



# all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 49 February 2020

## Greetings,

The worst of times often brings out the best in us and the continental conflagration Down Under sure did that. Our own fire season is a scant three months away, will you be ready? Do you have an evacuation plan for your home, business and staff? Are the LEFPA emergency numbers saved in your household phones?

In this issue we focus on fuel load management and control, lack of which was a significant factor in the Australian fires. We also encourage you to develop strong relationships with your neighbours and together, develop plans and procedures for the outbreak of fires on your properties. A prepared, close knit community guided and supported by LEFPA membership is your best fire protection plan. Until next time.



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## Housekeeping the Indigenous Way

Although two months remain of the fire season and the wild fires which began in August 2019 are still burning, slowly the tide (or should we say weather?) is turning in Australia and some control is being gained over the fires. As is always the way, the blame game is underway and fingers are pointed in all directions. While some incidents of arson have been confirmed, by far the biggest ignitor has been lightning, a weather phenomenon outside man's control.

But an ignition spark is only a fraction of the story; by itself, it cannot burn millions upon millions of land hectares. And while climate change is a contributor to dryness, heat and wind, climate alone doesn't burn, it exacerbates the ideal conditions for a fire.

No, the petrol on the fire, so to speak, of the 2019 / 2020 Australian bushfires is poor land and forest management. Australia's National Parks follow a policy of leaving nature to its own devices by leaving deadwood, fallen trees, dry leaves and scrub *in situ* to facilitate a natural animal ecosystem while National and State governments stand guilty of inadequate fuel load management. Fire Chiefs and specialists in fire management are agreed that fuel loads which stood at exceptionally high levels due to lack of maintenance and management for years were an inferno waiting for the unlucky ignition strike. Dry, hot weather combined with strong winds were the final ingredient in a perfect storm that was several years in the making.

Australian Federal Resources Minister Matthew Canavan, quoted on *abc.net.au* says "The Queensland Government taking powers off farmers, taking their rights off them to be able to manage their own land, put in fire breaks, do cool burns, and that has exposed us to much higher risk than we should." Not being allowed to take charge of your own land and fuel load management is a terrifying scenario which fortunately isn't the case in South Africa.

There is, however, a bright spark amongst this and no, it's not another ignitor! The Australian Government is a partner and supporter of the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) Fire Management initiative, *The Global Potential of Indigenous Fire Management*. ([www/collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:5605/indigenous\\_fire\\_management.pdf](http://www/collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:5605/indigenous_fire_management.pdf)) The detailed report discusses fire-vegetation-climate relationships in the context of land management techniques used by indigenous people across the globe for thousands of years. "Such use of fire by Indigenous and local communities has often been interrupted. These interruptions to traditional management have resulted in high-intensity fire regimes and correspondingly high greenhouse gas emissions from savanna wildfires. Recent experience in remote north Australia demonstrates that strategic reintroduction of traditional, Early Dry Season fire management practices can reduce emissions by more than a third. When coupled with carbon market participation, or through other funding sources, this reduction also provides meaningful income opportunities for remote Indigenous communities. Savanna Fire Management projects also have notable co-benefits such as improving biodiversity, reinvigorating cultural ties to country, improving food security and health, enhancing human capital, and helping remote communities adapt to climate.

(cont on page 2)

## Housekeeping the Indigenous Way (continued from page 1)

Victor Steffensen is an indigenous specialist in fire management and through his knowledge of indigenous fire management practices in Australia is an advocate for controlled burns and cultivating the right flora to provide better protection in fire-prone areas. His interview in the January 2020 issue of Popular Science makes for exciting reading; is something similar possible in South Africa? [www.popsci.com/story/environment/australia-fires-management-climate/](http://www.popsci.com/story/environment/australia-fires-management-climate/)

Working with the environment, using age-old methods of land management and fuel load control makes much more sense than opposing nature. One thinks back to *All Fired Up*, September 2018, where we reported on the Portuguese government having gone back to basics with fuel load management by using goats to chomp up dry woodland. Local is *lekker*, they say, perhaps we should add 'our ancestors knew better' and build our land management planning on proven old ways.

