



Greetings,

June's dreadful fires in Knysna and along the Garden Route are a shocking reminder that nature knows no 'fire season'. LEFPA commends the volunteer firemen from across the country who picked up their equipment and went to help, and our thoughts are with the families of the brave men who lost their lives in the raging conflagration.

Wild fires are serious and dangerous and we urge our members not to drop their guard but to remain aware and alert.

Until next time.

Friends in Need...

Are true friends indeed. In the early hours of Thursday 8th June LEFPA received a request for assistance with the Knysna fires. At first light, an Air Tractor 802 was sent to Knysna and Rinus van Raaij, one of LEFPA's Working on Fire Air Tractor pilots for this season, arrived in Plettenburg Bay by lunchtime of the same day. Of the six days he was away, due to travelling time and a day with strong winds which grounded the planes, Rinus spent three days flying on fire suppression/ bombing. On those three days he dropped 95 water loads of 3000 litres each, totalling 285 000 litres, over the raging inferno below. Rinus averaged 5 drops per hour in 19 hours of flying; a Herculean effort indeed.

On Saturday 10th, after a request for additional assistance, LEFPA dispatched Oom Koos Kieck with another Air Tractor 802.



LEFPA was also asked to provide a ground team and the LEFPA team based at Waterval Boven was mobilised on Sunday, spending the evening in Gauteng before flying to Port Elizabeth early on Monday 12th. The ground team assisted with fire suppression and mop up operations in the area.

The aircraft and pilots were released by the Knysna Emergency Officials at their briefing on the evening of Monday 12th and they returned to base on 13th June.

During Rinus and Oom Koos's absence, Liam Mostert from AFS Malelane base was on standby for LEFPA while Orsmond Aviation made an additional Thrush available should it have been needed.

Andre Scheepers has expressed his deepest thanks for their assistance at such short notice.

When it comes to suppressing wild fires, it's all hands on the fireline and everyone is a neighbour.



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A photo that says it all - unnamed exhausted firefighters in Knysna. (Picture from Facebook)

Introducing the 2017 Dispatchers

At the heart of the LEFPA control room are the dispatchers. Robert Rodgers is joined this year by Edwin Kumako.

This is Robert's 2nd season at LEFPA and his 10th as a Dispatcher. Hailing from Pretoria, he's been in the Lowveld since 2007 and has experience at Working on Fire as well as Fisantekraal in the Western Cape.

Sthembiso Edwin Komako was born in Pienaar and locally schooled. He's the family breadwinner, supporting his grandmother and siblings. Edwin has a background in security and IT Technical support. He was a Forest Watch Operator at EVS for a year and is currently a Type 2 Dispatcher at Working on Fire for the next six months.

LEFPA welcomes Edwin to the team and wishes the Dispatchers a good season.



Edwin Kumako and Robert Rodgers

On-Site Training Day at Gwynn Mason



Ephraim from Aquila Training explaining to the team what to expect from the Basic Fire Fighting training



Then he shows them how important fitness is



How to use their equipment



How to prepare the terrain for a burn



How to work on the fireline



And then...impressed with himself, Ephraim stands and watches how his newly trained team correctly fight fire

Meet the Working on Fire Pilots

LEFPA is joined by four Working on Fire pilots for the current season - Spotter pilots Johannes Botha and Francois Van Eeden, and Air Tractor 802 pilots Rinus van Raaij and Bevan Harris. Francois and Bevan took time out to share a bit about themselves with *All Fired Up*.

Francois Van Eeden grew up in the Lowveld and nothing excites him more than being in the midst of clear blue skies! He has over six years of hands-on the yoke fire fighting experience. Pilot safety and aircraft maintenance are critical for him and Francois has also qualified as an Avionics Engineer. His technical knowledge alongside his quick-thinking enables him to bring a basket of aviation skills to LEFPA. Francois' long term goal is to fly the Air Tractor 802 and to be the best he can be in the industry.



Francois van Eeden



Bevan Harris

In 1992 Bevan Harris started his career in aerial firefighting. Trained by Johan Heine, he became a Spotter pilot in 1993. Bevan has worked at all of the bases in the High-and Lowveld over the years and got to know the area well, including the major plantation names and even the foresters.

During the 1990's Bevan worked in Piet Retief and Piggs Peak as a Spotter pilot before crop-spraying in the Nelspruit area in 2002. That led to flying Dromaders as a bomber pilot and he began flying bombers in Nelspruit in 2003. After training in Spain, Bevan moved onto the Air Tractor 802 in 2015.

LEFPA is delighted to have this excellent mix of experience, energy and broad skills base on the team for the fire season. Safe flying, Bevan and Francois!

