

DID YOU KNOW?

2024 IS THE HOTTEST YEAR ON RECORD

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), 2024 has officially become the hottest year on record. This highlights the growing threat of climate change and its significant impact on the environment, including more frequent and intense wildfires.

Experts warn that rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and unpredictable weather patterns are driving the increased severity of fire seasons globally. Dr. Jim Skea, co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group III on mitigation of climate change, states: “The warming climate is extending fire seasons, making wildland fires more challenging to manage and increasingly hazardous to communities.”

This is evident with the recent wildland fires across the world, most notably the Los Angeles Fires in the United States of America and our international partner, Canada. South Africa is not immune to this, with fire seasons becoming longer and more destructive as seen by the 2024 Winter Fire Season. Our records indicate we responded to more out-of-season fires in our traditional winter fire season provinces in December 2024 than the previous year. 176 fire incidents were reported across provinces in 2024 compared to 105 in 2023, northern provinces recording more fires than the previous year.

At the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV), we are witnessing the effects of these changes first-hand. Our Climate Change Warriors are responding to increasingly complex fire seasons, demonstrating their expertise and commitment to saving lives and protecting the environment. With the record heat comes an urgent need for advanced firefighting strategies, state-of-the-art resources, and ongoing training - all of which we are investing in to stay ahead of the climate crisis.

This is a critical moment for collective action. The growing threat of wildland fires calls for strategic investment in fire management, heightened collaboration and leveraging of resources, and decisive steps to mitigate climate change. We can reduce risks and ensure a safer, more resilient future together.



Let Us Make 2025 a Year of Extraordinary Difference

As we embark on a new year, I extend a warm welcome back to every one of you. While many enjoyed a well-deserved festive break, our committed ground and aerial crews in the Western Cape and the western region of the Eastern Cape remained steadfast, carrying out critical work during South Africa's summer fire season. Your unwavering dedication to saving lives, protecting the environment, and supporting vulnerable communities shines as a beacon of hope and resilience in these challenging times.

A GLOBAL ALARM AND A LOCAL CALL TO ACTION

The wildfires devastating Los Angeles are a stark reminder that no corner of the globe is immune to the impacts of climate change. With at least 29 lives lost, 180,000 people displaced, and damages exceeding \$150 billion, these infernos expose the vulnerability of even the wealthiest regions to this escalating crisis.

But while the world watches California, South Africa is fighting its own battle against a wildfire crisis that is growing in intensity. In December 2024 alone, we saw a staggering 96% increase in wildfires compared to the same month the previous year. Out-of-season fires surged by nearly 70%, challenging traditional fire season boundaries and signalling the profound effects of climate change. This is more than an environmental issue—it is a call to action for every one of us.

The recent winter fire season was among the most severe in our nation's history. Thirty-five lives were lost, and approximately 4 million hectares of land were ravaged, resulting in billions of rands in damage. Thousands of livestock perished, critical infrastructure was destroyed, and entire communities were left reeling. The ripple effects on livelihoods and the economy have been devastating.

PREPAREDNESS IS OUR POWER

As the frequency and intensity of wildfires increase, so must our readiness to face them. Through our Integrated Fire Management Solutions (IFMS), we focus on proactive strategies like fuel load reduction and fire awareness education. By reducing excessive vegetation through prescribed burns and other methods, we can significantly lower the risk of catastrophic fires. These measures not only save lives but also preserve ecosystems critical to South Africa's natural heritage. Fire awareness is equally vital. Empowering communities with knowledge and resources is key to fostering a culture of fire safety and shared responsibility.

FIRE SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

Preventing wildfires is a collective effort. Every individual has a role to play, and simple actions—such as avoiding open flames in fire-prone areas, adhering to fire bans, and promptly reporting smoke or fire—can make a tremendous difference. Together, we can prevent tragedies and protect what matters most.

OUR READINESS, YOUR SAFETY

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture continues to stand ready as a pillar of support in these turbulent times. With over 5,300 firefighters, 48 pilots, and a fleet of specialized vehicles and aircraft, we are equipped to respond to emergencies and safeguard vulnerable communities. This operational excellence is matched by our commitment to innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement through training at the Kishugu Training Academy.

