



all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 58 November 2020

Greetings,

The internet has many jaw-dropping images and video footage of the raging bush fires in the USA and Europe - the sheer power of fire produces incredible visuals and spinal shivers at the immensity of it all. Tragically, it also shared local horrific images of Hertzogville and our hearts go out to the people and animals affected by the inferno. Happier news is that we've signed off the 2020 Lowveld fire season with the annual awards and we reveal all the winners on page 2.

Congratulations to them, and a huge round of applause to every member of the team - ground, aerial, dispatch and admin. COVID-19 added an additional burden to challenging jobs but you performed out of your socks and the Board is extremely grateful to you all. Until next time.

3 Airtractor 802's sent by LEFPA, UFPA & KZNFA to assist Hertzogville



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Fiery Holocaust in Hertzogville

The horror in Hertzogville that began 18th October defies description so we'll allow the images to speak for the victims. Strong winds (evident in the video) fanned fires, started by burning tyres, into a raging inferno. The farmers, who suffered tremendous loss of stock, crops and assets were heartened by the support they received and praised Working on Fire for their efforts to contain the blazing fires.

If you are able to make a donation, please contact Elaine Olivier, co-ordinator of animal feed and other donations for the affected farmers, on 082 787 9660. Funds can also be deposited directly into FSA's disaster fund: Absa account: 470 940 670 Reference: Ramp. www.youtube.com/watch?v=lugca25YGiw



www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/shttps://www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/south-africa/thousands-of-hectares-destroyed-by-free-state

Images A Scheepers from social media



Party Time - We Celebrate the Best of the Best

A pilots braai and prizegiving, held at the Nelspruit Aero Club on 31st October, was opened by Andre Scheepers, who thanked everyone for another safe season despite the additional challenges presented by the pandemic. He went on to wish the pilots well for the forthcoming Cape fire season. It was a bumper occasion for Orsmond Aviation who swept up many of the 2020 awards - both the Best Bomber Pilot and the Pilot's Pilot awards went to newbie Craigh Hamman, flying his first fire fighting season! Congratulations, Craig, an amazing achievement as the more experienced pilots are highly skilled.

The 2020 Spotter Pilot prize was awarded to Francois van Eden of Working on Fire while Mark Jackson from Leading Edge Aviation was this year's Chopper Pilot.

As usual, the ground crews came in for recognition and awards and the FSP (Forestry Support Programme) crew did extremely well in their first year - Hein 'Obelix' Krause and his team received the LEFPA trophy for the Most Improved Runway, Graskop, which they manned. The trophy for the best WoF hand crew in the LEFPA operational area was won by FSP Injaka. Well done guys! Best Bomber Loading Crew went to the crew at York Elandsdrift runway while Thembile Dlungwana from DEFF was presented with the GRINDER award for her unstinting efforts throughout the year.

Steven van der Linde was handed the Incident Commander of the Year award then Chairman Vaughan Lascelles closed the official part of the evening by thanking everyone for their commitment, loyalty and hard work throughout the season. Andre joins him in congratulating the award winners and thanked each and every one for being *All Fired Up* during the 2020 fire season. Thereafter, guests relaxed over a braai and a few cold ones. COVID-19 protocols have prevented get-together events this season and everyone was ready to kick back and catch up with colleagues and mates.

The Escarpment Ward Huey Pilot for 2020 trophies went to Michael Norman and Henning de Beer, with the citation:

Dankie vir julle akkurate werk, julle is verseker van die beste! Asseblief kom weer terug volgende jaar, julle plekkie op Tweefontein is verseker geboek!



Oom Steven vd Linde receives his award from Vaughan Lascelles



Escarpment Ward's fabulous trophy



Bomber Pilot & Pilots' Pilot Craigh Hamman with Andre Scheepers



Toe het hulle gebraai! Obelix with Spotter pilots Trevor Wilson & Lizanne Woite



Hein 'Obelix' Krause collects the prize for Most Improved Runway on behalf of FSP



Can Fire Blanket Technology Be Used For Wildfires?

Have you seen the fire blanket video produced by Bridgehill that within 3 weeks gained 35 million views, <https://youtu.be/3t7cPCqqsAc>? Bridgehill CEO and building engineer Frank Brubakken was determined to find a solution to the wild-fire epidemic and it seems that his patented technology, which will soon be available worldwide, could offer pop up solutions for wildfires.

