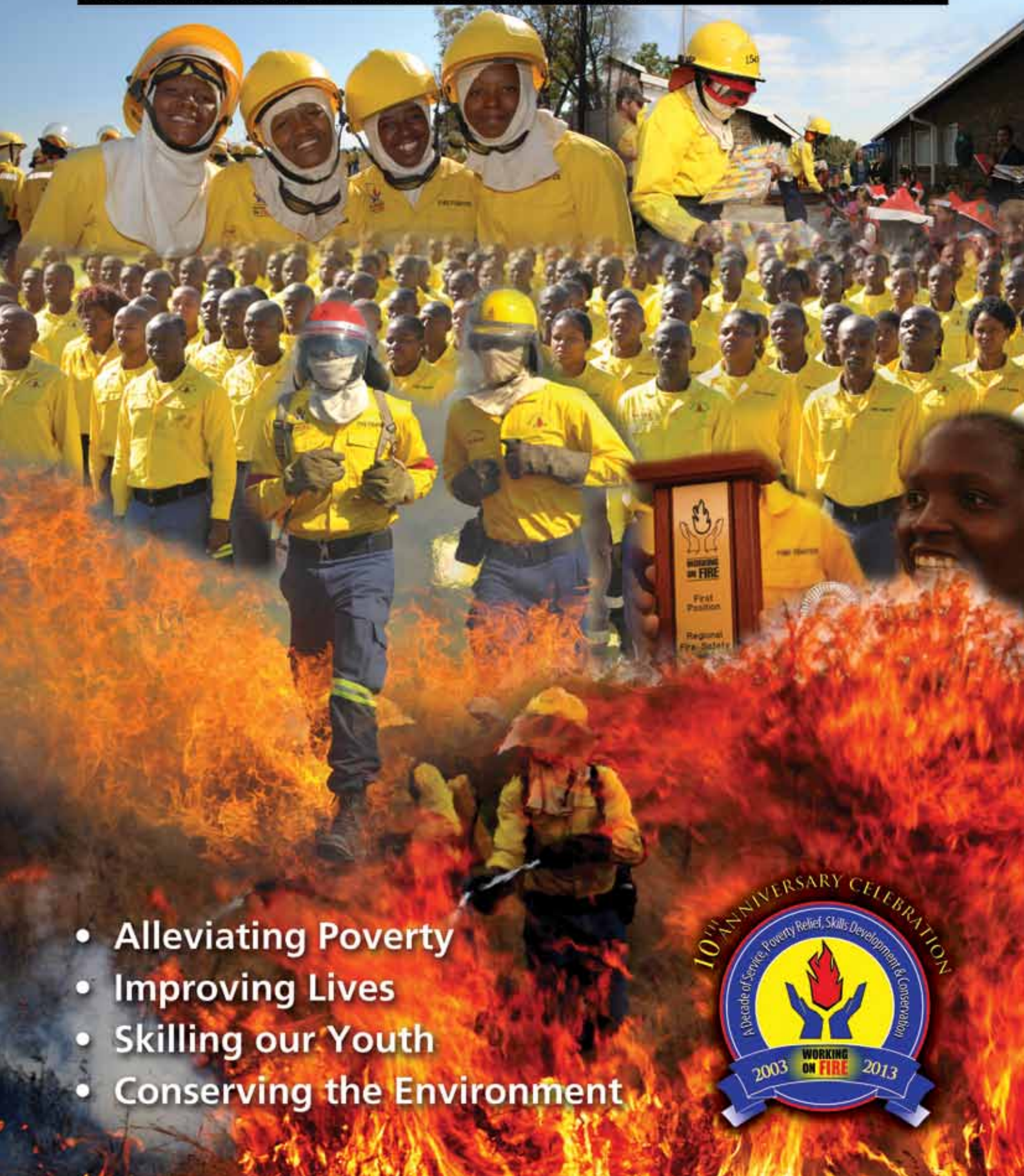


FIRE AND RESCUE INTERNATIONAL

Integrated fire, rescue, EMS and incident command technology

Volume 2 No 6



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FIRE AND RESCUE INTERNATIONAL

Integrated fire, rescue, EMS and incident command technology

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Comment



Lee Raath-Brownie

Fire and Rescue International (FRI) is proud to present its 18th edition. We feature the customary local and international news round-up, share practical advice and expertise, profile a charity organisation, discuss fire safety and review two fire fighter competitions. Enjoy reading this issue and share it with your colleagues!

Cover profile

Working on Fire celebrates its 10th anniversary this month and we profile this award-winning programme.

FRI Images photographic competition

One of our readers won R2 000 by submitting his photograph of a fire spreading. See page 3 for details. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Submit your high-resolution photograph featuring a rescue, emergency, incident or fire scene and win R2 000 cash!

News section

Pakistan's devastating earthquake leads the news section followed by the risky burn of backfires in the Rim Fire mitigation, 9/11 commemorations in the USA, the new XR-1 medium rescue pumper, South Africa's Pinetown truck accident, trial results of a long-term fire retardant, City of Cape Town's recent floods, Italian coach accident, typhoons in China, paramedics in Pakistan, bus accident in Kenya, Australian bushfires and the train derailment in the US. We also feature the breakdown of the health-care system in Syria and development of a Richter scale for fires that is being developed in the US.

Fire service

We profile City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service and also feature an interview with its CFO, Ian Schnetler.

Training

Our training focus this issue features Skills Train and we met with Linda Botha to share the new online web-based fire fighting training academy that was recently launched with our readers.

Hazmat incident command

Colin Deiner shares his thoughts on commanding a hazardous materials emergency and discusses the procedures from arrival to finish. Reconnaissance team tasks, methods of product identification, tips and tricks on product control and practical advice on personal protection equipment (PPE) forms part of this hands-on discussion. Deiner also describes the use of the media in establishing confidence within the public and how incident command will affect agencies responding to the scene. The critical decision of whether to go offensive or defensive is also debated.

Fire safety

Public fire safety education is detailed and debated by Rodney Eksteen, an expert in introducing fighting fire with education. Eksteen explains the history behind public fire safety messages, its proven effectiveness and the importance of a well-coordinated, structured educational-based approach.

Emergency medical service

We profile Hout Bay Volunteer Emergency Medical Service in Cape Town, South Africa and look at its history, areas of expertise, area of coverage, growth and the role it plays in the community.

Toughest Fire Fighter Alive and the SA Emergency Care Challenge

FRI attended these two major competitions and has even partaken in one. The competition was tough and South Africa can certainly be proud of its male and female fire fighting force. Congratulations to the winners!

Knots used in the fire service

Lenny Naidoo's article focuses on the hauling and securing knots used in the fire service then and now.

Umbrella fire protection association (UFPA)

The Eastern Cape Umbrella Fire Protection Association is profiled and we look at the role of the UFPA, its history and resources, biome and challenges.

Centrum Guardian

The Centrum Guardian award winners were announced and we review the incident that contributed to Team Focus' winning the grand prize of R61 009.

Gift of the Givers

Gift of the Givers is the largest disaster response, non-governmental organisation based on the African continent. FRI journalist, Sylvester Haskins, interviewed Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder of the organisation and we share his journey and experiences with our readers.

We would like to thank our readers, advertisers and contributors for their continued support. Fire and Rescue International is your magazine. Read it, use it and share it!

**Lee Raath-Brownie
Publisher**





This month's FRI images winner!

Congratulations to

Shannon Gilson for her "Spectator" photo taken with a Canon 550D, using a 18-250mm lens with an ISO of 200 and a shutter speed of 1/5 sec with a 3.5 f-stop.

Well done!

Photo description:

Burning long grass around staff houses on our farm, Swartberg, KwaZulu-Natal

Shannon Gilson wins this month's prize money of R 2 000!

Submit your rescue, fire or EMS photo and win R2 000!

Fire and Rescue International (FRI) has introduced a monthly photographic competition to all its readers. This exciting competition offers you the opportunity of submitting your digital images of fires, fire fighters, disasters, emergencies and rescues.

