



Greetings,

A new financial year dawns on 1st March and unfortunately LEFPA has to wave a big stick. The Association is funded by membership fees and the Board, unpaid, hardworking volunteers, have taken the tough decision to tighten up on defaulting members. Please ensure you are not one! This issue sees the beginning of a new series discussing Alien Invasive plants. Use the column as a handy reference to see what is growing on your patch that shouldn't be.



Until next time.

Invasive Alien Species

Fuel load reduction is a constant task, particularly in the run up to a fire season. This housekeeping chore is made more onerous by invasive alien species rampantly spreading, unimpeded by the controls that occur in their natural environment.

All Fired Up will run a feature each month until the end of the year, introducing the main culprits invading the Lowveld and which may well be on your land. Read about these unwanted illegal immigrants and why they should be controlled and managed.

Since returning from their December break, the LEFPA Mbombela and Waterval Boven teams have been busy with fuel load reduction along the N4 between Mbombela and Waterval Boven, assisting TRAC. Members in the Mara area and SAPPI Lomati in Barberton have also been helped by LEFPA to clear invasive aliens from their properties.

Lomati is situated some distance away from the Mbombela base, therefore in order to reduce costs and travel time and increase productivity, LEFPA Mbombela's Bravo team have set up a camp site at the mill. From here, the team operates from Monday to Friday for the next few weeks. Being outside of the fire season, crews are not on weekend standby so the team go home to their families for the weekends.



Lefpa Mbombela Bravo team with Crew Leader and Driver Goodman Madonsela in action at Lomati



Home, sweet home for LEFPA Mbombela's Bravo team at the moment

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The Law Relating to Veld & Forest Fires

With the forthcoming Lowveld fire season just over the horizon, LEFPA would like to take this opportunity to remind land owners about their legal responsibilities regarding any fires which start on their property. The law relating to veld and forest fires is very clear - if 'your' fire spreads to your neighbour, you are deemed responsible.

We encourage you to read this article in order to refresh your knowledge and to protect your interests in the event of a fire on your property.

Every land owner on whose land a veld fire may start (as a result of refuse pits, angle grinders, welding torches, kids playing with matches, fire breaks, block burning - any cause whatsoever) or burn or from whose land it may spread must have such equipment, protective clothing and trained personnel for extinguishing fires as are:

- prescribed; or
- in the absence of prescribed requirements, reasonably required under the circumstances.

Important points:

- A land owner must ensure that in his or her absence responsible persons are present on or near his or her property who, in the event of a fire, will extinguish the fire or assist in doing so; and take all reasonable steps to alert their neighbours and the relevant fire protection association, if any.
- A land owner may appoint an agent to do all that he or she is required to do in terms of fire break burning.
- A land owner who has reason to believe that a fire on his or her land or the land of an adjoining owner may endanger life, property or the environment, must immediately take all reasonable steps to notify the FPA or Fire Protection Officer and the neighbours; and do everything in his or her power to stop the spread of the fire.
- Any person who has reason to believe that a fire on any land may endanger life, property or the environment, may, together with any other person under his or her control, enter that property or land to which the fire can spread in order to prevent the fire from spreading or to extinguish it.



Drones Present a Threat to Aerial Firefighting

Suppressing fires is stressful enough for the firefighting pilots, made even more so when some bright spark with a drone decides to fly in the operational air space.

These amazing bits of technology are a heap of fun and can provide spectacular bird's eye views but drones are subject to stringent rules and regulations. Drone owners and operators may **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** interfere in an area where emergency services resources are being deployed.

Despite media suggestions that drones could be useful to emergency services, for the safety of our pilots LEFPA does not support their use at the current time.

Firefighting aircraft occupy the airspace between 0 and 500 feet above ground level to perform their task of extinguishing fires - a level where the irresponsible drone user likes to fly his / her craft.

With smoke and heat haze affecting visibility, a mid-air impact between a sightseeing drone and a bomber, helicopter or spotter plane is possible, even likely.

In a nutshell, flying drones near wildfires is not safe, posing a safety risk to the pilots already risking their lives to curtail damage and losses. A pilot's life, damaged aircraft and a liability claim against a drone user should be enough deterrent to keep your drone on the ground. A drone can be replaced, a life not.

It is best to leave the birds eye view of the blaze below to the licensed, skilled pilots in the planes and choppers.



Offences and Penalties



The March 2017 issue of All Fired Up covered the offences and penalties applicable in the case of veld and forest fires in great detail.

It is important to note that there is a presumption of negligence (to NON-MEMBERS) which could lead to heavy penalties in the event that a plaintiff who brings civil proceedings proves that he or she suffered loss from a veld fire which:

the defendant caused; or which started on or spread from land owned by the defendant, the defendant is presumed to have been negligent in relation to the veld fire until the contrary is proved, unless the defendant is a member of a fire protection association in the area where the fire occurred. (Extract from National Veld & Forest Fire Act 101, 1998).

