



# all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 53 June 2020

## Greetings,



Fellow inmates, as they say. Beyond the realm of science fiction we're into the 2nd month of the 2020 season and rewriting how we do things as we go. The biggest changes are on the office side but ground and aerial crews have adopted sanitisation and safety measures into their routines as well.

Fire agencies in the USA have scrambled to put new procedures in place but are not seeing eye to eye over planned burns. One school of thought is not to burn as smoke endangers COVID-19 patients struggling to breathe and increases the risk of personnel contracting the virus; they prefer to remove brush by hand and with heavy machinery to reduce fuel load without smoke. But whichever view you subscribe to, the key factor is that reducing fuel load is essential work, however you do it. Stay safe, wash those hands, wear your mask and maintain a physical distance. Until next time.

### Contact Us

**LEFPA Nelspruit**

Ivina

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

permit@lefpa.co.za

## LEFPA During Lockdown

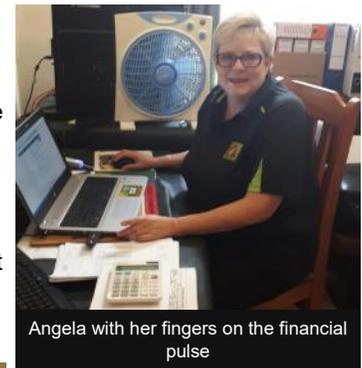
Oom Andre Scheepers has made the most of mild autumn weather to operate from his *Iapa* and we thought we'd show you some other team members in their home offices. Angela Norton, Ivina Alberts and Louwrens Prinsloo make sure it's business as usual although eagle-eyed readers will spot an unusual office accessory in Louwrens' arms - little Lumarie.

Yes, Louwrens and his wife Elmarie were delighted with the safe arrival of their daughter on 14th April and we can be sure that working from home has become a lot busier (and noisier!) for Louwrens.

Congratulations to the excited parents; Lumarie will be a bit bigger by the time she visits LEFPA to be shown off in person but the ladies are looking forward to a cuddle.



Ivina keeping everyone in order



Angela with her fingers on the financial pulse



Congratulations Elmarie and Louwrens!



Oom Dennis sanitising the LEFPA Centre

LEFPA Ops and LEFPA crew are on standby at a standby facility on a weekly basis as per the lockdown regulations.

The week before these new regulations and the opening of the Operational Centre it was all hands on deck to ensure the centre complied with legislation.

This entailed moving the radios and implementing personal distance spacing in the Dispatch Centre as well as placing sanitising stations in strategic places in the offices. More details can be read on the LEFPA website regarding LEFPA COVID-19 regulations during lockdown and the winter 2020 fire season.



## Dispatch News

History is in the making at LEFPA as for the first time the Operations Centre is chock-a-block full of experience and the team are rubbing their hands in anticipation of whatever the 2020 winter fire season cares to throw at them. The July 2019 issue of *All Fired Up* introduced Louwrens Prinsloo and Pleasure Nkosi. At the time, Pleasure had just completed his Type 2 Dispatch and Aeronautical Radio Telephony training and was raring to go. A year down the line, he's a seasoned dispatcher remaining cool and calm under pressure. Pleasure spent summer 2019 / 2020 with the Greater Cedarburg FPA in Porterville as a dispatcher and is pleased to return to the Lowveld and utilise his experience here.

Louwrens, an experienced Type 1 Dispatcher runs a tight ship and holds his team to a very high standard. Teamwork is critical in his eyes and he is looking forward to leading a tightknit, competent dispatch team this season.

New faces to LEFPA are Ané Theunissen and Andrew van der Berg. Ané is a Type 2 Dispatcher who spent her summer with the Winelands FPA in Stellenbosch. Lucky girl! The previous season she worked dispatch at Vryheid so brings lots of dispatch hours to the Operations Centre. Our aerial team may have to watch out though, as she's working towards her Commercial Pilots Licence - perhaps she'll join the team in the skies one day? Ané grew up on a farm in Vryheid and is a real outdoors person - her hobbies are hunting, fishing, jogging, surfing, horseriding and skiing. Shoo! She's obviously good at sports, too, as she is a Master Scuba Diving Instructor and Skipper and a horse trainer for polo players. For a time, Ané played polo competitively to earn money for her pilots training. Welcome to the Lowveld, Ané, we hope you are happy in our beautiful corner of the country.