2017 Safety Training by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

On 7th June the CAA hosted a safety campaign workshop at Nelspruit Aeroclub which was well attended by LEFPA management as well as LEFPA service providers Aerial Farming Services, Orsmond Aviation and Working on Fire.

LEFPA AGM

The 2017 AGM was held in the LEFPA Boardroom on Thursday 8th June. Chairman Duncan Ballantyne presented his report and LEFPA Secretary Mark Wagner reported on the audited financial year-end statements.

As LEFPA is in the midst of a three year office bearer cycle, there was no need for elections to be held and the current office bearers remain in their posts. No new resolutions were passed at the meeting.

Escarpment Ward Fire Fighting Competition

SAFCOL's Acting Manager: Fire & Risk, Annalize van Wyk has reported back on the annual Escarpment Ward Fire Fighting Competition, held on the 19th May at York Timber's sportsground. As in the past, the event was a successful one and the Escarpment Ward would like to thank the generous sponsors for making it possible:

- York Timbers
- SAFCOL (Komatiland Forests)
- Middelburg Sawmill
- Ulusaba Sawmill
- Long Tom Lumber
- GSP News
- EVS Sabie
- LEFPA

Timed to occur just before the beginning of the fire season, the event gives plantation owners and companies the opportunity to test the preparedness and readiness of their teams. Everyone is a winner on the day and it's good to see the fire fighters put through their paces, giving it everything they have.



Best Fire Truck Driver - Sibusiso Sithole from York Timbers Mauchsberg

Escarpment Ward Fire Fighting Competition (cont.)

The morning was filled with events and award categories. Eight teams took part in the Rake Hoeing event, 17 fire trucks participated in the Fire Truck competition and 9 Bakkie Sakkies entered the Bakkie Sakkie event.

Prize Winners:

Rake Hoeing - Gobonzela Hendriksdal

Fire Truck - York Timbers Mauchsberg

Bakkie-Sakkies - Gobonzela Hendriksdal

Best Fire Truck Driver - Sibusiso Sithole from York Timbers Mauchsberg who also won the **Neatest Fire Truck** award

Neatest Bakkie-Sakkie - Bernard Ndlovu from Komatiland Forests Morgenzon

Best Rake Hoe Supervisor - Solly Mokwena from Govonzela Hendriksdal

The judges commented on the improved standard from last year, however, felt that some technical aspects still need to be attended to. From the organisers side, Annalize remarks that everyone enjoyed the day and their hope is that this annual competition has a positive impact on the coming fire season.

She added that she would like to see more Wards in the LEFPA area host annual events such as this. With landowners in the wards being neighbours, it would assist them to learn from each other and to work together when fire incidents occur.

Annalize has a special mention for the excellent work by Armand Cronje and all the assistants, as well as to Andre Scheepers from LEFPA for arranging the Bomber water drop, always a drawcard at the competition. Organisers are also most grateful to Leslie Glass, who organised most of the event sponsorship.

LEFPA Escarpment Ward requests everyone to be aware of the following:

- Do not leave open fires unattended
- Do **not** make fires on an Orange or Red FDI day
- Report all fires to **0860 66 3473**

Winners of the Fire Truck competition - the team from York Timbers Mauchsberg

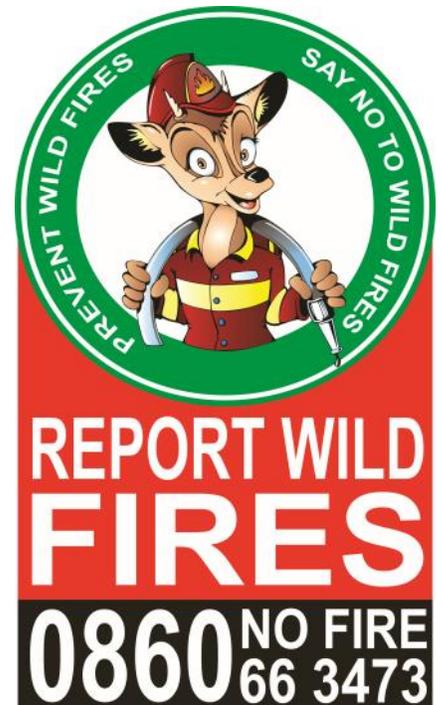


LEFPA Crew Base Revamps

The Nelspruit and Graskop Airfield Crew Rooms have been upgraded. The Graskop Crew Room was completed on 1st June while the Nelspruit Crew Room is still under construction. We'll have photographs of the new-look rooms to show you soon.

Activities for the Month - July

- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Check airstrips on a weekly basis.
- Ensure Eskom servitudes are burnt.
- 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.
- Complete the burning of your firebreaks as per your plan.
- Study weather systems and check forecasts on the internet.
- Perform daily and weekly checks of all equipment, using checklists.
- Perform checks to ensure readiness and quick reaction at all times.



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!