



all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 57 October 2020

Greetings,



A year ago, the world was gripped by the raging bushfires in Australia.

This year, our thoughts and prayers are for firefighting colleagues in California, battling flames and out of control fires that continue to burn. Communities in Oregon are living with their escape bags packed, ready to flee when the authorities give the order. Others, living on the coast midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, don't go outside because of the dreadful, ash-filled

air. Wildfires are no longer events happening somewhere in the countryside, they strike right at the heart of our city homes too. Can we ever be too prepared and aware of the fire potential in hot, dry, windy conditions? LEFPA's fire season has also picked up, with many call outs as the weather warms up and rain remains a fervent hope. Do your housekeeping and be ultra aware of every possible ignition spark. 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

Happy 17th Birthday, Working on Fire

LEFPA was honoured to host the 17th birthday celebrations for WoF's Mpumalanga event at our base in Canary Walk Business Park. And what a party it was! The theme was 'partnership for success' and this was what the day was all about. The City of Mbombela's Fire Department presented a fire suppression demonstration on a burning car, while the LEFPA Mbombela crew put on a splendid drilling display which kept the LEFPA flag flying high. After showing off their drill skills, the team proved they've



got all the moves and

launched into an impressive version of the Jerusalem dance.

Their rendition is available to view on the LEFPA Facebook page and the challenge is issued to the other WoF crews and Mpumalanga FPAs - can you match this?



Johan Heine, CEO of Kishugu and one of the founders of WoF gave the keynote address, remarking that his dream of saving people from devastating wildfires has become a reality. A big hip, hip hooray to that, Johan. Your dream has truly made a difference to hundreds of people.

Numerous Mpumalanga FPAs attended, along with government dignitaries including Petrus Mthiyane, LEFPA's FPO and Chief Fire Officer for the City of Mbombela and Siyabulela Kobese, Deputy Director: Forestry Regulations Support (Mpumalanga) and the Directorate of Forestry Management Limpopo-Mpumalanga. All the activities created an appetite and it was time for WoF Provincial General Manager Ovie Sehlabela to cut the gorgeous cake. <https://workingonfire.org/working-on-fire-celebrates-17-years-of-successful-partnerships-2/>



California On Fire

In August 2019, the horrific Australian bushfires began and firefighters from across the globe went to help their colleagues down under fight the fearsome fires that blazed across the continent. It's disheartening that August 2020 saw raging wildfires erupt in California on the other side of the world. Yet again, exhausted firefighters are called upon to reach deep into their mental and physical reserves to battle terrifying flames. The Guardian newspaper featured dramatic footage of a helicopter rescuing two stranded firefighters from advancing wildfires, quoting Sonoma county sheriff, Mark Essick, as saying "Had it not been for that helicopter, those firefighters would certainly have perished." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2020/aug/23/california-wildfires-helicopter-rescues-firefighters-as-blaze-advances-video>. A year ago we were watching similar footage of Australian firefighters driving their firetrucks through raging flames as they fled for their own lives.

On the 19th August 2020, UberFacts tweeted that California had been hit by nearly 11 000 lightning strikes in 72 hours, igniting more than 367 new wildfires. This unprecedented lightning 'siege' led to the Governor declaring a state of emergency.

<https://twitter.com/UberFacts/status/1296166238431973378>



CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE FIRE SUMMARY
FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2020

RESOURCE BREAKDOWN
(ASSIGNED TO ALL ACTIVE WILDFIRE, INCLUDES STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL RESOURCES)

259 FIRE CREWS
300 DOZERS
363 WATERTENDERS
OVER 14,600 + FIREFIGHTERS
NEARLY 2,400 FIRE ENGINES

SINCE AUGUST 15, 2020 THERE HAVE BEEN NEARLY 14,000 LIGHTNING STRIKES, WITH 93 NEW STRIKES IN THE PAST 24 HOURS. DURING THIS TIME-PERIOD, THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 730 NEW WILDFIRES, WHICH HAVE NOW BURNED OVER 1.38 MILLION ACRES. THERE HAVE BEEN 7 REPORTED FATALITIES AND NEARLY 2,100 STRUCTURES DESTROYED.



