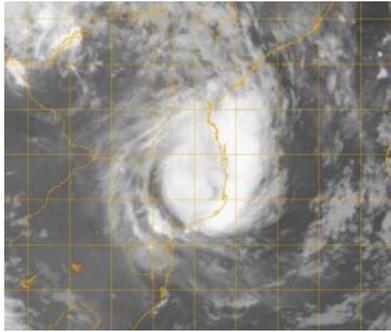




Greetings,

This issue was put together in the midst of Tropical Storm Dineo with fire risk in the area undoubtedly below zero!

At the request of the Provincial Disaster Management, Working on Fire Mpumalanga put LEFPA's Nelspruit Base on standby for humanitarian aid if needed in the Lowveld region. As things transpired, Dineo let us off lightly, the area suffered no disaster and we were not called upon, excellent news. Enjoy the good rains. Until next time.



Contact Us
LEFPA Nelspruit
Corné
Office :013 752 6419
Cell : 082 566 2728
Fax: 086 515 3755
admin@lefpa.co.za

Permit Requests
Office: 013 752 6419
0860 66 34 73
permit1@lefpa.co.za
or
permit2@lefpa.co.za

A New Contract for Fire Detection in LEFPA Area

The Sabie and Graskop areas have been served by electronic camera-based fire detection since about 1997. This started with 9 cameras and slowly grew into the present system of 29 cameras. Initially the detection centre was up at Bakenkop but this was destroyed in the 2007 fires. Subsequently everything was moved into the Tweefontein detection centre in Sabie. Contracts for this detection were held separately with the various forestry corporates.

Five years ago Sappi Forests decided to convert its plantations south of the Crocodile River to electronic detection and entered into a five-year agreement with LEFPA to provide the services. This was a large project which entailed many new camera towers and a new detection centre in Nelspruit. This area also ended up with 29 cameras covering the various companies' needs.

About 18 months ago a contract renewal process was begun whereby all 58 cameras and the two detection centres would be upgraded to state-of-the-art technology in time for the 2017 fire season. In total more than 690,000 hectares will be covered by the combined systems. A special project team was formed under the auspices of the Mpumalanga Fire Detection Steering Committee to manage this process. Currently the procurement and negotiation processes are complete.



The successful contractor is EnviroVision Solutions, the current service provider. The next step is finalization of the contract and implementation of the conversion and replacement process. This is likely to take several months.



The biggest improvement over the existing systems will be the upgrade to high definition cameras and screens. This will enable clearer viewing and detection out to about 10km on good days and quicker as well as more accurate detection of the fires. Software upgrades should speed-up detection and workflow. There will also be some tower, power supply and security upgrades at many sites.

LEFPA looks forward to the improvements that will be realized and an ongoing good working relationship with EVS.

One of the upgraded detection centres

What is a Fire Protection Association (FPA)?

The National Veld & Forest Fire Act 101, 1998 provides for the creation of an entity responsible for the coordination and implementation of Integrated Fire Management (IFM) strategies within a defined area of operation. Usually established within municipal boundaries, FPAs collect and collate data to assist with predicting, preventing and managing wildfire risks in the FPAs operational area.

Membership is voluntary but clearly the key duties, responsibilities and objectives are best achieved when all land owners and land users (including local and district government) participate in the structure of an FPA. Largely dependent on volunteers and well-resourced members, an FPA is staffed by a volunteer Executive Committee and a Fire Protection Officer and raises funds through membership fees. FPAs assist in coordinating the implementation of integrated fire management principles and their continual functioning and sustainability benefits the broader community.

Facilitating the implementation of IFM principles through the prediction, prevention and suppression of wildfires by the pooling of resources, FPAs focus on achieving the following objectives:

- To inform and train the community on the risks of fire; ensure that fire prevention and planning is used to mitigate fire.
- To put in place planning and resources, making certain that communities within the FPA area are appropriately protected in the context of rural fire reduction, readiness, response and recovery.
- To ensure fire suppression is coordinated and effective.
- To make sure that minimum equipment and personnel standards are met or exceeded .
- To educate land owners about forest and rural fire prevention.
- To implement a personnel fire fighter training programme for the benefit of all members.
- To provide volunteers/fire wardens with quality maps to assist them in their work.
- To facilitate a radio network covering the FPAs area of operation.
- To establish good working relationships and management systems with sister agencies (Provincial government departments, commercial forestry and local government fire services) to ensure that appropriate levels of hazard reduction are achieved.
- To manage and co-ordinate all veld & forest fire suppression operations in its area of operation.



Provincial Umbrella Fire Protection Association's (UFPAs) may be formed by FPAs. These operate within Provincial boundaries and are aligned to the Provincial Disaster Management Centre. The formation of these has hugely benefited local FPAs through a shared resources and services approach to Integrated Fire Management.