The rules are simple:

- All photographs submitted must be in jpeg format and not bigger than 4 megabytes.
- Photographs must be in high resolution (minimum 1500 pixels on the longest edge @ 300dpi) for publishing purposes
- **Allowed:** cropping, curves, levels, colour saturation, contrast, brightness, sharpening but the faithful representation of a natural form, behaviour or phenomenon must be maintained.
- **Not allowed:** cloning, merging/photo stitching, layering of two photos into one final frame, special effects digital filters.
- Fire and Rescue International (FRI) reserves the right to publish (printed or digitally) submitted photographs with acknowledgement to the photographer.
- Winners will be chosen on the merit of their photograph.
- The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into afterwards.
- Brief description should accompany photo.

Entries must include:

- Name of photographer
- Contact details (not for publishing)
- Email: (not for publishing)
- Name of photograph
- Brief description of photograph including type of fire
- Camera, lens and settings used

All entries must be emailed to:
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Working on Fire: a decade of service, poverty relief, skills development and conservation

The Working on Fire (WoF) Programme has, over its ten year existence, by all account been a resounding success, earning a number of awards, excelling in reaching its published goals and transforming the lives of its beneficiaries and their families, beyond expectations.

It has grown from its humble origins involving 25 teams (850 beneficiaries) in September 2003 to its current force of over 5 000 personnel spread across 200 bases throughout all nine provinces in South Africa.

2013 sees this government funded, award winning Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) initiative celebrate its tenth anniversary.

History

Working on Fire was launched in September 2003 as part of the South African Government's initiative to create jobs and to alleviate poverty. Today WoF employs more than 5 000 young men and women who have been fully trained as veld and forest fire fighters and are stationed in more than 200 teams throughout South Africa. The Programme is managed by the FFA Group of Companies.

The Programme addresses the prevention and control of veld and forest fires, enhancing the sustainability and protection of life, property and the environment through the implementation of

integrated fire management (IFM) practices. These practices include fire prevention, prescribed burning and land management, resource sharing and coordination, fire detection and suppression, fire damage rehabilitation and various fire awareness activities.

The Programme combines sound land management principles and best practice veld and forest fire fighting expertise, with the need to create jobs and develop skills.

In terms of poverty relief, WoF beneficiaries are being employed all year round and not only in the respective 'fire seasons' in the country. They are afforded year round employment by participation in advocacy activities, fire prevention initiatives such as fuel load reduction, prescribed burning, the creation of fire breaks as well as mandatory fire safety camps before every fire season.

Recruiting and training

After passing a stringent fitness test, recruits are put through rigorous training, which equips them to work as wildland fire fighters. They are deployed in self-styled 'hotshot'

crews of 25 people under the supervision of crew leaders.

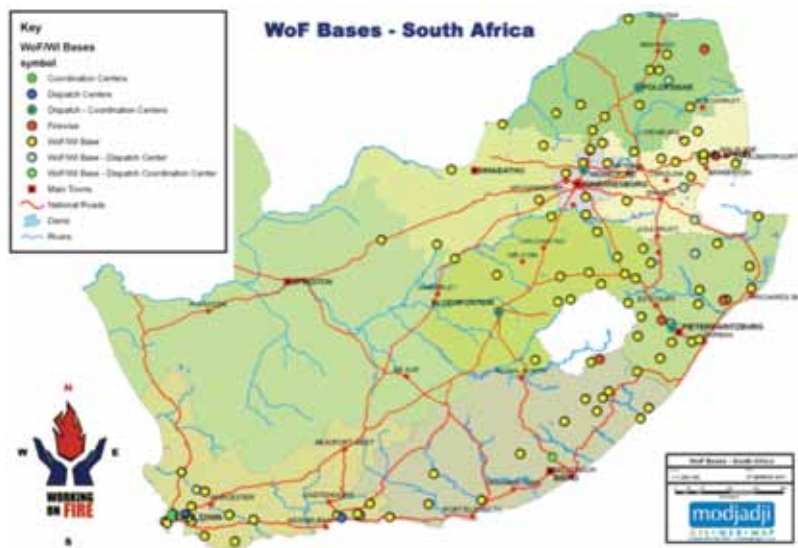
WoF hotshot crew members are recruited from disadvantaged communities and deployed, where possible, at a base close to their homes. They are not limited to their local region: should an unwanted fire occur in another area, even another province, crews are transported in custom-designed vehicles with their personal protection equipment (PPE) and necessary wildfire fighting equipment to where their services are required.

Working on Fire has over 200 fire fighting teams in fire-prone areas across the country. These teams have a strong working relationship with a range of local forestry and conservation stakeholders.

Each team is in constant radio communication with a local dispatch centre, these are in turn linked to provincial coordinating centres and a national coordinating centre (incident command centre) that coordinates WoF's resources, needs and actions. This is vital for swift, effective and sufficiently safe responses to fire-related operations. ▶

The job creation data reflected in the table below clearly illustrates the dramatic growth in the Programme.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Total WoF Employees	852	1482	1587	1703	1851	1961	3356	4765	5072



► **Communication and fire awareness**

Communication and fire awareness education are key components of integrated fire management (IFM). Up to 90% of unwanted fires are caused by human negligence. However, fire is required to maintain the ecosystem function and under controlled conditions, it can be used as an efficient land management tool in most of South Africa. This information needs to be communicated and understood in order to change negative perceptions and behaviour patterns.

Working on Fire runs fire awareness programmes in schools and communities making use of fire fighters to talk to and educate students. The fire fighters are also trained to become key role players in communicating fire awareness messages not only at grass roots level, but they have also been instrumental in raising the profile of veld and forest fires in the public domain and related agencies. The pride with which WoF fire fighters wear their uniform and talk about their work is testament to the value they hold as advocates of fire awareness.

Social development

The social development strategy equips and empowers beneficiaries to build on their capabilities and help create opportunities that would allow them to meet their needs, manage risks and make progress towards achieving their goals.

Social development officers (SDOs) are based in each region and

visit each team regularly to hold formal and informal training, talks and workshops. Talks and outreach workshops are often extended to the greater communities and address issues such as alcohol and substance abuse, financial management, HIV/AIDS awareness, TB awareness, self-defence for women and career guidance. Teams are encouraged to adopt a school, crèche or old age home as part of their effort to give back to their communities.

Employee demographics

The WoF employs the following representation: African 4 368; Coloured 596; Indian 4 and White 107 while its gender distribution shows that 32% of WoF veld and forest fire fighters are women. This is the highest level of females in the fire fighting fraternity internationally.

Incident command system

WoF teams are often deployed in times of large fires under the USA pioneered incident command system (ICS). This system establishes a single authority at time of disaster under which all resources are coordinated and deployed. Several WoF managers have undergone ICS training courses in South Africa, under the authority of North American ICS specialists invited to South Africa for this purpose.

Fire protection associations

The FPAs in South Africa work within the provincial umbrella associations (UFPAs) that operate in terms of the Veld and Forest Fire Act and facilitate the implementation of integrated

fire management principles through the prediction, prevention and suppression of veld and forest fire by pooling resources and having access to expert assistance.

The UFPAs maintain close links with provincial disaster management centres, district municipalities and WoF dispatch and coordination centres to ensure access to the resources required to minimise wildfire risk. These include weather forecasting and monitored satellite observation of vulnerable territory and WoF ground and aerial fire fighting resources. All WoF base partners are members of FPAs and WoF crews are deployed extensively for prevention purposes such as constructing firebreaks and clearing excess fuel loads as well as assisting with the suppression of fires.

WoF crews can be contracted through their base partners by other members of the FPAs to perform these fire prevention tasks in compliance with the National Veld and Forest Fire Act. Membership of fire protection associations by landowners is actively encouraged by WoF.

International

WoF enjoys a close association with similar wildland fire fighting entities in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and North and South America. The local fire fighters have enjoyed exchange programmes with their counterparts across the globe, sharing wildland fire fighting strategies and training programmes.▲

Pakistan earthquake death toll jumps to 515

A 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Pakistan in September, destroying some 21 000 houses

A powerful earthquake hit the southwestern region of Pakistan in September, causing the death of hundreds of people in and around the earthquake-prone province of Baluchistan.

The 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Baluchistan on 24 September, in the desert and rugged mountain region of Awaran and felt as far away as New Delhi, the Indian capital, some 1 200 kilometres away.