## Now It's Your Turn To Tidy Up - Fuel Load Management

Right, it's time to don your overalls and get cracking on your land housekeeping. The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) has a useful page on their website, [www.daff.gov.za/daoDev/sideMenu/ForestryWeb/webapp/Documents/ForestFire/192.168.10.11/nvffa.nsf/037495e53fc3007e42256dde0043eebd/762c2788728c842f42256e7d003587a802ec.html?OpenDocument](http://www.daff.gov.za/daoDev/sideMenu/ForestryWeb/webapp/Documents/ForestFire/192.168.10.11/nvffa.nsf/037495e53fc3007e42256dde0043eebd/762c2788728c842f42256e7d003587a802ec.html?OpenDocument) to guide you in fuel load reduction, firebreaks and how to prepare them, landscaping your garden for fire protection, preventing fires on a farm, protecting live-stock and veldfire survival plans along with a pre-season checklist of what you should do before 1st May every year.

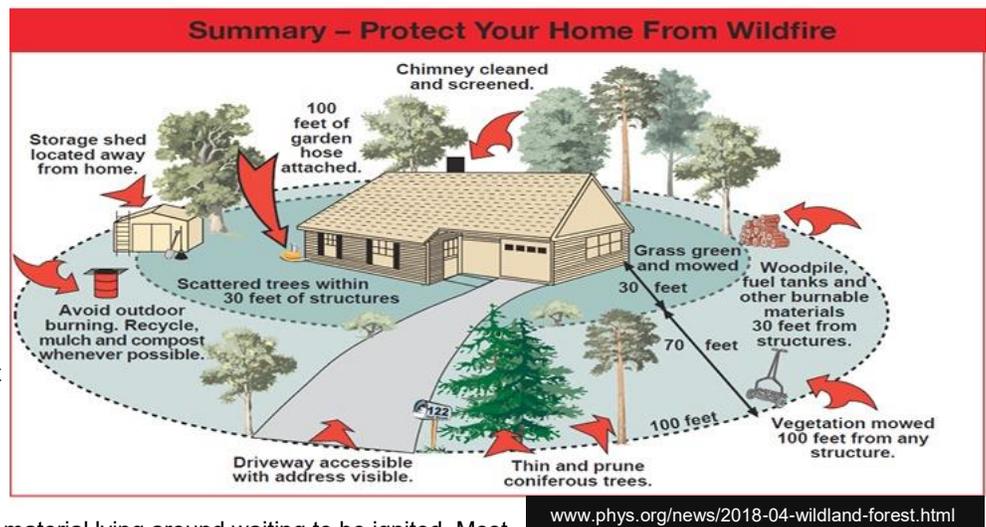
*All Fired Up* has a handy monthly activities checklist on the back page of each issue, this should act as your minimum guidelines for the month but it's up to you as a land-owner and householder to review your own property - what more needs to be done to prevent and protect you from fire?

Active land management, for instance, forest thinning, controlled burns and so on,

reduces the amount of flammable material lying around waiting to be ignited. Most of the factors that contribute to the severity of a fire - temperature, wind speed, fuel moisture and topography - are beyond human control. Fuel load, however, is a fire driver that we can influence.