Writing this issue on the 19th September, towns and cities across the west coast, as far north as Seattle, lay below a rain of ash and smoke, making the air gritty and difficult to breathe. As the COVID-19 pandemic keeps people at home under the lockdown regulations, they are unable to spend time in their own gardens due to the wildfires.

Time and again, *All Fired Up* mentions that the world appears to be on fire and in truth, at times it is.

More jaw-dropping images of California under the wildfire siege are on the Earth community organisation Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/451695145021872/posts/1486925408165502/?app=fbl>



© Hennie Homann

Ms Tembile Dlungwana and DEFF Foresters

DEFF Bakkie Sakkie Handover

The Forestry Support Programme, Kishugu and LEFPA identified the need to assist DEFF during the challenging fire season by donating four bakkie sakkies to assist in fire suppression in the Injaka and Salique areas. The handover was held at LEFPA's Canary Walk Business Park base and Ms Tembile Nonjabulo Dlungwana, Deputy Director Commercial Forestry - Mpumalanga, gratefully accepted the generous and much needed donation.



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Baie Dankie van Oom Koos

Oom Koos van Glengarry in die Barberton Valley het ingeskryf:

Wegholveldbrande is een van die mees gevreesde en vernietigende rampe wat enige boer of bosbouer kan tref. Die ironie is dat dit so klein begin en binne oomblikke buite beheer kan raak, en dan soms vir dae aaneen kan brand en duisende hektare se oeste, boorde, weiding en plantasies kan vernietig. In talle brande het mens en dier al met hulle lewens geboet.

Die doel van brandverenigings is die voorkoming en bestryding van hierdie vernietigende ramp. In ons area is ons baie gelukkig om LEFPA as ons brandvereniging te hê. Die passie en erns waarmee André Scheepers en sy span hulle taak verrig is prysenswaardig. Hulle bystand het nog altyd, en onlangs weer, baie verder gestrek as wat streng gesproke van hulle verwag word. So byvoorbeeld bied André en sy span ook gereëld hul deskundige kennis en ervaring aan om boere en bosboumaatskappye se regsverteenvoerders in hofsake by te staan, met baie voordelige gevolge. My dankbaarheid jeens André strek veel verder as dit. Met sy deskundige kennis en ervaring van veldbrande was André instrumenteel daarin dat die Staat uiteindelik aanspreeklik gehou is vir die brandskade aan ons macadamiaboord, en ook vir ons regskoste. Vir André se reuse rol in die saak is ek baie dankbaar. Sonder hom sou die oorwinning nie moontlik gewees het nie.

A prime example of André Scheepers' selfless assistance beyond the call of duty to the farming community and the forestry industry in the Lowveld lies in the following: in June 2012, a macadamia orchard on our farm Glengarry in the Barberton area was destroyed by a runaway veld fire on a dry, hot and windy day with an orange fire danger index. The veld fire spread from the State's farm Hanging Stone to the south east onto our farm Glengarry, where it destroyed almost 10 hectares of young macadamia trees. In our legal battle to recover millions of Rand in damages from the State, LEFPA was always there for us by providing our legal team comprising our senior advocate Tjaart van der Walt SC and our attorney Riaan du Randt from Tim du Toit and Co Attorneys with their expert knowledge and experience. The result was that in September 2018 the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein (Saffii case reference [2018] ZASCA123) ruled that the State as land owner may no longer hide behind the fact that the land was occupied by a lessee. Five Judges of Appeal unanimously found that the State as land owner remains responsible to comply with the fire prevention obligations in the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998, even if the land is occupied by a lessee.