Over 300 000 people were affected by the quake, which destroyed around 21 000 houses in and around Awaran, Baluchistan. The quake flattened wide swathes of Awaran,

with most of the victims were killed when their houses collapsed.

The death toll continued to rise in the aftermath of the earthquake, as rescue efforts got underway. Initial reports stated that around 350 had lost their lives in the earthquake, however the most recent death count stood at 515, according to a provincial official in Baluchistan.

Chief secretary of Baluchistan, Babar Yaqoob, gave the updated death toll after visiting Awaran. Pakistan's army airlifted hundreds of soldiers to help with the aftermath of the worst earthquake to hit the country since 2005, when about 75 000 people were killed in the north of the country.

"We need more tents, more medicine and more food," said a spokesman for the provincial government, Jan Mohammad Bulaidi. He described a horrific scene of people who lost limbs in the quake and who will need to be sent to hospitals in major cities of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province and Karachi along the Arabian Sea.

Insurgent attacks from rebels in the region threatened relief efforts, as they fight for independence from Pakistan.

Baluchistan chief minister, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, said that the earthquake affected 25 000 families in the Awaran district and left more than 100 000 people homeless. Baloch said that relief and rescue workers were facing obstacles in their operations in Awaran, referring to the security threat posed by rebels in the region, who are in a fight with the central Pakistan Government, whom they say are stealing the rich mineral deposits in the province. "There is no ideal situation; yes there are problems," stated Baloch in a media briefing in September.

About 25 000 tents and other relief goods, including 2 700 food parcels were distributed to the affected people in Awaran. ▶



A NASA satellite image showing the newly formed island about 1,6 kilometres from shore

Risky measures to save ancient trees in Rim Fire



Fire fighters set backfires to save ancient trees in the Yosemite National Park

Fire fighters took to setting backfires in Rim Fire in California, US, in order to save the giant Sequoias and a stand of giant pines, which stood in the way of the third largest blaze in California's history.

The risky measures were employed with a certain degree of trepidation as there were fears that if crews lost control of the backfires, flames could spread and cause even greater damage in the region.

Fire fighters launched the plan to protect some of Earth's oldest and largest living organisms on 30 August, about two weeks after the Rim Fire started. The risky measures to save the big trees in the California Rim Fire worked, as the fire was soon contained without extensive damage to the treasured trees of Yosemite National Park.

Local fire specialists had known a fire like this was coming. A hundred years of fire suppression had created a buildup of trees, logs and other fuels. Fire could climb up and fly through the crowns of trees rather than burn on the ground as forest fires had for centuries. Add two years of extreme drought and the Sierra Nevada was a pile of firewood.

Inside Yosemite, officials had tried to restore the natural cycle of fire. For

40 years, lightning-sparked flames in wilderness areas had been left to burn and specialists lighted controlled burns near tourist areas.

"Hypothetically those old fire scars would slow the fire the further it moved into the park," said Yosemite's fire ecologist, Gus Smith. "But the Rim Fire was like a flood and it was coming. This was not the fire you wanted to test out a hypothesis."

It had first been spotted in a remote area of neighbouring Stanislaus National Forest.

Two days later, on 17 August, flames exploded as whitewater rafters navigating the canyon described the incident as sounding like bombs. It was about 32 kilometres in the distance, but Yosemite fire chief Kelly Martin, a specialist in predicting fire behaviour, knew it was headed their way.

"This is it," she said. "This is the big one." In one day the Rim Fire burned 20 000 hectares inside the park. The biggest fire since the park began keeping records in 1930 had burned 18 600 hectares.

The Sequoias trees have evolved to face wildfire. However, officials feared that this fire could kill even trees that had been shrugging off flames since before Rome burned.▲

► Baloch said that rehabilitation of the earthquake-affected people was not possible without the support of the international community, urging for foreign aid.

New island formation

Meanwhile, Pakistani officials were investigating a small island that appeared off the coast of Pakistan after the quake, apparently the result of earth and mud pushed to the surface by the quake.

The head of the Geological Survey of Pakistan, Zahid Rafi, confirmed that the mass was created by the quake and said scientists were trying to determine how it happened. Rafi said such masses are sometimes created by the movement of gases locked in the earth under the sea, pushing mud and earth up to the surface in something akin to a mud volcano.

"When such a strong earthquake builds pressure, there is the likelihood of such islands emerging," he said. "That big shock beneath the earth causes a lot of disturbance."

The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) released images of the newly formed islet. The image of the island was taken by NASA's Earth Observing-1 satellite on September 26. ▲

9/11 commemoration ceremonies ring across US

Tribute of Light lit in New York where the Twin Towers used to stand

The US was lead in a moment of silence on 11 September this year in commemoration of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, as well as Washington and Pennsylvania on the same day in 2001.

Commemoration ceremonies took place in each of these states; at the Pentagon in Washington, at the Flight 93 memorial in Pennsylvania and at the World Trade Centre.

The US paused in a moment of reflection in New York's Commemoration Ceremony of the nearly 3 000 victims who were killed in the 9/11 attacks.

In this 12th anniversary since two hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Centre in 2001, garlands were laid at the two-year Ground Zero memorial plaza in New York and relatives recited the names of the nearly 3 000 people who died.

The fire fighters who died in the 9/11 attacks totalled 343, as at least one fire fighter died in each one of the 75 fire houses of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) on 11 September, 2001.

This year, the FDNY honoured the legacy of those fire fighters during a promotions ceremony that ushered in a new generation of fire officers on 12 September. Ninety-nine FDNY officers were promoted during the ceremony.

In keeping with a decision made prior to last year's event, there were no politicians speaking at the New York Commemoration Ceremony on 11 September this year. The ceremony included a tribute parade of fire fighters and celebrities riding motorcycles from a Manhattan fire station to the site of the old Twin Towers.

As in past ceremonies, family members read the names of the victims of the three plane crashes that occurred in three different states namely Washington, New York and Pennsylvania. The names of the victims of a truck bombing at the World Trade Centre in 1993 were also read.

It is expected to be the last anniversary ceremony before the opening of an official 9/11 museum at Ground Zero, which has been scheduled for opening by the start of the second quarter of 2014.

US President, Barack Obama, attended the 9/11 memorial at the Pentagon. "Let us have the strength to face the threats that endure, different though they may ▶



The names of fallen fire fighters are read at the World Trade Centre memorial site



Members of the FDNY hold flowers in a ceremony for those fire fighters that lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks



Roses and a flag adorn the names of the victims of 9/11 at the 2013 New York Commemoration Ceremony

► be from 12 years ago, so that as long as there are those who would strike our citizens, we will stand vigilant and defend our nation," said Obama after laying a wreath at the memorial site at the Pentagon. "Let us have the wisdom to know that, while force is at times necessary, force alone cannot build the world we seek."

A commemoration initiative made up of 88 searchlights called, A Tribute of Light, lit up the New York skyline the night before New York Commemoration Ceremony. The light display has become a regular fixture in remembering the attacks after it was initially set up as a temporary installation 10 years ago.

Meanwhile, a charity event was held at brokerage firm BGC Partners in London, England where the Duke of Cambridge, Prince Harry and celebrities including singer, Rod Stewart, and famed British actor, Idris Elba, attended to raise money in memory of those who died.


BGC Partners lost 658 employees in the attack on the World Trade Centre 12 years ago and its annual Charity Day, now in its ninth year, has so far raised more than \$89 million.

In the US there was a conscious effort from most to keep today's focus on 9/11 commemorations. "As things evolve in the future, the focus on the remembrance is going to stay sacrosanct," said Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Centre Foundation President, Joe Daniels. ▲


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100 FRI VOZ266

The new XR-1 medium rescue pumper launched by Protect-o-Burn



XR-1 medium rescue pumper launched by Protect-o-Burn

South African based Protect-o-Burn introduced the all-new XR-1 medium rescue pumper, which is designed and purpose-built for the African market.

The company has a proven track record through innovation in a wide product offering that includes portable fire extinguishers, industrial and mining fire protection systems, as well as an extensive range of fire and rescue vehicles. The design basis for the new pumper was first of all simplicity and secondly, ruggedness.

"The XR-1 was purpose-built for the rigours of a cross-border African mining environment and is a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliant vehicle sporting a host of features to satisfy the demanding environment of a fully self-contained fire station, distanced from fire service support," says vehicle building workshop manager, Lourentius van der Merwe.