A SHARED MISSION FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE

As climate change accelerates, collaboration will be our greatest asset. To our frontline heroes, your courage inspires us all. To our partners and stakeholders, your unwavering support strengthens our mission. Together, we are not just a firefighting agency—we are a force for good, working tirelessly to create a safer, greener, and more resilient South Africa.

Let us rise to the challenges of 2025 with determination, unity, and innovation. Every ember extinguished, every life saved, and every community protected is a testament to the extraordinary difference we can make together. Stay safe, stay strong, and let's make 2025 a year of transformative impact.

Warm regards, *Trevor Abrahams*
Project Manager, Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture



Tackling Intense Fire Seasons Amidst Global Climate Challenges

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture is navigating an intense fire season in the Western Cape and the western region of the Eastern Cape. Starting in December 2024, this period aligns with historical summer fire patterns but underscores the increasing frequency and severity of wildland fires due to the escalating impacts of climate change.

DECEMBER 2023 VS DECEMBER 2024

In December 2023, our records indicate that 51 wildland fires were suppressed, with 36 in the Western Cape and six in the Eastern Cape. By December 2024, this figure nearly doubled to 100 wildland fires, with 42 in the Western Cape and five in the Eastern Cape. Out-of-season fires, including fires in the northern provinces where the official winter fire season ended in October 2024, also surged, with 176 incidents reported across provinces in 2024 compared to 105 in 2023.

ALARMING GLOBAL TRENDS

This alarming rise mirrors global trends. In 2024, Brazil recorded 62,000 wildland fires, highlighting the ongoing climate crisis. Similarly, California is experiencing devastating firestorms, with flames spreading into urban areas and causing widespread destruction. These events underscore the growing risks posed by uncontrolled wildland fires, exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

2024/2025 SUMMER FIRE SEASON

December 2024 proved to be a challenging month for our firefighting teams in the Western Cape, with several significant fires recorded. In the Swartberg Mountains, a fire raged for nine days, destroying over 15,000 hectares of vegetation. This operation involved 212 ground firefighters, supported by aerial firefighting resources, including a fixed-wing command aircraft, a helicopter, and an AT-802 Fixed Wing Water Bomber. Our aircraft dropped 194,000 litres of water to suppress the fire.

In Stilbaai, the Jongensfontein fire became the longest-running blaze of the month, lasting a gruelling 18 days. Strong and unpredictable winds fuelled the fire, complicating both aerial and ground firefighting efforts. Despite these challenges, our teams demonstrated remarkable expertise and resilience, showcasing their ability to manage complex operations under difficult conditions.

The Bredasdorp fire at Grashoek required a multi-day coordinated response. On the first day, resources included two fixed-wing command aircraft, two helicopters, an AT-802 Fixed Wing Water Bomber, and 15 ground firefighters. By the second day, reinforcements arrived, increasing the number of ground firefighters to 20, while aerial suppression efforts continued.



Similarly, the Napier Mountain fire burned for five days, necessitating the deployment of both ground and aerial resources. Meanwhile, at Theewaterskloof Dam, a fire raged for 13 days. As the world celebrated the arrival of 2025, over 30 firefighters worked tirelessly to protect lives and the environment, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to saving lives and protecting our ecosystems.

In Stanford, a team of 55 firefighters, supported by a spotter aircraft and a helicopter, battled blazes for four days.

KISHUGU AVIATION RISES ABOVE THE FLAMES

Our aerial resources played a critical role in managing fires in December 2024. Fixed-wing aircraft logged 111 flying hours, while AT-802 Fixed Wing Water Bombers flew for 31 hours, dropping 252,000 litres of water. Huey Helicopters contributed significantly, logging 103 hours and delivering 1,337,000 litres of water to the firefighting efforts. These resources are indispensable in managing large-scale fires, often in areas and terrains where ground access is limited or dangerous.