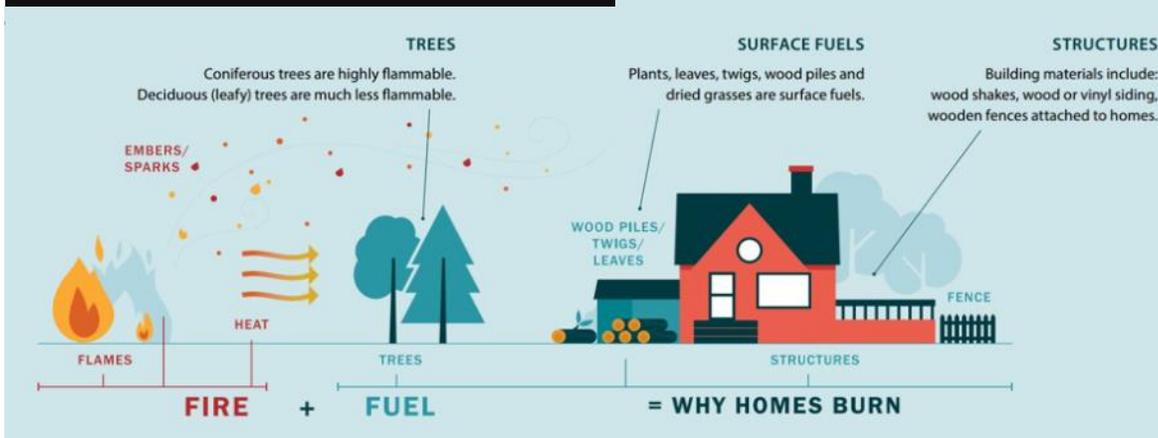
Preparation is a key factor in wildfire management - how are you coming along with your preparation for the 2020 fire season?

- Manage fuel loads and vegetation,
- Maintain access to tracks and fire breaks,
- Plan fire response,
- Ensure sufficient human capacity and resources to respond to worst-case scenarios.



[www.phys.org/news/2018-04-wildland-forest.html](http://www.phys.org/news/2018-04-wildland-forest.html)

[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/firesmart](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/firesmart)



If you have the above list on your planning agenda, well done.

If not, now is the perfect time to get your fire preparedness plans in order. Advice, support and assistance for paid-up members is only a phone call to LEFPA.

# International Fire Conference Statement

In November 2019 Duncan Ballantyne and Andre Scheepers represented LEFPA at the 7th International Fire Conference held in Brazil, reported in All Fired Up December 2019. Herewith the official statement from the conference.



Número Especial: 7ª Conferência Internacional sobre Incêndios Florestais - Resumos



7<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference  
Facing Fire in a Changing World: Reducing Vulnerability of People and  
Landscapes by Integrated Fire Management  
Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, 28 October - 1 November 2019  
Campo Grande Statement  
“Building Sustainable and Fire-Resilient Societies and Landscapes”  
1 November 2019

The 7<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference “Facing Fire in a Changing World: Reducing Vulnerability of People and Landscapes by Integrated Fire Management” took place in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, between 28 October and 1 November 2019. The conference was attended by more than a thousand government officials, scientists, practitioners, the private sector and civil society from 37 countries, and by UN agencies and other international and regional organizations.

The International Wildland Fire Conferences were initiated in 1989 in the United States of America and hosted in Canada, Australia, Spain, South Africa and South Korea since then. The 7<sup>th</sup> conference in Brazil evaluated three decades of international cooperation facilitated by these conferences, their aim to create a global science-policy-practitioners interface, the achievements and the gaps in fire management globally.

In response to fire and smoke episodes, people around the world are becoming concerned about wildfires. The participants of the conference confirmed that in many regions of the world, wildfires are a growing threat to communities and to natural, cultural, rural, urban and industrial landscapes. The problem is increasing due to the consequences of social, economic and ecological change (land-use change, demographic change, ecosystem degradation), as well as climate change. This is impacting human health and security and resulting in the loss of public and private assets, including critical infrastructure. Current risk governance and institutional arrangements are inadequate to cope with this growing trend. Cross-sectoral approaches are required.

The paradigm of addressing the problem through individual and disconnected services and actions in fire prevention or suppression should be reframed. Unified and integral planning must ensure and strengthen societal, environmental and economic resilience to landscape fires by addressing:

- Risk governance and ownership,
- Dialogue of knowledge, including traditional and indigenous knowledge,
- Gender, diversity and inclusion,
- Socio-economic innovation in rural landscapes, favouring nature-based solutions,
- Strengthening local action,
- Creation of resilient ecosystems and communities.

Decision-making must be evidence-based and supported by monitoring and evaluation systems. Implementation should be coherent, cohesive and coordinated.

The integrated cross-sectoral approach described above supports the Sustainable Development Goals, the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. This approach would be further strengthened by an appropriate United Nations instrument.

