



# all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 84 February 2023

## Greetings,



In the month of love we're *All Fired Up* with affection for our LEFPA teams and basking in the love shown by the firefighters, pilots, admin staff, dispatchers, management and board members of LEFPA for the job they do. It takes guts, sweat, dedication and passion to work in this industry. They carry a weight of responsibility even when they go home and we'd like to give the families a shout out too - for all the worry, the dirty laundry, the exhaustion and stress that often walks through the front door at night. Thank you for your service.

From this issue, we begin rerunning Jaco Badenhorst's 2018 series on fire safety in residential homes, something that can happen to everyone. Until next month.

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## Fire Awareness Induction at LEFPA

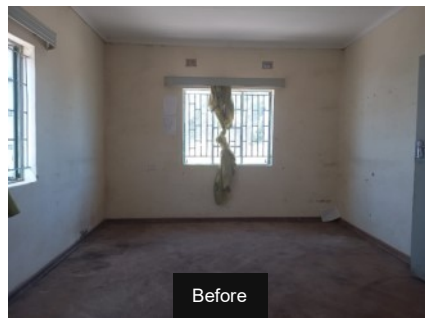
Veon Fourie, Vegetation and Fire Management (Overhead Lines and Servitudes) for Eskom Transmission North East Grid, writes:

*After many discussions with LEFPA General Manager Andre Scheepers, we made the decision that all Eskom Transmission North East Grid Vegetation Contractors will undergo a compulsory fire awareness induction at LEFPA. Because of the vast size of vegetation management in the Lowveld, contractors work into the winter/fire season period and the need for fire awareness induction was identified. Two contractors attended the induction and fire equipment compliance in late 2022. In January 2023 a further six contractors were successfully inducted and equipment compliance will be done during March 2023. During the induction AFDI's/PPE/equipment/types of vegetation and more were discussed, ensuring contractors are much more aware of the danger of fires. Andre also initiated a WhatsApp group on which all contractors' supervisors will receive daily FDI's.*

*I would really like to take this opportunity to thank Andre and his team for their commitment and dedication to assist Eskom Transmission with this endeavour.*

## FSP Base Maintenance Done and Dusted

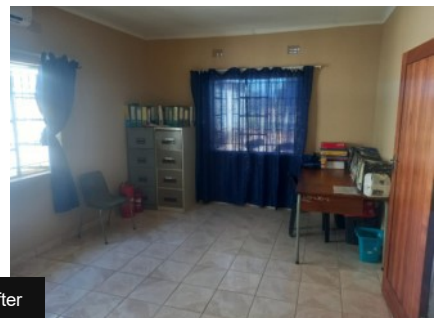
It took a while but finally FSP Injaka Base has been given some love and attention. A vote of special thanks is owed to Hermie Van Der Berg, FSP Support Programme Operations Manager, for approving the project. The Injaka Teams are now *All Fired Up* for the forthcoming winter fire season.