"Whether responding to a vehicle accident, structural incident or to a fire, the XR-1 makes accessing the tools required for any job, simple and effortless, based on some clever design decisions that were made when planning this build," says Van der Merwe.

He elaborates saying that "with the transparent doors fitted on the XR-1, you can immediately and at all times, see exactly where your tools are. Aside from the on-going training and drilling that ensures that a fireman knows how to use his equipment and more importantly, knows where to find it quickly in the event of an emergency response, the unique compartment doors of the XR-1 make it even easier than ever to find your way around in a pressure situation."

"The bottom line design basis we worked from was that we all know that in an incident, seconds count and even the slightest delay can have tragic consequences. The defining question, therefore, was how we can help our clients work faster and more confidently? This was the guiding factor throughout the design of this vehicle; making it work faster and smarter."

"Having a hinged door presented another challenge. What does one do with such a door when it has been opened? How does it manoeuvre safely out of the way?"

"To solve this problem, we built the door hinges onto receding rails that safely and securely retract the

open doors away within the body of the superstructure. The XR-1's doors therefore open in a double-action and are held in place with pneumatic control pistons. So, even if the unit is parked on a steep sideways angle, the doors will stay in position and the compartment access will be unrestricted and unencumbered from all sides," says the company's managing director, Paul Andrews.

To further enhance the access to the tools and hoses, generous storage capacity on sliding rails was fitted. These sliding walls function efficiently together with the fold-down working spaces that are provided by the lower compartment doors. The modular storage system therefore makes it easy to load and off-load equipment while the NFPA brackets and tie-downs fitted throughout ensure everything has its place and there is a place for everything.

The XR-1 has an all-aluminium superstructure that is not only lightweight, but also corrosion resistant. Leehan Jansen, Protect-o-Burn's plastic fabrication workshop manager, adds: "The XR-1 has been fitted with a 4 000 litre capacity, custom-plastic water tank. Its composition naturally provides ►

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Transparent doors allows you to see exactly where your tools are



The XR-1 boasts generous storage capacity fitted on sliding rails

► superior protection against process water used to extinguish fires on site. In addition, there is a total of just over 200 litres of foam concentrate storage space in two plastic tanks situated directly above and to the sides of the rear-mounted fire pump. This provides a superior direct gravity feed for the round the pump proportioning (RTP) foam system."

Andrews states furthermore: "When I took over the company in April of this year, I made the decision to give our vehicles a particular style and look that would make them instantly identifiable and decided to take the risk of breaking new ground in terms of rethinking functionality for the sake of efficiency."

"For this reason, we have gone completely counter to the rest of the industry by not using roller shutter doors. The decision was not to make a fashion statement, but rather a conscientious choice rooted in the fact that we have always been about helping firemen get to work faster. This thinking is best illustrated by our patented instantly-available, self-expanding foam that needs no mixing or aerating. It is available immediately and independently and is the company's single most defining feature, upon which my team and I decided to keep on building" says Andrews.

"Using this ethos in this build, fire fighters are able to see the equipment

at all times and with no obstruction. We're also quite pleased that it ended up looking this good," he adds with a wry smile.

"Let's face it, in no other industry would you find professionals so proud of their equipment that they wear the gear of rival departments and carry their tools with them all the time, just in case. They even tattoo work related images on themselves."

Andrews concludes in saying: "In designing the XR-1, we believe we have managed to combine good looks with performance excellence. Time will tell if we have succeeded, but one thing is for sure; this vehicle will turn heads in the meantime!" ▲

Shack fires raise concern in Johannesburg

Johannesburg Emergency Services officials said they are concerned about the recent spate of shack fires.

This comes after over 500 people were left homeless in a blaze that took two hours to extinguish on 9 September this year. Johannesburg Emergency Services spokesperson, Robert Malaudzi, said after the incident, "We have responded to about three incidents in the last three days, this is the fourth."

Over 100 shacks were destroyed 546 people were left in need of assistance

in the blaze on 9 September. "When we were going through the damping down. We found two people who lost their lives. They were burnt beyond recognition. It looks like the fire might have started in their shack."

Authorities said the fires are a worrying trend. At the time of going to press, authorities were still investigating the cause of the fire.

They urged people to ensure they buy only South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) approved lighting and heating equipment.

Another blaze broke out in the early morning hours in the Kya Sands informal settlement northwest of Johannesburg, resulting in the death of one couple in October.

The fire destroyed 70 shacks and 150 people were displaced in the blaze. The fire was believed to have started in the shack of the couple that died in the incident. Two people were left dead in the fire. The City of Johannesburg

Disaster management provided some relief for the affected families and appealed for blankets, food and building material. ▲

Truck driver charged with multiple counts of murder

South Africa's Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) has vowed to clamp down on the trucking industry and whip the sector into shape. This comes after a truck driver crashed into four taxis and a car at a four-way traffic intersection in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), killing 23 people and injuring many others on 5 September this year.

National emergency medical care network, ER24, subsequently stated that the death toll stood at 27 after three people succumbed to their injuries in hospital.

Paramedics that responded to the scene of the accidents reported that a further 10 people sustained critical injuries, eight sustained moderate injuries and 14 sustained minor to moderate injuries.

SAPS Spokesman captain, Thulani Zwane, confirmed that the 23-year-old truck driver was arrested and charged with culpable homicide and reckless and negligent driving. He was held at the Pinetown Police Station after the accident and was set to appear in the Pinetown Magistrates Court.

Transport Minister, Dipuo Peters, has ordered a high level investigation into the fatal crash, expressing her shock at the news of the horrific crash. Minister Peters says the RTMC must work with provincial and local traffic authorities in KwaZulu-Natal and eThekweni respectively, as well as the South African Police Service (SAPS) to unearth the circumstances that led to this fatal crash.

Minister Peters says the country is facing a serious challenge in the form of the road carnage that we continue to experience on our roads. "We need all hands on deck to turn the tide against this massive challenge confronting us. It cannot be business as usual anymore. This is absolutely not normal," she stressed.



The scene of the truck crash that claimed 23 lives in September this year

KZN's Volunteer Emergency Medical Assistance (VEMA) operations manager, Shannon Charles, was one of the paramedics that responded to the accident on Field's Hill. "One word comes to mind when I think of that accident scene; war zone. I give my condolences to all of the families who had loved ones in those vehicles," Charles told a local news portal in KZN.

Charles said that he could not describe what he saw, saying it had to be the 'most graphic scenes' that the region had experienced in a long time. "At one time we had more patients than ambulances. But it was extremely well coordinated and all the officials at the scene worked well and efficiently together, all of them going beyond the call of duty. We also received a fair amount of help from bystanders," said Charles.

A senior officer at the Pinetown Fire Station, Roger Jones, who entered the service in 1975 said that he had not seen a worse accident in terms of fatalities. The station's shift commander, Ashley Diedericks, who was in charge of the shift that handled the accident corroborated Jones' statement.

MEC of Transport for KZN, Jeff Radebe and other government officials

visited the RK Khan Hospital to visit the victims of the crash in Pinetown. Radebe said that what happened should have not taken place. "It was horrible and we convey our deepest condolences to those who have lost their loved ones and we pray for a speedy recovery for those who are in hospital. The incident should have been prevented if the brakes of the vehicle were fixed."