Andrew van der Berg is new to dispatch but has a BBA Degree in Disaster Risk Management and experience at the Ehlanzeni District Municipality as a Disaster Management intern. A year in China teaching English has sharpened up his communication skills and he joins LEFPA as a Type 2 Dispatcher handling both ground and aerial resources. Hailing from Port Alfred (we are gaining two from the Cape provinces!) Andrew describes himself as someone who adapts easily and is very sociable. As he plays squash and golf and likes a bit of 'visvang', we think Andre is getting his rods ready for the post fire season (hopefully post lockdown as well!) social rest and relaxation get-togethers - he has some fellow enthusiasts to join his fishing forays.

We know that Andrew will fit right in, his favourite quote is "Sometimes I feel like giving up, then I remember all the people that I still have to prove wrong!" If that isn't a driver, what is?



LEFPA's thorns and rose: Pleasure, Louwrens, Ané & Andrew

On the work front, Andre says that the sharing of dispatchers is a great initiative between the FPA's and WoF. There is a tremendous benefit to the organisations in moulding a dispatch career while maintaining continuity and experience. He comments "It is very disappointing to train up a dispatcher only to lose them at the end of a five month contract and then have to begin all over again the following season."

Andre wishes all of them the very best of luck and as always, entreats everyone to stay safe out there.

## International Firefighters' Day

International Firefighters Day 2020, like other commemorations and celebrations during global lockdown, went online and electronic.

Working on Fire created a video to honour our brave men and women and while we would have preferred to celebrate in person and face to face, the virtual wishes and respect paid are no less heartfelt.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 sanitisation rules, anticipated to be in place for many more months, will make a difficult job even more challenging. You face danger both seen and unseen and as we enter the winter 2020 fire season we extend our deepest thanks to the ground and aerial teams as well as the essential operations crew.

Our prayers are with you for your safety while performing your fire suppression duties and also for your potential exposure to the virus.

<https://web.facebook.com/wofire/videos/230106204913236/>



## Standing Down - Black Summer is Over

New South Wales, in south-western Australia, bore the brunt of the continent's catastrophic inferno that raged for 210 days across 2019 and 2020 - more than 6% of the state's land area was burned in the fires. Nationally, it's estimated that at least 1 billion native animals have been killed, 2500 homes destroyed and 33 people lost their lives, including 6 firefighters.

Torrential rains in February were a massive aid in finally suppressing the flames after 7 months but the wearying fact is that the next fire season is just a few months away and needs to be prepared for in the midst of the Corona 19 pandemic.

Setting aside for the moment what lies ahead, public and government debate and sparring opinions pin pointing the causes and reasons for fires that blazed uncontrollably for months is almost as hot and fiery as the flames. We're only human and mistakes can and will be made in a crisis but that should spur governments on to pass laws that balance environmental health and climate change with pragmatic, often unpalatable facts. We don't have the luxury of allowing nature to manage our environment, we've tipped the scales beyond the means of natural solutions and must interfere to the extent of protecting life, land and property.

Climate change and poor land management are facing off against each other but the truth is they both bear responsibility. Yes, seasons are persistently hotter, drier and windier. Yes, there has been poor land management, much of which is due to stringent laws and regulations against prescribed burns. The price of banning controlled burns to improve air quality is some 400 million tons of carbon dioxide spewed into the sky by the bushfires this past season. That's just 140 million tons less than Australia emits annually anyway, so these fires have almost doubled the nation's annual output of carbon dioxide in addition to causing almost incalculable harm and damage.

Prescribed burns have been part of indigenous land management across the world for centuries and this was discussed in the March issue. Across the board in many facets of our society there is a tendency to ignore how things have been done in the past and replace ancient methods with shiny technology or ban processes as being harmful to our health and the environment. In many cases, progress is a positive step to improving lives but there is a great danger of 'throwing the baby out with the bath-water' and in the matter of Australia's land management this appears to be the case.