The Law Relating to Veld & Forest Fires

The law relating to veld and forest fires is very clear and we encourage you to read this article in order to refresh your knowledge.

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;
- ensure that in his or her absence responsible persons are present on or near his or her land who, in the event of a fire, will extinguish the fire or assist in doing so; and take all reasonable steps to alert the owners of adjoining land 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 owners of adjoining land; 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 land or land to which the fire can spread in order to prevent that fire from spreading or to extinguish it.



Photo by Hennie Homan

Objectives of a Fire Protection Association

Fire Prevention
Appointment of FPO
To ensure landowners are educated about forest and rural fire prevention.
Communication to landowners & the public regarding veld fire management, landowners are educated about forest and rural fire prevention – fuel load reduction, necessity of fire breaks.
Liaison & Coordination with PDMC / NDMC
Exercise the powers and perform the duties delegated to it by the Minister.
Communicating Fire Danger Index
Ensure minimum equipment and personnel standards are met or exceeded while not compromising operational efficiency or effectiveness
Assistance to members of FPAs where court cases arise, such as providing expert witness, and statistical and weather information
Providing equipment, personnel and training standards, where the Fire services have not provided these
Fire Protection
Strategic policy & planning: develop a veld fire management strategy, including contributions to local disaster management plans
Coordination functions: co-ordination of equipment and other resources between individual FPAs
To ensure planning and resources are in place to proactively ensure communities within the area of operation are appropriately protected in the context of rural fire reduction, readiness, response and recovery.
Identify the ecological conditions that affect the fire danger, ecosystems, alien plant control
Weather data collection for NFDRS improvements
Provide input data for FDI
Implement a radio network to effectively handle emergencies
Provide management services, training, capacity building and support for communities in their efforts to manage and control veld fires;
Training, where training is not provided by an industry
Furnish any information requested by the Minister in order to prepare or maintain the fire danger rating system
Management and maintenance of aerial support services
Fire Suppression
Provide aerial support services
Provide fire incident command specialists: support and coordination between FPAs and other firefighting agencies

Notice of Special General Meeting

Annual membership fees will be approved at a Special General Meeting to be held in the LEFPA Boardroom on the 9th March at 10h00. All Members are cordially invited.

LEFPA Credit Control

The new financial year is a good time to remind members of the financial responsibility they have for their LEFPA accounts. It's easy outside of fire season for membership dues to slip your mind however, LEFPA provides annual protection similar to an insurance policy - it's not a pay-for-use service. LEFPA expertise and teams are on standby for you during the season whether you use them or not and naturally this availability and protection costs money.

LEFPA's annual budget is based on every member and requires everyone to pay their accounts timeously. Susan Daniel is sympathetic to individual cash flow situations but asks members to give her a call on 013 752 6419 / 083 702 3792. You could also email her debtors@lefpa.co.za to discuss payment options rather than wait for her to get in touch with you.

Membership invoices will be sent out on the 1st April 2017. Accounts are strictly 30 days, so if fees are not received on time Susan will follow up with the member.

Offences and Penalties

In terms of the Act, the following offences and penalties are applicable. There is a presumption of negligence (NON-MEMBERS)

If a person 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.

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

Offences - First Category:

Any person who lights, uses or maintains a fire in the open air when a fire warning has been issued;

Any owner, occupier or person in control of land on which a fire occurs who fails to take reasonable steps to extinguish the fire or to confine it to that land or to prevent it from causing damage to property on adjoining land, is guilty of a first category offence.

Penalty: 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.

Offences - Second Category:

Any person who, in the open air:

leaves unattended a fire which he or she lit;

lights, uses or maintains a fire, which spreads and causes injury or damage;

throws, puts down or drops a burning match or other burning material and, by doing so, makes a fire which spreads and causes injury or damage;

lights, uses or maintains a fire in a road reserve;

Any person who:

fails to prepare a firebreak in terms of the Act;

fails to give notice of intention to burn a firebreak in terms of the Act;

burns a firebreak when a Fire Protection Association has objected in terms of the Act;

fails to inform adjoining landowners and the Fire Protection Association of their intention to burn fire breaks or block burns;

Any person who:

fails to meet the standards of readiness for firefighting;

fails to notify the correct persons;

refuses to assist a fire protection officer or a forest officer; hinders or obstructs any person or any fire protection officer or a forest officer,

Penalty:

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.

Activities for the Month - March

- Mow airstrips
- Prepare chemical traces.
- 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.
- Check that all tools conform to LEFPA standards.
- 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.



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.
- A Corporate Creditors Meeting will be held in the LEFPA Boardroom in May. Details to follow.