It is expected that during the forthcoming years tangible results in the policy arenas will be reached and reported back to the next International Wildland Fire Conference, which will be held tentatively in 2023.

The conference participants thanked the Government of Brazil, the State of Mato Grosso do Sul and the city of Campo Grande for hosting the conference and congratulated IBAMA and Prevfogo for preparing and organizing the conference. The conference participants welcomed the offer of Portugal to host the 8<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference in 2023.

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<sup>1</sup>Other terms such as landscape fires, vegetation fire, bushfire, forest fire, grass fire or peat fire are also used to describe the same phenomenon depending on the type of vegetation burned. The term “wildfire” is used when fires are unwanted and unplanned.

# Introducing Firelce

Firelce® is a firefighting gel that makes water more durable, is easy to use and allows first responders to act effectively and efficiently to save lives and protect assets. LEFPA is always seeking up-to-date fire suppression developments and so a Firelce® demonstration was arranged after the last LEFPA General Meeting in the car park of Canary Walk B on 28th November.



(L - R) Ferdi and Mark in deep discussion, Dennis, Duncan and Annelize

The manufacturers of Firelce® say that the product works by creating an oxygen barrier that breaks the fire triangle. Firelce®

- Remains effective at extremely high temperatures,
- Lasts for up to 48 hours,
- Can be easily rehydrated,
- Has excellent adhesion on almost all surfaces, including vertical surfaces,
- Cools instantly.

As you know, the first minutes in fire response are critical and while Firelce® is only one of the weapons in your fire suppression armoury, it offers some unique benefits to first responders in emergency situations. An important feature is that the product is safe for people, plants, animals and aquifers. The environmentally-friendly gel is also easy to clean up as you simply rinse with water.

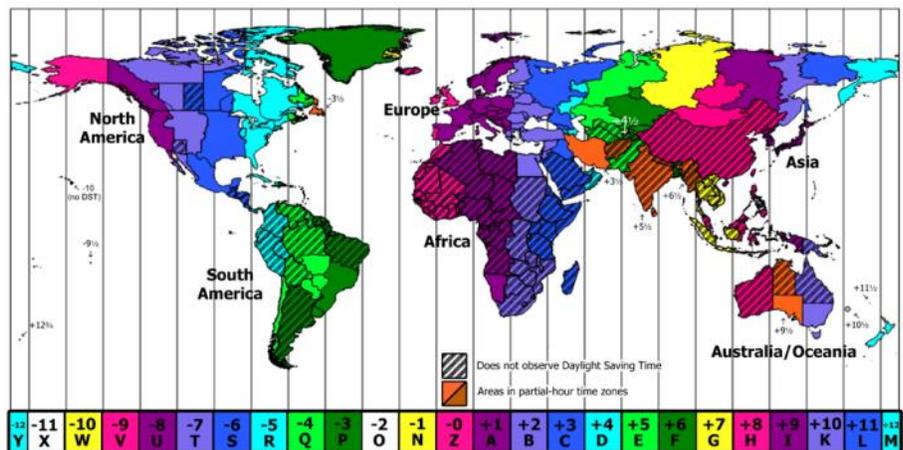
<https://www.fireicesolutions.com/>

## Did You Know?

We're familiar with the 24-hour clock which counts the day off from 01h00 (1am) through to midnight at 24h00 but Andre Scheepers caused editorial confusion when he submitted a piece to *All Fired Up* wherein he referred to a time as 1500B!

The communication wires hummed for an explanation which was rather interesting. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is known amongst the military and aviation industry as Zulu time, with time zones to the east of Greenwich in alphabetical order. Hence Central African Time (CAT) which is our South African time zone, is known as B.

Graphic from <http://24-hour-watch.com/>



## Activities for the Month - February

- Mow airstrips.
- Prepare chemical tracer belts.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Train your employees in fire management.
- Finalise a firebreak agreement with your neighbours.
- Draw up an action plan for non-conforming firebreaks.
- Slash burning allowed if weather permits - get a burning permit from LEFPA.



### Important Note:

- PLEASE ATTEND the Special General Meeting 26th March at 9h00 in the LEFPA board room.
- 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!**