The above presumption does not exempt the plaintiff from the onus of proving that any act or omission by the defendant was wrongful.

Membership of LEFPA provides land owners with the security of compliance with the law, as the penalties in the event of being found guilty are stringent.

A further extract from the Act covers the applicable penalties:

A person who is guilty of a first category offence may be sentenced on a first conviction for that offence to a fine or imprisonment for a period of up to two years, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

A person who is guilty of a second category offence may be sentenced on a first conviction for that offence to a fine or imprisonment for a period of up to one year, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

To read the full list of offenses please visit www.lefpa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Fines-and-Penalties.pdf, or email admin@lefpa.co.za for a copy of the March 2017 issue.

Eskom Transmission Servitude Burn Protocol

Burning under Eskom transmission lines and within the Eskom servitudes requires additional preparation to prevent line faults occurring. Proper planning by land owners and Eskom Transmission staff enables Eskom's National Control to timeously switch out lines in order to prevent line faults (caused by 'flashovers'). Due to the system constraints it is vital for Eskom Transmission Overhead Lines staff to inform Eskom National Control of planned burns near or under Eskom's High Voltage power lines at least **2– 4 days in advance**. Land owners should apply for burn permits at LEFPA and these must be issued and in hand before any burn commences. Eskom staff must be present at the planned burn in order to manage the risks.

Eskom Transmission Lowveld staff should also be informed immediately of any unplanned or runaway fires under or in close proximity to any power lines.

What is a flash-over?

The discharge process begins when the local electric field exceeds the breakdown strength of air, about 500kV/mm. Intense ionisation occurs, producing an outward projecting discharge to ground (earth).

For example, in the case of sugar cane fires under the line, the bio-mass fire produces pollution and heat which increases the electric field across the conductors and insulators. As a result this electric field becomes powerful enough to become a current-carrying conductor, transferring that energy to ground.

The impact of a line trip (flashover) for the Eskom network AND customers

- Equipment damage,
- Loss of income,
- Property damage due to runaway veld fires,
- Potentially lethal to humans and livestock at electricity strike point to ground.

ZERO LINE FAULTS = ZERO HARM

Eskom contact details:

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Notification of a Special General Meeting 8th March 2018

The LEFPA Special General Meeting will take place on Thursday 8 March 2018 at 10h00 in the LEFPA Boardroom (FGK Capital Building, Canary Walk Business Park, 8 Bester Street, Nelspruit). The sole purpose of the LEFPA Special General Meeting is to approve rates for the upcoming financial year beginning 1 April 2018. The LEFPA budget will be presented at this meeting.

AGENDA

1. Opening and welcome
2. Apologies
3. Attendance register
 - 3.1 Verification of members present to confirm a Quorum.
4. Confirmation of previous minutes of 9 March 2017
5. Matters for discussion
 - 5.1 LEFPA Budget: Membership Rates 2018/2019 financial year
 - 5.2 Fire Detection advance payments for 2018/2019 financial year
 - 5.3 LEFPA team variable cost adjustment for 2018/2019 financial year
 - 5.4 Flying Rates, Runway and Chemical Rates for 2018/2019 financial year
6. Resolutions and mandates
7. Closure



LEFPA Creditors Information Meeting

It is LEFPA's responsibility to make sure that our members understand their membership as well as their credit limits and payment responsibilities. A LEFPA Creditors meeting will take place on Thursday 8 March 2018 at 11h30 in the LEFPA Boardroom directly after the LEFPA Special General Meeting. This informative meeting will explain LEFPA membership to the debtors and admin clerks responsible for processing LEFPA documentation for payment.

LEFPA staff encourages two-way communication and feedback and look forward to seeing the relevant member representatives at the meeting.



"For starters, I think we should find out who made the coffee that day!"

Activities for the Month - March

- Mow airstrips
- Prepare chemical tracer belts
- Update road slashing plan
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly
- Update contact details of all neighbours
- Train your employees in fire management
- Check that water points have adequate supplies
- Finalise a firebreak agreement with your neighbours
- Draw up an action plan for non-conforming firebreaks
- Implement an action plan for firebreak preparation
- Do you understand the obligations of your insurance warranties?
- Do your fire crew members have appropriate protective clothing?
- Do you understand the legal implications concerning your liability?
- Slash burning allowed if weather permits - get a burning permit from LEFPA.

sappi

LEFPA would like to thank Sappi for sponsoring the monthly activity desk pads supplied to the Mpumalanga FPA's

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 Corné for more information.
- **SUCCESS cannot be spelt without U. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!**