Upgraded charges

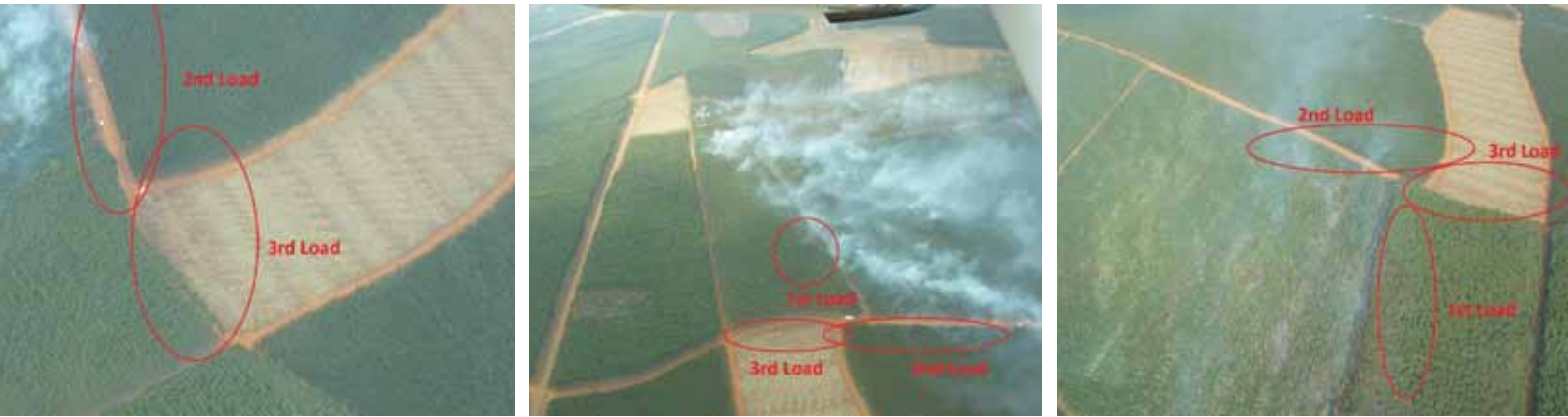
While initially charged with culpable homicide, the National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson, Natasha Ramkisson, confirmed that the charges against May had been upgraded to murder.

Minister Peters believes vigilant and uncompromising enforcement is central to the fight against road carnage. "Our department is currently in the process of reviewing several areas of the National Road Traffic Act to ensure that our laws punish, without fear or favour, those who are hell-bent on undermining every rule of the road under the sun."

Thousands of mourners attended the memorial service for the victims of the Pinetown crash on 12 September, one week on from the tragedy. ▲

Fire retardant

proven effective in wildfire mitigation efforts



Supplier of specialised chemical products and services, Chemfit, introduced long-term fire retardant (LTR) that has shown to be effective in forest fire fighting efforts

The flame retardant is particularly attractive owing to its purported contribution to the global drive towards the protection of health and the environment.

A recent fire incident in an agricultural plantation in Piet Retief in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa demonstrated the effectiveness of the LTR's in forming a fire break in the event wildfires. The potentially devastating fire called on the resources of the Mkhondo Fire Protection Association (FPA), with international packaging and paper group, Mondi Forests' area manager, Grant Ferguson, acting as the incident commander.

Fire protection officer (FPO) for Mkhondo FPA, Gunter Prigge, says that this incident provided the opportunity to test the fire retardant in a significant fire incident. Prigge says a demonstration of the applications of the LTR in fire prevention and mitigation practices was conducted by Mondi Forests, earlier this year.

Prigge says that the FPA used the chemical for the first time to combat the fire that struck up on the farm in Piet Retief in August this year. "This was where we decided to bring it in and see whether it works," states Prigge.

He says, "It was a severe fire that would not have been contained if it had gone into the brush and veld compartments. The fire would have really taken off. We decided to send one load of the LTR. When that load was dropped the incident commander decided to send for two more LTR loads."

Fire report

Mkhondo FPA spotter pilot, Ernst Meyer, filed a report of the incident saying that the fire was burning out of control when he arrived at the site, but that the use of the LTR prevented major losses to agriculture.

"The LTR slowed down the burning rate, which was out of control on the right flank," states Meyer. "I think if we didn't use it on the right flank, the head would definitely have jumped the road and caused extreme losses."

Upon arrival at the fire, Meyer and the incident command team began cooling down exercises on the left flank, where fire spotting was most evident. "These left flank spots were all taken care of. We continued working on the left flank to keep it out of harvested areas and cool it down to prevent further spotting," he explains.

After mitigating any immediate fire risks or danger on the left flank, a decision was made to apply a single load of fire retardant supplied by Mkhondo FPA on the right flank, using a B11 Dromader aircraft.

"The load was dropped ahead of where the right flank was burning and I noticed a severe amount of smoke as the flames reached the area where the LTR was dropped. The rate of fire burning towards the harvested area slowed down to a near stop," reports Meyer.

Prigge also recalls the incident saying, "The spotter said that the colour of the smoke changed when the first load was dropped and the fire was contained right there."

At this point, the incident commander decided to bring in two more LTR loads. The B11 Dromader and the B98 Thrush aircraft were instructed to drop two additional loads of the fire retardant.

The load was dropped ahead to where the fire was burning parallel to the road from the harvested area forward and the third load was dropped from the start of the harvested compartment, so that the harvested area could also be secured, explains Meyer.

Prigge says that the two additional FTR loads were dropped on the brush lines on the right flank. However, the first FTR load 'knocked the head, so it did not get to the other two loads'.

In his report of the incident, Meyer commends the effectiveness of the fire retardants. "The chemical worked extremely well and should always be used in cases like the one above," he says. ▶

Long Term Retardants for forest fire fighting

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FR CROS 134 P

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FR CROS 134 T

● Servicing



● Products



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City of Cape Town spends close to R16 million on flood relief efforts

City of Cape Town was plagued by recent floods

The City of Cape Town, South Africa, has spent more than R15,9 million to help alleviate the suffering of its most vulnerable citizens caused by the storms of August and September this year.

The City's disaster response teams and other officials have worked non-stop to help Capetonians, particularly those that are most vulnerable to natural disasters and as such require most assistance. The number of flood victims who have been helped by the City since August is nearing 160 000.

The City's Disaster Risk Management Centre, with the assistance of the South African Social Security Agency through disaster relief agencies, has

to date helped flood victims and street people since August with:

- 78 503 blankets
- 218 649 meals
- 373 food parcels
- 1 410 baby kits
- 2 082 baby packs

In one weekend, the City provided flood relief to more than 400 residents, restored electricity connections and cleared roads affected by the inclement weather.

Around 200 residents were affected by flooding in the low-lying area of Khayelitsha. Hot meals and blankets were provided to those who were affected in the area and around 210 residents were provided with disaster relief aid.

Furthermore, the Lotus Park informal settlement was waterlogged and the City provided sand on a large scale to the area.

Flooded roads

Roads in flood-prone areas were underwater due to blockages in drains caused by the illegal dumping of rubble in the storm water system.

Staff from the water and sanitation, roads and storm water and electricity and city parks departments have worked tirelessly since August to ensure a minimum disruption of services and helped clearing sewers and drains, restored electricity supplies and cleared fallen trees and branches in affected areas.▲



▶ Working solution

The fire incident on an agricultural farm in Piet Retief acted as a trial exercise by the Mkhondo FPA for the use of LTRs in fire fighting efforts, but it will not be the last time the FPA turns to the LTR, according to Prigge.

Additional LTR chemicals have been acquired by the FPA following the incident that took place in August this year, mentions Prigge. "Next year the guys will use it substantially for fire breaks in the region. There are guys on the ground with fire tankers who are laying the chemicals for fire breaks," he notes.▲

Thirty-six fatalities in Italy coach crash

A coach crash in Italy caused the death of 36 pilgrims

At least 36 people were killed and several more injured after a coach carrying pilgrims plunged off an elevated mountain pass in southern Italy in July this year.

Rescue workers said they had pulled 33 bodies from the wreckage after the crash near the town of Avellino in Italy's Campania region. Another 11 people were injured, stated Avellino rescue workers.

Fire crews raced to find any remaining survivors, as the victims were laid out under white sheets along the roadside. The emergency services had rushed three badly injured children, four women and two men to hospitals in

Avellino and nearby Naples, media reports said.

From time to time, rescue workers called for 'a moment of silence' to listen for signs of life from the wreckage. Police would not put a definitive number on those killed in the accident.

The coach passengers had been returning to Naples following a pilgrimage to Pietrelcina, the birthplace of Saint Pio, an Italian priest canonised in 2002 who is highly venerated in southern Italy.

The coach had hit several cars before plunging off the flyover and some passengers had been flung from the vehicle as it fell, stated local rescue services. It had been travelling

at high speed when it crashed on the busy dual carriageway.

It was not yet clear how many people were on the coach, but local media reported that many of the passengers were children.

"The situation is critical," head fireman, Pellegrino Iandolo, told SKY TG24 television. "Our men are working to save as many lives as possible."

Witnesses to the crash said it looked as if the coach might have had brake problems.