Before



After

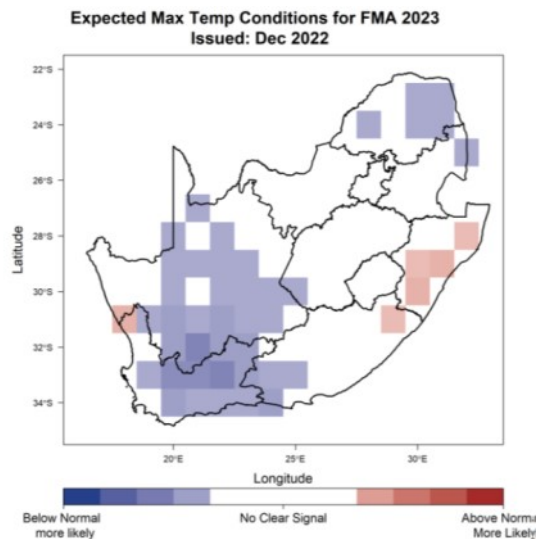
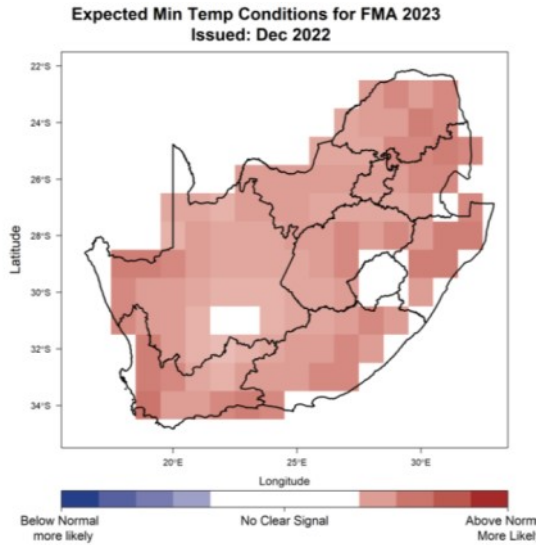
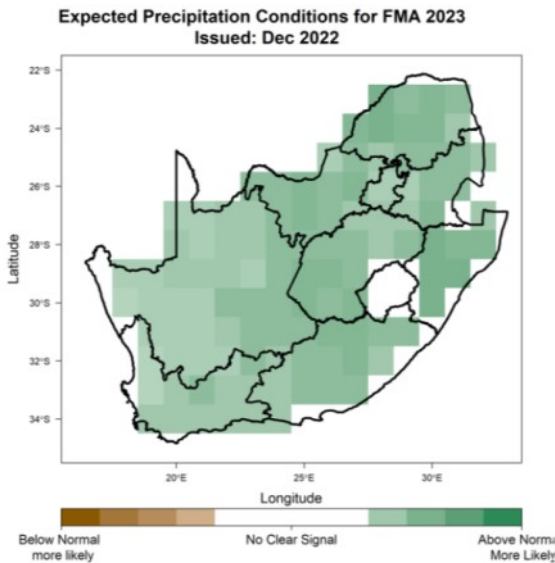


# Seasonal Climate Watch: January to May 2023

The National Agro-meteorological Committee (NAC) has issued an Advisory on the 2022/23 summer season. The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a La Niña state, forecasts indicate that it will likely remain in this state for the remainder of the 2022/23 summer season, before returning to a neutral state during Autumn. The presence of a La Niña event usually has the strongest impact on rainfall during the mid-summer months. With the continued persistence of La Niña in South Africa, there is a high chance of above-normal rainfall and below-normal temperatures over the summer rainfall areas.

During the summer months, Mpumalanga experienced normal to above-normal with isolated areas of flooding and persistent heat-waves in Ehlanzeni district. The average level of storage of dams across the province has increased to 97% 2022 compared to 87% in 2021. (Information on level of dams is obtained from the Department of Water and Sanitation [www.dwa.gov.za/Hydrology/Weekly/Province.aspx](http://www.dwa.gov.za/Hydrology/Weekly/Province.aspx). Dam levels as at 2022/12/26)

In summary, above-normal rainfall is expected for the remainder of summer with below-normal maximum temperatures. Farmers are encouraged to continually check updated seasonal forecasts and utilise 7-day weather forecasts for short term planning.



## What to do when flooding is forecasted:

### Avoid:

- Cutting grass in the rainy season as this can result in nutrient depletion,
- Applying fungicides and pesticide (plants and animals). Early Warning Unit: CCDRR 13,
- Applying Nitrogen fertilizer as this can burn plants. Dumping fertilizer in one spot can cause the roots below the fertilizer to be burnt and die,
- Irrigation, this can result in waterlogging leading to nutrient depletion.

### Other measures to implement:

- Cover Urea licks to prevent them from becoming toxic,
- Provide shelter for animals (young ones can die easily),
- Leave cultivated areas coarse,
- Relocate/ move animals to a safe place,
- Be extra cautious for pest and diseases after rain has fallen, as high moisture content and high temperatures may trigger these,
- Assume that flood water contains sewage and might be harmful for human and livestock consumption,
- Before leading livestock across a river, check whether the water level is rising. This is especially necessary if it is already raining.



## Firefighting at Home

In 2017 and 2018 Jaco Badenhorst, then a LEFPA Board member, wrote a series of articles on fire safety pertinent to homeowners. They remain relevant today and All Fired Up will feature them over the next few months. Please take a few minutes to read his article and share it with your family and domestic staff.

Big fires begin as little fires and if correctly dealt with immediately a great deal of damage may be prevented. Most of the time it's best to leave firefighting to the professionals but there are times when you can deal with small fires yourself, as long as you're certain that it's safe to do so. If you're going to suppress a fire, you need to learn how to do it correctly beforehand. Do it the wrong way and you could put yourself in danger and make things worse.