Brubakken first came up with the idea for his fire blanket when the historic village of Laerdal, Norway was swept by fire in 2014. The fire completely destroyed some of Norway's most well-preserved 18th and 19th century wooden houses. After spending 1800 hours on Google and talking himself hoarse on the phone discussing fabrics that could handle extreme heats, he found the answer with NASA which enabled him to develop a blanket which isolates fires in 20 seconds and can withstand up to 1000 degrees, making it the only safe way to extinguish fires in electric cars and fork lifts.

The next step for the Bridgehill team is finding a way to use the fire blanket to suppress wildfires and they think they may well have done that. For years, they have been testing fire sails with impressive and effective results.

The sails create a barrier around burning parts of a forest, protecting the surrounding area from igniting. Keep an eye on this development, folks, it could be the future for wildfire protection in South Africa. <https://discovergrey.com/hustle/work-tech/how-this-blanket-can-help-end-the-wildfire-epidemic/>



The Bridgehill fire blanket protecting homes from wildfire.
Photo Frank Brubakken / Bridgehill

The Day The World Turned Orange

WUSA9.com carried striking photographs of iconic San Francisco bathed in orange light as smoke from the raging California wildfires filled the sky. Beautiful in the moment, the consequences of these fires have yet to be tallied. www.wusa9.com/article/news/nation-world/western-us-skies-turn-eerie-orange-due-to-wildfires/507-76b5e6de-b295-4b28-9749-7d45c24b4e76



Credit: AP

October Fire Statistics

Our final month of the fire season brought good rains and we're hoping that the predicted La Niña will treat us to a wet, cool summer. A quiet six months both for the Cape and Lowveld will be very welcome.

LEFPA Fire Stats - 2020 Fire Season										
	Fires				Ha Burned		Fire Suppression Hours			
	Total Fires	Aerial	Ground	A & G	Plantation	Vegetation	Total Hours	Spotter	Bomber	Chopper
Totals 2019	135	71	55	9	11815	5383	1001,93	284,64	369,93	347,36
Totals 2020	144	44	90	10	2 147	3305,62	550,25	128,22	227,75	194,28
May 15 - 31	3	0	2	1	60	50	8,03	2,73	5,30	0,00
June	11	9	2	0	136	250,35	51,68	13,86	19,03	18,79
July	30	15	13	2	745	2491	165,26	38,77	61,11	65,38
Aug	60	13	42	5	823	375,5	233,61	50,98	105,53	77,10
Sept	35	4	29	2	350	138,77	76,73	16,70	32,55	27,48
Oct	5	3	2	0	33	0	14,94	5,18	4,23	5,53
Oct 2019	15	10	2	3	4 092	916	254,30	62,20	67,50	120,10
FSP	27	0	27	0	139	237,3	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

COVID-19 Still Lurks

Seven months after the pandemic kickstarted our national lockdown and months of hardship across the board, our energy is flagging. The adrenaline 'fight or flight' boost that kept spirits up in April and May has slowed to a dribble; people have lost family members and friends either from the virus or as a direct result of it. Jobs, businesses, homes, studies and careers are lost or in the doldrums and the impulse to rip off the masks, refuse to sanitise our hands and invite everyone over for an 'opskop' is gaining strength. People are planning what they are going to do with their masks 'when COVID ends' as if this invisible fiend will suddenly whisk itself away to Mars. The unpalatable reality is that the virus, like Pandora, is out of the box and will remain with us evermore. We simply cannot revert back to life before 27th March; we have to factor bio-health into our everyday life hereon in. It takes 21 days to learn new habits, they say. After seven months, we should be into our new lifestyle 'groove' and taking masks, sanitising and maintaining social distance in our stride.

Spectacular Shot

This spectacular shot of a Canadair aircraft, captured on the 3rd August 2020 by Emanuela Valeri/EPA-EFE, was featured in the Daily Maverick newspaper. Four Canadairs, three helicopters, 80 firemen, 56 civil protection volunteers, 35 Alpine troops from the 9th Regiment in addition to 14 personnel from the Municipality of L'Aquila were used to extinguish a forest fire in Arischia and Cansatessa-Pettino in L'Aquila, Italy.



Activities for the Month - November

- Keep monitoring FDI.
- Plan weed control operations.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Close manual lookouts if weather permits.
- Study weather systems and check forecasts on the internet.

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!**