United States of America.

Teffo is studying at one of the nation's top community colleges, Colby Community College, and is also a proud member of the cross-country and track and field teams with the intent of obtaining a master's degree in criminal justice.

Recruited in August 2019 at the Mookgophong in Limpopo, Teffo found his calling in fighting fires to protect the environment and save lives. The former firefighter highlighted how the WOF Values of Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability, and Making a Difference were integral to his journey. "The support and rigorous training also assisted in my path. It is like the motor of always being fit," Teffo remarks.

"I believe in hard work and dedication. I believe that God cannot give you an opportunity you cannot handle."

His journey to the United States was not without challenges, as he tirelessly raised funds for his trip. However, he remained steadfast in his determination, never giving up until he achieved his dream. Make us proud Teffo!



DEDICATED TO SAVING LIVES

Siphokazi Mboyiya is a former firefighter who has exited the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme to become a Basic Ambulance Assistant with Gauteng Emergency Services, based in Fochville.

While in the WOF for the Carletonville base, Mboyiya pursued a course in Basic Ambulance Assistance. Additionally, she completed first aid, high-angle rescue, and fire search and rescue courses with the West Rand District Municipality Training Academy. She also gained experience in road accident management with the same municipality, significantly enhancing her qualifications, expertise, and experience.

Mboyiya is dedicated and passionate about saving lives and she believes that this hands-on experience is invaluable. Notably, she was part of the historic 2023 deployment to Canada. "It is wonderful and a pleasure to have been part of WOF," she said. "It served as a refuge when the chips were down. I used the stipend to acquire these qualifications and my driver's license."

Her task now is to help save lives as one of the first responders to accidents and patients. The WOF-Kishugu Joint Venture wishes you all the best Siphokazi!

A TESTAMENT TO GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

Thando Wambi is one of many former Working on Fire (WOF) Programme firefighters who have used the programme as a stepping stone to achieving their dreams. Recruited as a wildland firefighter at the Limietberg Base in 2017, Wambi knew from the start that his ultimate goal was to become a structural firefighter.

"WOF paved the way for me. I have always wanted to be a structural firefighter, and WOF was the right place to get the firefighting experience," Wambi stated.

During his time with WOF, he honed his skills and gained valuable experience battling wildland fires. This hands-on training proved instrumental when he got his big break, being recruited as a firefighter for the Drakenstein Local Municipality.

Beyond firefighting, the programme also provided Wambi with essential qualifications and skills. "I am very grateful that I obtained a Health and Safety certificate and gained much-needed experience because this has benefited my current job."

Wambi's journey exemplifies how the Working on Fire Programme remains a crucial stepping stone for marginalised youth living in disadvantaged communities, showcasing the significant impact of the training and opportunities provided.