WOF-KISHUGU JV ALWAYS STANDS READY

Our dedicated teams are always ready to assist partners, stakeholders, and Fire Protection Associations in joint organisational suppression efforts. Equipped with advanced training from the Kishugu Training Academy and deployed swiftly through Kishugu Fleet Solutions, we remain at the forefront of combating wildland fires. The collaboration between ground and aerial teams, supported by cutting-edge technology, highlights the importance of continuous vigilance and expert training in tackling prolonged fire seasons effectively.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AND COLLABORATION ARE KEY!

The escalating number of wildland fires locally and globally serves as a stark reminder of the tangible impacts of climate change. It stresses the urgent need for strategic investment in firefighting resources, infrastructure, education, and awareness, alongside collective action to mitigate the devastating effects of wildland fires. The dedication and resilience of firefighters in these challenging times stand as a testament to their crucial role in saving lives, protecting property, and safeguarding the environment.





WOF Kids Care Package **WE DID IT!**

**Total funds raised
= R34,604.20**

**Total number of kids
nominated = 1,969**

In the spirit of giving and support, our management, led by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), once again extended its love and care to the children of the Working on Fire Programme firefighters through the WOF Kids Care Package, which aims to alleviate the economic pressure and challenges faced by our firefighters in these difficult times.

MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Provincial management staff came together to raise funds for the care packages. Through a combination of corporate donations, recycling initiatives, and personal contributions, the provinces collectively supported the purchase of essential items for the children. The continued dedication of our management teams to this cause highlights the spirit of collaboration and making a difference that defines the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture community.

Olwethu Mafuya, the Acting Head of the Department for the Employee Assistance Programme, stressed the importance of the WOF Kids Care Package, stating: "The 2024/2025 financial year was one of the toughest years for the WOF Kids project. However, we always remember that the care packages play an instrumental role in supporting our firefighter families."

This year, we received approximately 1,969 nomination forms nationally, a clear reflection of the continued need for this initiative. The fundraising efforts and kind donations from external stakeholders, food sales, staff contributions, and even the personal donation from our

Managing Director Trevor Abrahams, have helped us raise a total of R34,604. While this is a commendable effort, we are still in need of additional support to ensure we can brighten the smiles and Christmas spirit of every nominated child across all provinces."

WHAT'S INSIDE THE CARE PACKAGES?

The WOF Kids Care Packages, carefully curated with love, include toiletries, stationery, and other essential items, which go a long way, especially during the festive season and the January rush of the reopening of schools.

BRINGING JOY TO THE WOF KIDS

Ntshuxeko Masangu, the Social Development Practitioner for Gauteng, shared that the care packages were meant to bring smiles and happiness to the young ones. "It is all about creating moments of joy for the children, even in challenging times," Masangu said.

The impact of the WOF Kids initiative was evident in the words of Selinah Madiela, a participant at the Abe Bailey base in Gauteng. She expressed her appreciation, acknowledging that some of the items in the care packages were not covered in their budgets. "This cheered us up with our children at home. It was a good moment to start the festive season."

A SUCCESS STORY SINCE 2017

Since its inception in 2017, the WOF Kids initiative has been a success, bringing joy to the most vulnerable. It has remained a beacon of support for our firefighter families, ensuring their children receive the care and attention they deserve.

Former Firefighters Take Flight in Aviation Careers

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture has been instrumental in creating new career opportunities for the Working on Fire Programme firefighters by equipping them with the skills to advance into management roles, transition into the government or private sectors, or even become self-sufficient entrepreneurs. This was evident when WOF drivers advanced into vital roles as Helicopter Personal Assistants (HPAs) and Aircraft Support Vehicle (ASV) drivers with Kishugu Aviation. These professionals, who began their careers as firefighters, now make significant contributions to the aviation sector, ensuring firefighting aircraft are always prepared to respond swiftly and effectively during fire emergencies. Their transition highlights the expanding opportunities for growth and development within the sector, strengthening the vital link between ground operations and aerial firefighting.