LEFPA and *All Fired Up* are not going to cease reminding members of how important land management, including controlled burns, is. Our ideal fire season is one where the pilots are comfortably ensconced in their crew rooms, the ground teams are enjoying a cup of tea and a snooze in the sun and the dispatchers play a round of poker in the dispatch centre. Members, of course, will enjoy the benefit of getting on with their lives without worrying about that dreaded phone call. Work with us to make this a reality for all. If you haven't already seen it, "The fight against Australia's biggest ever bushfires | 60 Minutes Australia" takes viewers into the terrifying heart of those dreadful bushfires. [youtu.be/0Kom5bA-XTk](https://youtu.be/0Kom5bA-XTk), while Krystina Skurk lays out the case for poor land management in [thefederalist.com/2020/01/15/dont-blame-climate-change-for-raging-wildfires-blame-bad-management/](https://thefederalist.com/2020/01/15/dont-blame-climate-change-for-raging-wildfires-blame-bad-management/)



## Inspecting Spekboom



FAMSA has sent in a photograph of their very healthy spekboom, proudly capturing carbon outside their offices at Canary Walk, Mbombela. How are your plants doing? Please send in your photos. With so much time on your hands at the moment, you should be cutting and planting like crazy!



## Spekboom Challenge



## LEFPA Signs New 3 Year Contract With EVS

LEFPA has signed a new 3-year contract with EnviroVision Solutions (EVS) which runs from April 2020 to the end of March 2023. EVS Director, Gavin Hough, reports:

After developing software for wildfire detection trials in 1994, EVS has run 3 and 5 year contracts in Mpumalanga since 1997, making this the 24<sup>th</sup> successive fire season where cameras feed the Sabie and (since 2011) Nelspruit, Detection Centres. This season EVS is delivering ForestWatch Online version 2 and its new mobile app for detection members. We are also delivering all detection events to FireWeb, a new cloud-based Dispatch solution which notifies Foresters about fire response and helps compile fire reports for Foresters.

We look forward to working with LEFPA in growing the service for LEFPA detection members whether they are small growers, forestry corporates, agriculture or conservation. Please contact the LEFPA office if you have any requirements in the run-up to the season regarding the detection service LEFPA can offer its members.

All the very best to LEFPA members for a successful fire season. Extensive support for staff, shift arrangements and dual redundant detection centres have been upgraded in order to provide a robust solution should COVID peak during the fire season.

## The Last Post Resounds for Fred Favard

With a heavy heart we report on the passing of Fred Favard, remembered by many as the WoF Training Academy Manager, after a courageous battle with cancer. Fred began providing training in 2004 and many firefighters, foresters and land owners, within and outside South Africa's borders, owe their knowledge and skills to him. Bill Miller, US Forestry Service in Arizona, USA, wrote this moving obituary:

*Today I learned of the passing of an amazing man, an accomplished leader and fine example of service to many. Fred has been a long standing leader, a brother of integrity, faith and influence and a wonderful friend. He's been an inspiration for me, for other leaders and for the youth in South Africa and around the world. Fred, I will treasure amazing memories with you and the opportunities to work by your side, watching, listening and learning much as you led by example. Serving and making important differences in the lives of many and the causes of a nation dreaming of what its children could become and the changes they will influence. And they will Fred, they will serve and influence positive change. Many will carry on your work and your legacy. They will provide hope where there was none before and in many ways you will remain here with us. I shared the best adventures of my life with you, wandering at night across the broad expanses of the Namib desert, shooting pool in the mountain kingdom, racing horseback in Zululand, sharing beer and cigars with our friends and sending loud drumbeats (and less than pretty voices) out to sea late at night along the coast of Mozambique. I still have those drums Fred... maybe I need to get them out and send some beats your direction.*

*Goodbye for a little while my friend, we'll see you on the other side. To you, I lift The Parting Glass.*

Thank you, Bill. From all at LEFPA we send condolences to Fred's family. The firefighting world has lost a star but the skills and lessons he taught live on.

## Activities for the Month - June

- Train airstrip loading crews.
- Check airstrips on a weekly basis.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Ensure Eskom servitudes are burnt.
- Burn your firebreaks as per your plan.
- 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.
- Identify and mark completed fire breaks on a map.
- Perform daily and weekly checks of all equipment, using checklists.
- Perform checks to ensure readiness and quick reaction at all times.



Fred Favard 9/10/1964 - 30/4/2020

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

