



## Greetings,

July's Attica wildfires in Greece, the 2nd deadliest wildfires this century, once again draw our attention to the role played by climate change. Mother Nature has a hot temper and we are well advised to pay heed. On a lighter note, we bring you news of a new weapon in the firefighting arsenal - goats! Yes, those cute little critters are turning out to be effective and earth-friendly fire preventers. More on this and other stories to enjoy in this month's issue so keep reading. Until next time.



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## Goodbye...



For almost four years, Corné Martyn has gently but firmly kept the office team in hand and LEFPA's admin on track so we were very sorry to say goodbye to her last month. At the AGM Chairman Duncan Ballantyne thanked her for her loyal service and wished her well. Corné's last day with the team was Friday 3rd August and Vice-Chairman Vaughn Lascelles along with the office staff gave her a fine send-off. Thanks for everything, Corné, it's been a pleasure working with you and we know that you will be successful in your new position.

## ... and Hello

Every goodbye leads to a new 'hello' and LEFPA welcomes Angela Norton as the new Financial Officer. Angela is a local lass who grew up and schooled in Nelspruit and may be a familiar face to some of our members. Married with a lovely 12-year old daughter, Chloé, Angela is keen to learn the LEFPA ropes and says the warm welcome she has received from the team has helped her to settle in quickly. Angela's husband, Daryll, is a Master Technician at SAPPI and the family have lived in Ngodwana village for the past 15 years.



Angela arrived at LEFPA from Viljoen Wagner Attorneys where she kept the books for four years. Her work experience includes 11 years in Finance at SAPPI Ngodwana Mill and a year working at EOH Medical Clinic on a project basis, so it's clear that numbers are her game. She is looking forward to enjoying many happy years with the LEFPA team but don't let her warm, friendly face fool you - this is a tough cookie and errant debtors should watch out!

Welcome, Angela, it's wonderful to have you with us.

# Heat and Hydrate

Hydration is critical for firefighters - do you know how to check that you are properly hydrated? The simplest technique is to note the colour of your urine - the brighter the colour, the more water you need to drink. This easy to read graphic will help you and your team gauge your hydration level. Note: certain medications and vitamins also affect the colour.

What happens when you are dehydrated in a hot environment? Insufficiently hydrated, your body is unable to create enough perspiration to cool itself and overheats, leading to heat exhaustion and heat stroke which can be deadly.

## **Heat Exhaustion**

**Symptoms:** headaches, dizziness or light-headedness, irritability, upset stomach, weakness, confusion, vomiting, decreased or dark-coloured urine, fainting, pale and clammy skin.

**What to do:** act immediately to avoid escalation to heat stroke.

- move the patient to a cool, shady area to rest and keep a watchful eye on him / her;
- If the patient is dizzy, lay him / her on his back and raise the legs 15cm. If the symptoms include nausea or an upset stomach, lay them on their side;
- Loosen and remove heavy clothing;
- Unless the patient is vomiting, have him / her drink a cup of cool water every 15 minutes;
- Cool his / her body by fanning and spraying with a cool mist of water or apply a wet cloth to their skin;
- If he / she does not feel better, call for emergency help.

## **Heat Stroke**

**Symptoms:** dry, pale skin without sweating or hot, red skin that looks sunburned, irritability, confusion, seizures or fits, unconsciousness with no response.

**What to do:** call for emergency help immediately

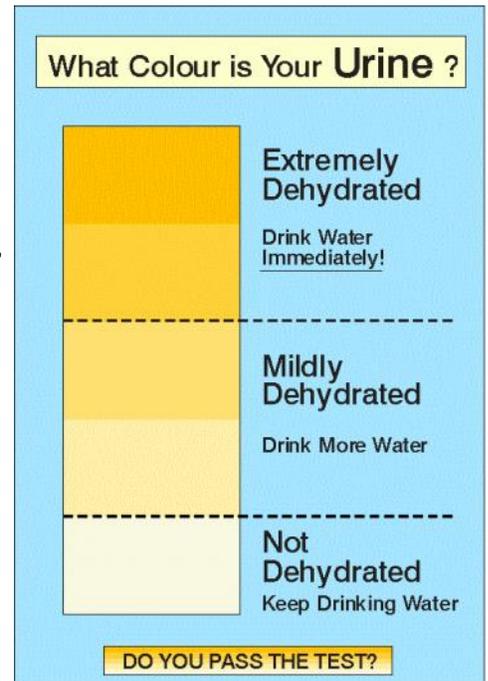
- Move the patient to a cool, shady area to rest and keep a watchful eye on him / her;
- Loosen and remove heavy clothing;
- Unless the patient is vomiting, have him / her drink a cup of cool water every 15 minutes;
- Cool the patient's body by fanning and spraying with a cool mist of water or apply a wet cloth to their skin;
- Place ice-packs under the armpits and in the groin area.

## **Risk Factors:**

- Taking certain medications. Check with your pharmacist to see if any medicines you are taking affect you while working in hot environments;
- Having a previous heat-induced illness;
- Wearing personal protective equipment such as a respirator or protective suit.