RESTORING DIGNITY THROUGH CAREER ADVANCEMENT

One of our core objectives is restoring dignity by providing participants with the opportunity to build a career, gain new skills, and achieve personal growth. Starting as a firefighter with WOF is not just about fighting fires - it is about opening doors to future possibilities. Through structured skills development initiatives, participants are equipped with the tools to move up the ranks, from frontline firefighters to leadership roles within the organisation or beyond. The training provided also arms participants with valuable skills that make them highly competitive in the broader job market or even capable of pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

June Botha, Human Resource Manager for Kishugu Aviation, explains that former firefighters transitioning to aviation roles such as HPAs and ASV drivers bring with them a strong foundation in discipline, communication, and teamwork. "The value these professionals add to aviation is rooted in their specialised competencies. They are efficient, task-driven, solution-oriented, and capable of working under extreme pressure," she said.

ESSENTIAL ROLES IN AIRCRAFT SUPPORT

While many may not be familiar with the roles of HPAs and ASV drivers, they are vital to the operational success of Kishugu Aviation. These professionals undergo rigorous aviation training to understand the operations and complexities of supporting aircraft and are primarily responsible for aircraft fuel management and vehicle maintenance, ensuring equipment runs smoothly.

Louis Heyns, an ASV driver, shared his experience: "We ensure the aircraft have the fuel they need to carry out firefighting operations. Our training has been thorough, particularly in understanding the legal compliance aspects of aviation. Handling dangerous or flammable liquids is something we take very seriously, and I remain vigilant at all times." The Base Radio Communications course has been particularly valuable for these former firefighters now working in aviation. "I'm now confident in performing my tasks daily," said Heyns. "It's a fulfilling position at Kishugu Aviation, and we get to engage with pilots about fuel issues, ensuring everything runs smoothly."

MAKING A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION

These former firefighters now become an essential part of aerial firefighting operations, providing the necessary support to pilots and aircraft. Their transition into aviation not only highlights the diverse career opportunities available in the sector but also reinforces their ongoing commitment to saving lives, protecting property, and the environment.

All the best in your new roles!



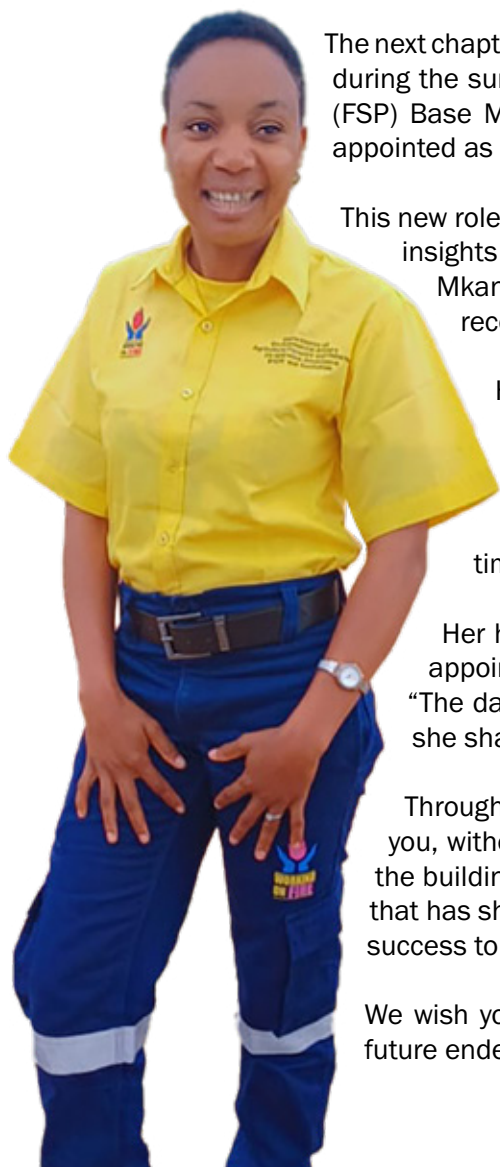
A Blaze of Ambition Catapults Crew Leader to Base Manager

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture congratulates Rebecca Mkansi on her remarkable journey from firefighter to her new role as Base Manager at the Lowveld Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA) in Mpumalanga. Mkansi's story is a testament to the life-changing impact of the Working on Fire Programme and the power of skills development, resilience, and determination.