Others said it was not clear whether the driver may have fallen asleep at the wheel or whether the coach could have burst a tyre on the road.▲

Over 50 injured in fireworks explosion at Japan festival

An explosion at a row of stalls in a Kyoto Prefecture, Japan summer fireworks festival injured a total of 59 people on 17 August.

One woman died a few days after the explosion occurred. She was among the 60 victims rushed to hospital; however the 44-year old succumbed to the injuries she sustained in the explosion. Of the 59 people injured in the Kyoto fireworks blast, 18 people suffered major burns, including two young boys,

one 13-year old boy and the other, 10-years old.

The blast occurred at around 19h30 just before the start of the firework display in the main viewing area on the bank of the Yura River in Fukuchiyama, Kyoto Prefecture, which is across from the firework launch site.

Police sources said the blast was believed to have been caused by one of the stall operators at the fireworks site putting gasoline into an electricity

generator without switching it off. The police plan to question the stall operator, who was injured in the blast and taken to hospital, on suspicion of professional negligence that resulted in injuries.

The annual festival, which last year drew around 110 000 spectators, was cancelled immediately.

The local chamber of commerce, which organised the festival, said propane gas cylinders used at the stalls may have exploded. Fire fighters said three stalls caught fire and collapsed.

About 6 000 fireworks were scheduled to be let off during the 90-minute festival, according to the official website of the event.▲



Typhoons sweep through China, causing widespread destruction

Persistent rains in China are estimated to have caused \$1,6 billion in damages

Flooding in north and southern region of mainland China's left at least 107 dead and inundated roads and farmland in August this year, reported the Government and State media.

Three provinces in northeastern China bore the brunt of the floods with 85 dead and 105 missing in Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning. A total of 37-million residents in that region were affected by flood waters, which were described by a local newspaper as the worst in 50 years in Liaoning province.

At the opposite end of the country, rainfall in the wake of Typhoon Utor, which made landfall in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong last week, killed 22 people and is said to have caused \$1,6 billion in damage.

According to the State news agency, Xinhua, persistent rains have brought chaos to more than 50 counties, forcing 239 000 people to evacuate their homes in Jilin province in the northeast.

More than 787 000 hectares of farmland in the region, a major

grain growing area, were flooded and pictures showed roads in many urban areas looking more like rivers. The People's Liberation Army had been mobilised to carry out rescue work.

The floods in the northeast region of the country is said to have resulted in China's worst flooding in decades, Chinese media reported.

Heavy downpours cut off access to many roads. Bridges were closed and the train service suspended in the worst-affected areas. Sources say at least 105 people are still missing after days of torrential rain and floods in the affected areas.

Some 585 000 hectares of cropland, as well as thousands of homes have been damaged there. Over 800 tons of grain has been sent to disaster areas as part of relief efforts. Hundreds of Chinese soldiers are also helping with relief efforts across the region.

Meanwhile, winds of up to 180 kilometres per hour were recorded in some areas, toppling trees and blowing cars off roads in late

September this year, as Typhoon Usagi struck China's Guangdong province in the southern region of the country.

Trains from Guangzhou to Beijing were suspended and hundreds of flights from Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong were also cancelled in late August amidst the inclement weather. However, Hong Kong escaped the worst of the storm. Weather officials said that the ferocity of the storm abated as it progressed into southern China.

More than 80 000 people were moved to safety in Fujian province and the authorities have deployed at least 50 000 relief workers, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Power supplies in many parts of the province and in Guangdong were cut off.

Typhoon Usagi cause the collapse of 7 100 homes and led to direct economic losses of \$526 million, according to State media.

Mudslides and flooding are common in China's mountainous areas, killing hundreds of people every year.▲

NFPA releases new US fire loss report

A fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the US every 23 seconds, according to a new report released by the US National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The NFPA report titled, Fire Loss in the United States in 2012, provides a comprehensive look at fires in the US, including civilian fire deaths and injuries, property damage and intentionally set fires.

The NFPA report states that in 2012 there was a civilian fire injury every 32 minutes, a civilian fire death every three hours and four minutes and a home fire occurred every 85 seconds, accounting for 76 percent of all structural fires.

In 2012, there were 1 375 500 fires responded to by public fire departments. There were 2 855 civilian deaths and 16 500 injuries as a result of fire.


The majority of civilian fire injuries and deaths occurred in the home, accounting for 78 percent of fire injuries and 83 percent of fire deaths.

Other key findings from the report reveal that property damage of roughly \$12,4 billion occurred as a result of fire, property loss from home fires amounted to \$7 billion and the amount of property damage that occurred as result of fires increased by nearly seven percent in 2012.

Meanwhile, the US Fire Administration report on annual fire fighter fatalities in the US reveals that 81 fire fighters died while on duty in 2012. The total breakdown in these numbers show that 42 volunteers, 28 career and 11 wildland agency, make up the fire fighter fatalities in the US.

There were four multiple fire fighter fatality incidents claiming a total of 10 fire fighters. Fifteen fire fighters died in duties associated with wildland fires and activities related to emergency incidents resulted in the deaths of 45 fire fighters.

Heart attacks were the most frequent cause of death with 39 fire fighter deaths.▲



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Hot and cold review of emergency services in Queensland



A review of the Queensland's Department of Public and Community Safety



Queensland Fire and Rescue Service was given a favourable review in a Government report

A police and community safety review was conducted in Queensland, Australia, representing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew and future-proof the State's emergency service, stated the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for Queensland on its website.

The focus of the review was to ensure a better and more sustainable approach to delivery public safety outcomes. The recommended improvements to the systems and structures of the Police and Community Safety portfolio will allow staff to focus on delivering critical work.

"The report acknowledges that staff and volunteers are making an enormous effort to the community through their work, in often challenging circumstances," noted the department.

Government will now commence implementing the report's recommendations.

The review covered two departments within Minister Jack Dempsey's Public and Community Safety portfolio, which are the Department

of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service.

The Department of Community Safety comprises of a number of operational agencies, including the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Corrective Services, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Emergency Management Queensland.

The review commenced on 2 January 2013, after being initiated by the Minister for Police and Community Safety in late 2012.

The findings of the review, addressing the inadequacies of the Department of Community Safety. There was a high level of ambiguity in its legislative foundation.

Whereas most of the Department of Community Safety operational divisions are clearly established in legislation, the department itself was not, stated the review team.

This lead to systematic problems, such as no commonly agreed definition of 'community safety' upon which the Government, the public sector and the community can rely. Also, the

Director-General of the Department Safety does not sufficiently control its operational divisions.

In terms of disaster management the review team found that Emergency Management Queensland was in an undesirable position, having no line authority over the significant collective capability of other agencies and is considered to be floundering.

Fire and rescue service

A flattering report of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service was issued by the review team, which stated that it was impressed by the capability and professionalism of the service.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service spend little time actually extinguishing fires. It spends even less time extinguishing structural fires, which accounts for five percent of the total activities of the service, according to the review team. "The trend to less structural fire fighting work for the service is understandable given the focus over the past decades on fire prevention. Assisted by technological advancements and a commensurate role in fire protection design for buildings and building ▶

Building reduced to rubble in Argentina gas explosion

A gas explosion killed at least 10 people in the Argentine city of Rosario in August this year. The escaped gas in the basement of a residential building caused the powerful explosion that brought down the 10-storey structure and caused severe damage to another building.

Rescue workers were searching through rubble after as many as 12 people remained missing. Authorities in Rosario, the largest city in the province of Sante Fe, Argentina cancelled classes in 11 schools near the site of the blast, which also injured more than 60 people.

Argentine President, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, declared two days of national mourning.

Two plumbers who were working in the residential building where the explosion occurred were detained for questioning, reported a local newspaper. Some witnesses said one

of the workers, Carlos Garcia, fled the building before the blast occurred.

The prosecutor investigating the explosion, Graciela Arguelles, said that part of the responsibility lies with the utility company, Litoral Gas for its 'very limited and obsolete' inspections.

Litoral Gas did very rudimentary work and then made the situation worse by restoring gas service when proper security conditions were not in place, stated Arguelles. "When an inspector goes and only ascertains that there is no loss of gas, that's not enough. He has to see if the installation is authorised," she said.

