

**POTENTIAL DANGERS  
FIRE FIGHTING ON NATURE RESERVES  
Version 2 September 2011**

The following potential dangers must be noted when firefighting teams enter nature reserves to extinguish or suppress wild fires.

<b>BE AWARE AND TAKE NOTE OF:</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<p><b>“Big Five” Nature reserve</b> If any or all of the following game are present on a NR – Lion, Buffalo, Elephant, Rhino and Leopard</p>	<p>Determine from reserve staff whether any of these animals are present on the reserve. <b>If so:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One armed field ranger</b> equipped with two-way radio communication must be assigned to every <b>10 fire fighters</b> at all times.</li> <li>• When approaching a fire through un-burnt vegetation from the drop-off point, an armed field ranger should lead the fire team towards the fire in <b>single file</b>.</li> <li>• When moving from one fire to another on foot through un-burnt vegetation an armed field ranger should lead the fire team in single file.</li> <li>• <b>Be alert</b> to fresh animal tracks, fresh dung, strong smell of dung &amp; urine (elephant, rhino), breaking of branches, hoof sounds on rocks, alert sounds from animals, wind direction, escape routes (tree’s, higher ground, rock faces).</li> <li>• <b>Be noisy</b> , especially at night when leaving the drop-off zone or when moving through vegetated areas so as to scare animals from your route/position.</li> </ul>
<b>Other dangers on Nature Reserves</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Hippo and crocodiles	<p>Determine from reserve staff, whether any of these <b>aquatic animals/reptiles</b> are present in the rivers, streams or dams on the reserve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take note of surrounding area when collecting water from such water bodies for firefighting equipment. <b>Collect water from shallow rocky areas</b>. Avoid areas along rivers with steep banks and deep pools.</li> <li>• In case of hippo, take special precaution when approaching water at night. (Hippo tends to forage away from the rivers and</li> </ul>

	<p>have specific paths along which they run when alerted. <b>Never walk on hippo paths</b>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should rivers have to be crossed, first inspect area where crossing could be made and make sure water crossing is as shallow as possible(below knee level)</li> </ul>
Mining shafts (adducts, addits, pits)	<p>Determine whether any such <b>mining disturbances</b> exist on the NR. These shafts may be unmarked and extremely dangerous should a person fall into and down such a shaft.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should fires be fought in such terrain, especially at night, extreme caution should be taken. Gather as much information as possible from staff on the ground in terms of location, distribution and numbers.</li> <li>• During firefighting should such shafts be identified, a “marker”, known to all (danger tape, toilet paper), can be tied to the closest tree/stump/rock etc.</li> <li>• To minimise such risk, firefighting team should walk in single file when advancing through un-burnt vegetation.</li> </ul>
Mountainous terrain	<p>Many nature reserves have <b>rugged mountainous terrain</b> and totally void of any access roads.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that staff on the ground provides maps and that <b>thorough discussions</b> take place where to combat wild fires. (note that in some instances, fires in extreme rugged terrain, due to its remoteness, are left to burn itself out). It is often found that in the Lowveld/bushveld areas natural breaks such as streams/ rock faces ect., act as fire barriers.</li> </ul>
Roads on nature reserves	<p>Prior to fighting fires on nature reserves request a <b>road map</b> for the reserve, which may indicate access to and escape routes from wild fires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow reserve staff to identify the <b>class of roads</b> providing access to firefighting areas. (4x4, LDV, Truck or Tractor-trailer access.)</li> </ul>
Reserve staff assistance	<p><b>In all cases</b>, request that <b>knowledgeable staff</b>, equipped with two way communication accompany fire fighters so as to provide assistance when needed. (Be aware that due to rugged terrain in some area of a nature reserve, there may be no communication at all.)</p>
Access to water from streams/rivers	<p>Prior to fighting fires on nature reserves requested information in terms of <b>access to</b></p>

	<b>water</b> , when fighting fires in identified areas.(Some areas may be totally void of any surface water).
Bites and stings from snakes and insects.	Bees and wasps, snakebites, Violin spider, Black widow or button spiders, scorpions, Ticks.(Take care and be aware of any <b>allergies</b> from bee stings-it could be fatal). Tick bites may cause Congo or tick bite fever.
Dead animal carcass/bones	Rather do not touch/pick up any dead <b>animal remains</b> . It could have died from a contagious disease such as anthrax, rift, valley fever, TB, rabies or foot & mouth.
Awareness	Always <b>be aware of your surroundings</b> and take special note of the immediate area – condition of terrain (open grass veldt, dense bush, flat or steep, dry or muddy, rocky, smooth, deep & shallow water, fast moving river flow).