## **What can you and your co-workers do to protect yourselves?**

- Learn the signs and symptoms of heat-induced illnesses and how to respond;
- Teach your workforce about heat-induced illnesses;
- Perform the heaviest work during the coolest part of the day;
- Build up your tolerance to the heat and the work activity slowly. This usually takes about two weeks;
- Use the buddy system, with people working in pairs;
- Drink plenty of cool water, about a cup every 15 to 20 minutes;
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing in fabric that breathes, such as cotton;
- Take frequent, short breaks in cool, shaded areas to allow the body to cool down;
- Avoid eating large meals before working in hot environments;
- Avoid alcohol or beverages with caffeine. These make the body lose water and increase the risk for heat illnesses.



**It's hot out there, take care!**

## Deadly Summer Wildfires Devastate Greece

On 23 July a wildfire started west of Athens near Kineta; a few hours later, a second fire began north of Athens near Penteli. Due to strong wind gusts of up to 124 km/h, both wildfires spread quickly. The fire in Kineta burned houses in the area, while the fire in Penteli headed east towards the beach, where it started burning parts of Neos Voutzas and Mati.

Assistance from 27 countries streamed in, ranging from fire personnel and equipment, aircraft, drone surveillance to financial aid. The flames were so intense that they trapped and burned people inside their houses, cars and a few metres away from the beach. A summer camp of 620 children was evacuated in an overnight operation while thousands of vehicles and houses were destroyed before the fires were brought under control.

The cost in human life reached 96 with 175 injured, making this the second deadliest wildfire this century. The cause of the fire remains under investigation, but it is suspected that either arson or a damaged cable on a utility pole could be to blame. The summer heatwave and fierce winds did the rest.



## Getting Your Goat

Wildfires in Portugal are a regular occurrence during the dry summer months, with 106 people dying in the 2017 wildfires. The Portuguese government, seeking new wildfire prevention solutions, is trying an old strategy - goats and whether you love or loathe them, goats have joined Portugal's wildfire prevention team.

The government has hired hundreds of the furry munchers in the hopes that they will clean up the dry woodland before temperatures rise and the land becomes a tinderbox.

Goats can reach places people can't get to and using goats and sheep to manage fuel was common in ancient times. This old method has only recently been 'rediscovered' by scientists and researchers at universities

in Europe and the United States.

It's not as simple as sending Bokkie and his mates out to eat their heads off, though. Fuel density, forage quality and the availability of water are critical factors that aren't always consistent within the same patch of land.

While it appears that goats may be the most cost effective method to clear large stretches of land, the overall cost of this technique remains to be determined.

Perhaps one day a dainty little goat will join Miilo on LEFPA's posters!



## Black Hawk Swoops into Service as Mbombela Base Quarters Shine

With the fire season now in full swing, crews from LEFPA working alongside Working on Fire ground crews and all the LEFPA aircraft have been busy throughout the LEFPA Operational area. Operational for the very first time in South Africa, the Black Hawk helicopter assisted in suppressing the Kaapschehoop fire that began on Monday 13th August and was only contained on Tuesday afternoon. LEFPA crews were still mopping up late on Friday, cheered by the news that the weather was about to take a turn for the better.

Due to the high FDI's, both LEFPA Teams from Mbombela and Waterval Boven worked tirelessly throughout August and all hands were on deck, whether out in the field busy with fire suppression or at base keeping the ship afloat. The Waterval Boven team was bussed in to assist with the fires in the LEFPA Mbombela area and accommodated in the well-equipped LEFPA Mbombela base. The revamped base caters for ladies and gents with sleeping quarters and ablutions for both and a combined kitchen and canteen area.

At any given time Mbombela base can accommodate up to 6 fire crews and base operations are run by LEFPA Base Manager Queen Khoza. With so many crews involved in the Kaapschehoop operation, a Base Camp Manager was appointed to oversee the smooth running of the base as feeding, sleeping, equipping and transporting of crews day and night was a mammoth task.



LEFPA Crew Leader Goodman Madonsela was appointed Base Camp Manager and he and his team did a fine job of feeding the tired, hungry crews returning after hours spent on the fire line. Good work, guys and gals!



Storeman Bongani Mgewakana, Crew Leader Goodman Madonsela and new recruit Gugu Shabangu prepare a meal for the firefighting crews

## Environmental Empowerment Workshop

LEFPA Manager Andre Scheepers was a guest presenter at a workshop arranged by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs' Control Officer, Hein Geldenhuys. With his usual enthusiasm, Andre shared his extensive knowledge of wildfires and their environmental impact with the rapt audience and the organisers have received positive feedback from the attendees. From these seeds, environmental and wildfire awareness grows.

## Activities for the Month - September

- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Check airstrips on a weekly basis.
- Distribute your standby rosters to all neighbours.
- Advise all staff of call-out and dispatch protocols.
- Obtain FDI forecast on a daily basis from LEFPA.
- Study weather systems and check forecasts on the internet.
- Perform daily and weekly checks of all equipment, using checklists.



### Important Note:

- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties can contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members, contact Ivina for more information.
- **SUCCESS cannot be spelt without U. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!**