The company technician working in the area prior to the blast is also a target of the investigation. "When he began to have problems with the gas and couldn't shut the main valves, I think he should have suspended the work," said Arguelles.



A gas explosion killed at least 10 people in a city in Argentina

► material, a drop in structural fires was inevitable," expounded the report.

Ambulance service

The Queensland Ambulance Service was established in 1991 as an amalgamation of nearly one hundred separate ambulance services across the state. This has contributed to the efficacy of the Queensland Ambulance Service, which has evolved into a highly professional and effective ambulance service, according to the Community Safety services review team.

"Credit for its current standing belongs to their current and former executives who have worked hard to align Queensland Ambulance Service with the Queensland health services," reported the review team.

The Queensland Ambulance Service is one of the first ambulance services in the world to introduce prehospital ultrasound and the first

in Australia to undertake prehospital blood transfusion.

Recommendation

As part of the move to a portfolio approach the review team recommended the creation of a chief executive officer portfolio business.

The new portfolio recommendation would provide corporate service capabilities for the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, which will require additional focus following the breakup of the Department of Community Safety.

It would also grow business acumen in the executives of the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and provide a window for government and other stakeholders on critical corporate decisions, such as information and communication

technology enterprise architecture and procurement.

This would reduce waste and duplication across the agencies of the Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service, proposed the review team.

The conclusion drawn by the review team was that the Police and Community Safety agencies were not broken, as stated by the Minister in the commissioning of the review. However, there were significant flaws making the current arrangements unsustainable despite the goodwill and hard fought efforts of frontline staff.

"Our proposed solution has been to design a portfolio approach, which we believe will strengthen transparency and accountability and ensure sustained improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and interoperability," stated the review team.▲

Paramedics: a novelty service in Pakistan



Pakistan NGO, Aman Foundation, provided Karachi with its first professional EMS in 1999

An initiative by Pakistan-based nongovernmental organisation (NGO), the Aman Foundation, has seen the country's first trained paramedics operating on the streets of the southern port city of Karachi.

A total of 75 paramedics have been trained since the service started in 2009 and now a fleet of ambulances with qualified paramedics operate across the sprawling megacity.

Emergency services in Pakistan have long been run by charitable organisations, which fill the gap where the country's cash-strapped government services leave off. The Edhi Foundation, headed by Pakistan's most famous philanthropist, Abdul Sattar Edhi, has been running such a service in cities across the country for over 60 years.

The Aman Foundation's 80 vehicles are equipped with all the medical equipment found in ambulances in developed countries. Each one is manned by a fully qualified doctor or paramedic and an emergency medical technician. The crew is trained by the Aman Foundation, which has developed its own

paramedic-training course based on the curriculum followed by the London Ambulance Service in the UK.

Since the service was launched in March 2009, the Aman Foundation's ambulances have responded to over 460 000 calls, an average of 400 a day. The foundation charges a nominal fee of \$1.90 or 200 rupees for its service, but only asks for the fee from those who can afford to pay.

Working in Karachi where political interests and ethnic tensions play out in an endless violent battle for votes and land, presents unique challenges for the new paramedics.

Local emergency medical technician (EMT), Jan Sahid, described a scenario in which three gunmen opened fire on an approaching ambulance that was called to pick up a gunshot victim in North Nazimabad, a middle-class suburb in Karachi.

Another challenge faced by the paramedics of Karachi is finding the patient in the first place. Many areas of Karachi have developed haphazardly as an informal sprawl and lack a proper address system. Patients usually use landmarks

to explain to the paramedics where they live. The paramedics are generally stationed in areas where they come from so they can interpret the sometimes idiosyncratic directions, explains Kurram Latif, who has been with the Aman Foundation since 2009, first as an EMT and for the last year as a paramedic.

Aman Foundation EMT, Sahid says that the NGOs ambulances are changing people's perception of emergency medical services. He explained that when he first joined the service and turned up at the scene of an accident in his smart green uniform, people didn't know who or what he was. "Now we get respect," he said.

Muhammad Sokaib, who has been working with the Aman Foundation as a paramedic for a year, says the ambulance service was a new concept. "Many people don't know about emergency medical services," he said. "An ambulance is just a transport service."

The Aman ambulances are now well known throughout the city and have built a strong reputation as a reliable service, though sometimes with unexpected consequences.▲

Richter scale for fires being developed in the US

A 'Richter' scale that measures and predict the destructiveness of wildfires is being developed in the US

Researchers from the Federal Government in the US are working on a system to measure and predict the destructiveness of wildfires.

The system is similar to the way officials use the magnitude scale for earthquakes and other tools to rate and evaluate tornadoes and hurricanes. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) hopes the Wildland Urban Interface Hazard Scale will tell residents the likely intensity of a wildfire burning into their neighbourhood.

The scale would allow city planners to assign better building codes for the millions of people who live in fire-prone areas in the West and would also measure how those homes could contribute to the spread of a fire.

The proposed scale would range from E1 to E4, with E4 being a location's highest exposure to fire, be it from grasslands to a forest in a remote mountain canyon. Building codes and buffer zones between homes and forest could then be set accordingly.

NIST fire research division engineer, Nelson Bryner, envisions the day when television stations report that a wildfire is burning in an E4 community. He said, however, that the scale is primarily meant to form the technical foundation for tougher building codes to be developed by states, cities and communities for high-risk areas.

"If you're going to build there, then you need to use the following designs," said Bryner, who introduced the scale at a recent International Association of Fire Fighters conference in Denver, Colorado in the US.

Insurers also are eager for results. In Colorado alone, wildfires accounted for more than \$858 million in insurance claims in 2012 and 2013, according to the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association. More than 1 100 homes have been destroyed in 2012 and 2013.

Insurance payouts after western wildfires have grown exponentially. In the 1970s, wildfires destroyed about 400 homes nationwide. Since 2 000, wildfires have destroyed about 3 000 homes per year, according to NIST.

Several agencies and states already have fire prediction tools or maps, but those models are based on research conducted in the 1960s and only consider similar types of fuels, such as large stands of trees. Most building codes are based on direct flame exposure and don't factor in dangerous ember showers, according the NIST.

The institute has already developed a mobile app and is developing other computer programs that will allow fire marshals, building inspectors and others to rate an area before a fire starts.

Researchers caution it will be several years before that happens. ▲

Bus accident at Kericho 'black spot' claims more lives



A horrific dawn accident at a notorious 'black spot' on Kenya's Kericho-Mau Summit Highway saw six people lose their lives in Kericho County on 7 September this year.

According to Kericho County Police commandant, Rose Muchuma, 21 other passengers also sustained injuries in the incident that involved a Kisumu-bound Modern Coast Express passenger bus and a saloon vehicle.

"The bus was travelling from Mombasa, while the Toyota Probox was travelling from Kericho towards Chepseon. They collided head on and the six victims lost their lives on the spot," said Muchuma.

Five of the dead were in the saloon car while only one passenger in the bus lost her life.

The Police and the Kenya Red Cross were the first responders to the scene of the accident and they evacuated the injured to the Kericho District Hospital, reported local media.

Police were receiving contradictory statements from bus passengers who survived the accident and other eye witnesses, she said.

Over the years, Kapkatungor has earned itself a reputation as an infamous 'black spot' with police in the region blaming the rising cases of accidents on over-speeding and outright disregard of traffic rules by road users.

The worst accident known to have occurred at Kapkatungor was in 1994 when about 100 people lost their lives after two buses collided head on.

More than 2 000 people died in road accidents in Kenya since January this year. Inspector General of Police, David Kimaiyo said they have recorded 1 776 cases of fatal accidents, 2 029 serious road accidents and 491 slightly serious road accidents in the period.

Kimaiyo termed the number as alarming and urged for caution from all concerned parties to cut them down. ▲



Ship tipped over in 15-metre waves amid gale winds whipped up by Typhoon Utor

Ship sinks amid typhoon scare in Hong Kong

Hong Kong Flying Services officers lifted 21 seamen whose ship sank in waves of up to 15 metres high on 14 August amidst gale force winds that was whipped up by Typhoon Utor. The severe typhoon struck the Philippines and southern China in August this year.