Her story began in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga, where, after completing her Matric, she worked a part-time job at Bavaria Farm to support herself, as her parents could not afford further education. Her determination to succeed never wavered, and in 2012, Mkansi joined the Working on Fire Programme as a firefighter at the Injaka Base, in Bushbuckridge, becoming the only woman in a team of 16 firefighters.

In February 2013, after completing her Advanced First Aid Training at the Kishugu Training Academy, her leadership potential began to shine. She became a Crew Leader Type 2 in June 2013, and in 2015, she was promoted to Crew Leader Type 1, a role that she describes as the most interesting and fulfilling position of her life.

The Working on Fire Programme is a leader in equipping its participants with essential skills. In 2021, Mkansi completed her Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and Forensics courses at Intec College, aimed at equipping her with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage or participate in investigative and forensic work. With the knowledge gained and with her stipend, she built a beautiful house for her family, who had previously lived in a cramped two-room home.



The next chapter in her journey came in 2021 when she returned from a Cape Town deployment during the summer fire season and took on the role of Acting Forestry Support Programme (FSP) Base Manager for two teams – Injaka and Diepdriest FSP teams. She was officially appointed as a qualified Base Manager in 2023, a moment she will never forget.

This new role was followed by an exciting deployment to Canada, where she gained valuable insights into different leadership styles in firefighting operations across countries. Mkansi was a part of our historic deployment to Canada that year and received recognition as one of the best crew leaders.

However, her steady rise was not without challenges. As a new Base Manager, she faced resistance as a woman leader, a tough experience that only strengthened her resolve. “I turned that negative into a positive because I knew my blessing was just around the corner,” she reflects. Her supportive husband played a key role in keeping her motivated during these challenging times.

Her hard work culminated in another milestone in November 2024, when she was appointed Base Manager for LEFPA, fulfilling a dream she had worked tirelessly for. “The day I received my new position, I was so excited and emotionally overwhelmed,” she shares.

Through her journey, Mkansi has learned that life is about focusing on what works for you, without feeling the need to explain yourself to others. Her next goal is to complete the building of her orphanage, a project close to her heart. She is grateful for the journey that has shaped her into the woman leader she always aspired to be, and she credits her success to her faith and hard work.

We wish you continued success in your new chapter Rebecca, and all the best in your future endeavours!

A photograph of President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa walking on a red carpet. He is wearing a dark suit and a red tie. Behind him is a row of flags from G20 member states, including the United Kingdom, Canada, China, the European Union, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, and Russia. The text 'Turning Heat into Hope as SOUTH AFRICA HOSTS G20 PRESIDENCY' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Turning Heat into Hope as **SOUTH AFRICA** **HOSTS G20** **PRESIDENCY**

South Africa is poised to assume the presidency of the G20 summit, a premier forum for international economic cooperation comprising the world's largest economies. The summit, which is scheduled to take place in Johannesburg at the end of November, will mark a significant milestone for South Africa's leadership on the global stage.

During the G20 Rio Leaders' Summit in Brazil in 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa officially accepted South Africa's responsibility for the G20 Presidency for 2025. This will be the first time an African economy leads the G20 for a rotational, one-year term. Brazil held the G20 Presidency in 2024, and South Africa will hand it over to the United States of America at the end of its term.

WHAT IS THE G20?

The G20, or Group of Twenty, is an intergovernmental forum that includes 19 countries and the European Union. Members are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States, alongside the European Union.

These economies account for over 80% of the global GDP, 75% of international trade, and 60% of the world's population. The G20's objectives include:

- Promoting international financial stability.
- Addressing global economic challenges.
- Fostering sustainable development and climate action.
- Collaborating on global health, trade, and technology.

LEVERAGING THE G20 FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

As part of the WOF-Kishugu Joint Venture's internal capacity-building efforts, the Kintra Learning Hub hosted a webinar on 23 January 2025. Linton Rensburg, Team Lead: Stakeholder Relations, Marketing, and Media, delivered a talk titled "Strategic Opportunities: Elevating WOF-Kishugu JV's Global Presence through the G20."

The webinar explored actionable strategies to strengthen our organisation's international partnerships and showcase our contributions to Integrated Fire Management Solutions. This initiative highlighted our commitment to innovation, professional development, and global collaboration.