Fighting stove-top fires is a good example. NEVER leave cooking pans on your stove unattended, they can cause a serious, life-threatening fire and tackling such a fire the wrong way will undoubtedly make things worse.

### How not to tackle a chip-pan fire

Here's the golden rule - **never throw water onto a hot oil (chip-pan) fire**. If you do, the water will instantly boil and turn to steam, throwing a huge spray of burning oil droplets high into the air. Because the oil is burning, spreading it out like this gives it rapid access to much more oxygen thus causing a massive fireball.

A fire extinguisher is also never used on a chip-pan fire, because a water extinguisher will have the same effect as pouring water on the fire, a powder extinguisher may cause an explosion while a carbon dioxide extinguisher will blast and spread the burning oil. A fire blanket is generally the best thing to use.

### What is a fire blanket?

Fire blankets are made from thick wool treated with a flameproof coating, fibreglass or flameproof synthetic materials. You can also use them to help fight chemical fires if it's safe to do so. They can be wrapped around someone whose clothes have caught fire or you can wrap them around your body to help you escape from the flames.

### How does a fire blanket work?

If a fire breaks out in your home, the best thing to do is to stay calm and evacuate quickly, closing the doors behind you and call the fire service. You may be able to deal with a small fire yourself using a fire extinguisher or a fire blanket, but if you have any doubts at all, **leave it** and get yourself and others to safety. **Choose your life over your possessions**. If you have a hot oil fire in your kitchen, the most effective way to suppress it is to place a fire blanket over the fire to cut off the oxygen supply. If you have no fire blanket, soak a tea towel in water, wring it out and then cover the pan completely with the towel. Both of these methods break the fire triangle by removing oxygen (air).

### How to use a fire blanket

Be sure to read the instructions on the container when you buy one so you know how to use it properly in an emergency. In principle:

Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so.

Don't move the pan.

Fetch the fire blanket and pull on the tapes to release the blanket from its container.

Wrap the blanket around your hands before you go near the fire so you don't burn yourself.

Put the blanket over the container to smother the flames.

Leave the pan to cool completely.

Now leave the fire and exit the building, calling the fire service if necessary. Do not go back to the fire and do not uncover it again until it is **completely** cool.

If you have the slightest doubt about whether you can tackle a fire safely without risk to yourself or others - leave it alone, alert others nearby, get yourselves well away and call the fire service immediately.

And remember: if in doubt, just get out! Leave the fire and get yourself to safety.

## Unprecedented Heatwaves Expected Should El Niño Return in 2023

It appears that our extended run of cooler, wetter La Niña weather events is set to end later this year, according to early forecasts. Considering the heatwaves endured across parts of South Africa in January, perhaps El Niño has already made an appearance?

Members are encouraged to start planning now for extremely hot, dry weather coming at the end of the fire season (if not before) which will extend the FDI through summer. Scientists are predicting average temperatures in 2024 will rise the critical 1.5° they have been warning about for years.

"Climate modelling results issued in early January by Australia's Bureau of Meteorology indicated the country could swing from three years of above-average rainfall to one of the hottest, driest El Niño periods on record, increasing the risk of severe heatwaves, droughts and fires." [www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/16/return-of-el-nino-will-cause-off-the-chart-temperature-rise-climate-crisis](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/16/return-of-el-nino-will-cause-off-the-chart-temperature-rise-climate-crisis)

It would serve us well to find ways now to operate in the face of this coming climate storm; there is no immediate quick fix nor is it going to be a short-lived event. More than ever before, landowners are urged to maintain dams, control fuel loads and be prepared at all times for the possibility of disastrous fires breaking out on or next to their property. In the event of a drought, every drop of water in a dam will be required to protect your home, livelihood and investment.

## TRAC Induction

LEFPA has once again been granted the opportunity to work with TRAC on alien plant clearing within the LEFPA Operational Area. Working next to a busy road can be a huge challenge for roadside vegetation maintenance.

Recently, Mr Reggie Nkosi from TRAC did a safety induction with the LEFPA Mbombela Team. We are pleased to report that the team's experience gained over the years combined with LEFPA Mbombela's dedication and commitment goes a long way to overcoming the safety and hazard challenges.



## Activities for the Month - February

- Mow airstrips.
- Prepare chemical trace 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.

### 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!