This was a ground breaking judgment which overturned previous High Court judgments to the contrary. Ever since the ruling, the State as land owner can be held liable for damages caused by veld fires spreading from State land, even when the land is occupied by a lessee. This was not only a personal victory for us, it was also a far reaching victory for the whole farming community and the forestry industry throughout South Africa. As a consequence of the judgement, the State has become more compliant with its fire prevention obligations under the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998.

As a further consequence, it is now much easier for farmers and forestry companies to recover damages caused by veld fires because, as a rule, individuals who lease farm land from the State do not have the resources to compensate their neighbours for fire damage, but the State has such resources.

Nogmaals dankie en groete,

Koos Boshoff

Jean du Plessis from Klagsbrun Edelstein Bosman Du Plessis Attorneys, LEFPA's Attorney, comments:

Unfortunately these processes take time, and given that the Government had to concede merits in this matter, it should serve as a warning to landowners who do not adhere to the Act, that they will be sued for damages and in the end they will in most instances be held liable for the damages incurred by their neighbours. All landowners or lessees who neglect to perform their duties in terms of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 will have to take responsibility for their actions!



It takes patience and perseverance to fight these battles, qualities LEFPA has in spades and we will always stand alongside our members to fight their rightful claims.

We're delighted that Oom Koos's case had a happy ending, and join him in celebrating the significant impact this judgement has for land-owners.

Wildfire origin, cause determination as well as camera footage, evidence and witnesses are critical in a successful case says LEFPA Manager Andre Scheepers.

Welgedaan, Oom Koos, and baie, baie dankie vir Andre en almal wat so hard gewerk het om geregtigheid laat seëvier.



Gone. But Never Forgotten

11th September 2001 was a day, as Franklin D Roosevelt once commented about 7th December 1941, "that will go down in infamy". Anyone in their 30's and older can remember where they were when they heard about the planes crashing into the World Trade Centre towers.

Gripped as we were by the unimaginable images flashed across the world, it took a few days before the dreadful toll that the immense bravery of the firemen and first responders took on the service was fully comprehended. Four hundred and twelve emergency workers died that day and many more have succumbed subsequently from health issues arising as a direct consequence of working in the blazing, toxic towers. Without hesitation, they came from districts across the city and beyond, sacrificing themselves to do their duty.

LEFPA pays tribute to their selfless service.



September Fire Statistics

We're approaching the end of the 2020 fireseason but the show will go on. Until good rains fall consistently, the fire danger will remain. That means that awareness and housekeeping, as well as keeping a sharp eye on the FDI and weather, stays top of mind. Be on the alert for lightning ignited fires when the thunderstorms commence.

LEFPA Fire Stats - 2020 Fire Season										
	Fires				Ha Burned		Fire Suppression Hours			
	Total Fires	Aerial	Ground	Aerial & Ground	Plantation	Vegetation	Total Hours	Spotter	Bomber	Chopper
Totals 2019	135	71	55	9	11815	5383	1001,93	284,64	369,93	347,36
Totals 2020	137	41	85	10	2 070	3305,62	535,51	123,04	223,52	188,75
May 15 - 31	3	0	2	1	60	50	8,03	2,73	5,30	0,00
June	11	9	2	0	136	250,35	51,68	13,86	19,03	18,79
July	29	15	12	2	745	2491	165,26	38,77	61,11	65,38
August	60	13	42	5	823	375,5	233,61	50,98	105,53	77,10
Sept	33	4	27	2	306	138,77	76,73	16,70	32,55	27,48
Sept 2019	16	11	4	1	3 303	451	181,50	46,20	72,90	62,40
FSP Sep 2020	27	0	27	0	139	237,3	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

Activities for the Month - October

- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly or join virtually via Teams.
- Check airstrips on a weekly basis.
- Distribute your standby rosters to all neighbours.
- Obtain FDI forecast on a daily basis from LEFPA.
- 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 Ivina for more information.
- **SUCCESS** cannot be spelt without **U**. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!