Visit the Kintra Learning and Developmental Hub and arm yourself with information and education from expert speakers!

A CALL TO CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change remains a critical issue, posing existential threats to populations, economies, and ecosystems. South Africa's presidency presents an opportunity to lead collaborative efforts addressing these challenges. The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV) plays a vital role in this mission, both nationally and internationally, as a key player in wildland fire management and climate resilience.

Trevor Abrahams, our Project Manager, stresses the importance of an integrated approach to wildland fire management, focusing on prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

WOF-KISHUGU JV LEADS BY EXAMPLE

As a member of the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF), the WOF-Kishugu JV is committed to a multilateral approach to wildland fire management. According to the IAWF, climate change has intensified drying and warming trends across the globe, increasing the likelihood of extreme fire events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts these conditions will worsen, requiring urgent action and collaboration.

A PATH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Under South Africa's G20 presidency, there is potential to reshape global policies to address the climate crisis and align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The G20 nations have the collective power to advance strategies that ensure sustainable growth, eradicate poverty and hunger, and bolster climate resilience.

South Africa's leadership in the G20 reflects its commitment to global partnerships and solutions. Integrating expertise from the WOF-Kishugu JV and other key stakeholders can drive meaningful progress in combating wildland fires and addressing the broader climate crisis.

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2024 G20 summit is more than a gathering of leaders, it is a call to action for a sustainable and resilient future. The WOF-Kishugu JV reaffirms its belief that through collaboration, innovation, and commitment, South Africa can transform the heat of today's challenges into the light of tomorrow's opportunities.



WOF Alumni



Duncan Rautenbach

MTO ABSORBS FOUR FORMER FIREFIGHTERS

A significant number of our participants exit the Working on Fire (WOF) Programme each year to secure full-time employment in various industries. This reflects one of the key objectives of the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture: restoring dignity by providing a stepping stone for young men and women from disadvantaged communities. Through recruitment, training, and skills development, the WOF Programme makes these youths employable in the job market or pursue entrepreneurship and be self-sustainable.

In 2024 alone, young men and women in the Eastern Cape left the programme to pursue new careers with organisations such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA), SANParks, Mountain to Ocean (MTO), and several other private companies.

Simamkela Matana, Bonga Pakade, and Yanga Kadina from the Sarah Baartman team, along with Zibele Ngwekazi from the Longmore team, recently transitioned from WOF to begin new roles at MTO. Additionally, Duncan Rautenbach from the Baviaanskloof team was hired by ECPTA as a guard.

Simamkela Matana, one of the former participants, shared his journey: "I was recruited in 2022 at the Sarah Baartman base and resigned in November 2024. During my time in the programme, I gained numerous skills, including being a brush cutter operator and a SHE Representative," he explained with a smile.

He expressed his gratitude to WOF, saying the programme played a significant role in shaping him into a better person. "I am so happy to have been part of the programme," he concluded.

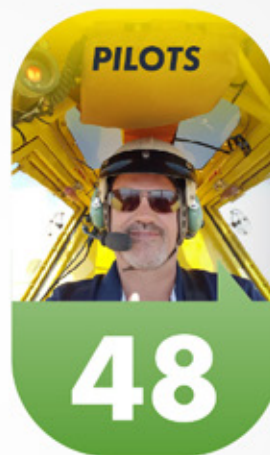
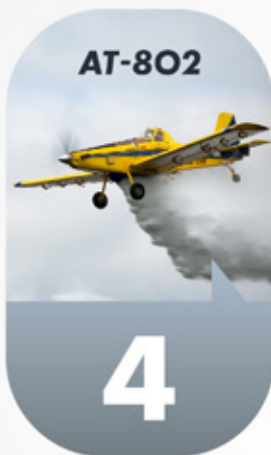


Bonga Phakade

LET'S MAKE 2025 A YEAR OF EXTRAORDINARY DIFFERENCE

*OUR DEDICATED TEAM OF
OVER 5,300 FIREFIGHTERS*

SUPPORTED BY:



*With unwavering commitment, we are ready to protect, serve,
and make 2025 a year of extraordinary difference.*