The crew were rescued after they abandoned the 190-metre-long bulk carrier, *Trans Summer*, which tipped over on its side and sank 80 kilometres southwest of Hong Kong.

One of the pilots who took part in the rescue operation said two helicopter teams were dispatched at 10H00 after receiving an SOS call. They then found some of the crew drifting on life rafts, while others were treading water.

The boat had started to sink so the crew decided to abandon ship. The waves were 10-to 15-metres high. The wind was 90 kilometres per hour and when the air crew arrived, the ship was tilting by about 20-to 30-degrees. It then tilted further and sank, reported local emergency services in Hong Kong.

The typhoon passed within 240 kilometres of Hong Kong, injuring at least nine people, closing the financial market and schools and disrupting hundreds of flights. Hong Kong issued a No 8 signal, which is the third highest storm signal rating. The No 8 signal was up for 12 hours, the longest since 2002 when it was also up for 12 hours on the approach of Typhoon Hagupit.

The Hong Kong Observatory lowered the signal to No 3 at 13H40 as Utor weakened.

The Drainage Services Department received six reports of minor flooding from the town of Kwai Chung to Tseung Kwan O in Hong Kong. There were also 48 reports of fallen trees.

More than 100 flights were cancelled and about 400 flights delayed. Most bus and ferry services were suspended during the passage of the typhoon. The Hospital Authority said nine people, aged 26 to 84, sought treatment due to accidents.

Two men and two women were admitted and were in stable condition, while five others were discharged after treatment.

The city returned to normality after the No 8 signal was lowered on 14 August, this year.▲

Illegal miners clash in Brakpan, South Africa

Four illegal miners were found dead at a mine in Gauteng, South Africa prompting rescue efforts from Ekurhuleni emergency management services and other rescue teams for the remaining miners injured in the incident in late July, this year.

The incident occurred at a mine shaft in Brakpan where two rival illegal mining groups came head to head,

resulting in a gun battle and the killing of four individuals at the hands of a gang of rival miners.

Ekurhuleni Emergency Management Services senior district manager, Rogers Mamaila, said at the time of the incident that the EMS was assembling a team along with the department of mineral resources and the SA Police Service (SAPS) to discuss a way forward.

Members of various rescue teams, as well as members of the SAPS worked fervently to stabilise a hostage situation that ensued in the mine shaft. The gang that held the surviving miners of the rival group eventually fled the mine site.

Mines Rescue Services recovered the four bodies slain in the incident and assisted eleven of the illegal miners who were injured in the altercation.

“We rescued 11 people with various injuries, including gunshot wounds and some needing amputations,” said Mamaila.▲



Bushfires stretch fire resources to the limit

More than 500 fire fighters battled copious bushfires in NSW, Australia in September

Fire fighters struggled to cope with copious number of bushfires that sprung up across the Australia state of New South Wales (NSW) in September this year.

Almost 60 bushfires converged near Sydney in Australia, leading to evacuations, destroyed property and stretching fire crews to their limit. Officials say that more than 500 fire fighters battled to control the blazes.

Seven fire fighters were injured while tackling the bushfires, which are common in Australia. However, the blazes arrived unusually early this year, owing to the hot and dry weather experienced in the region.

Residents were warned to put their 'bushfire survival plan' into action in early September this year. The bushfire survival plan is a Government initiative by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, encouraging people at risk to bushfires to develop

a plan of escape or in defence of their property's in the event of a fire.

NSW Fire Service deputy commissioner, Rob Rogers, stated that the fires were erratic and that people needed to monitor the situation, which he said was 'rapidly changing'.

Australian officials reported that 40 bushfires burned west of the main city of Sydney in NSW. Fire fighters battled strong winds and temperatures of around 30 degrees Celsius, with much of western Sydney being under a haze of smoke.

New South Wales state premier, Barry O'Farrell, briefed parliament on the ongoing dangers of the bushfires.

O'Farrell reported that around 500 fire fighters and 200 fire engines were at work on the ground to bring the fires under control.

Fire service commissioner Rogers said having so many fires in such a concentrated area around Sydney's

greater west was a challenge. Rogers said that the fires were not all too far apart and expected more losses as a result of the numerous blazes underway in the region.

Premier O'Farrell told parliament emergency warnings are in place across the state, adding that 'strong, gusty north-westerly winds continue to affect the fire grounds'.

Various evacuations have taken place across New South Wales, including 2 000 people from a University of Western Sydney campus.

After an emergency warning was issued earlier in the month, the fire danger was downgraded by NSW fire officials on 27 September. However, a large bushfire remained out of control and threatened homes on the New South Wales mid-north coast.

The Bureau of Meteorology recently announced that last summer, ending 28 February 2013, was the hottest on record in the country.▲

New night-flying helicopters help contain fire

A Los Angeles County Fire Department water dropping helicopter proved to be the difference in avoiding a devastating fire in the San Gabriel Mountains in California, US, in September this year.

The Madre Fire was compared to the devastating Station Fire that struck the region four years ago, but the fire was quickly contained a few days after the blaze started, much owing to the use of the night-flying helicopters.

In the Station Fire, the US Forest Service made the decision not to fly at night. The decision proved costly as the fire gained strength overnight and consumed 64 000 hectares, destroying 89 homes and kill two Los Angeles County fire fighters.

Years of criticism, a Government Accountability Office report and a bill by a US Government official, Adam Schiff, changed the way the Forest Service fights fires. Republican Schiff's bill gave the Forest Service a specially equipped helicopter and newly trained pilots with night goggles.

The Forest Service used the FS night-flying helicopter for the first time to fight the 108-hectare Madre Fire. The US Forest Service listed the fire as 90

percent contained five days after it started on 24 September.

The use of a federal aerial helicopter at night marked one of the first times the Forest Service flew at night over a fire this year, since the 1970s. The night-flying helicopter was later dispatched to the Sierra Fire in Cajon Pass, also in California, to assist with fire fighting efforts there.

Aerial night helicopter flights dumped water on the flaming ridgelines and dry canyons shortly after the Madre Fire began. The air operations crews knocked down the Madre Fire in San Gabriel Canyon with relentless sorties of aerial night helicopter flights for close to four hours on 23 September.

Night-flying helicopters made passes up the jagged canyon every two minutes during that crucial time period, when the fire was spreading out of control and threatening homes in a nearby neighbourhood.

The Forest Service helicopter pilots who fought the Madre Fire, were those recently trained as a result of the Schiff bill.

LA County Fire Department inspector, Keith Mora, said that the majority of fire fighting on the first day took place by air. "There were so many

helicopters. They really attacked it from the air," he said.

Both the regular county helicopter, which holds about 1 300 litres of water per drop and the sky crane chopper, which holds about 7 500 litres of water, were used during the night to fight the Madre Fire in the early stages, he said. They were not needed since then.

"I think it very likely made a big difference," Schiff said. "Whether that fire could've been contained the next morning we'll never know. It is much better to put out those hot spots when they can or they could get away from you.

"We saw in the Station Fire how devastating it can be if you wait until morning."

Night-flying helicopters were also used to lift hot shot crews up to hard-to-reach ridges in San Gabriel Canyon, Mora said. These crews use pickaxes and shovels to create fire breaks and extinguish hot spots.

The Forest Service has one night-flying helicopter, but may soon add more, said Schiff. He didn't know the exact cost of the program, but added; "We think it is money well spent." ▲

Five bodies recovered from landslide spot in rural India

Nearly 15 people were feared trapped in a landslide that occurred in Adimali, a town in the Kerala, India, in early August this year.

The incident occurred when a large portion of the mountain caved in on the road to the famous hill station Munnar in a mountain range area in Western Ghats in Idukki district. Officials said that nearly 20 to 50 metres of the road was under debris and a few vehicles on the road have been washed away in the landslide.

Preliminary reports stated that five bodies have been recovered from the spot and rescue works were on at the spot. Kochi range inspector

general, K Padmakumar, reviewed the rescue works carried out by police, fire service personnel.

The rescue teams have spotted three vehicles that fell into a gorge on the other side of the road. "The heavy downpour has hampered the rescue work. We could not reach the vehicles lying in the gorge," said an officer of the fire and rescue team.

A team of Indian Navy personnel from the Southern Naval Command provided assistance to the rescue team in Chiyapara.

The identity of the deceased were yet to be ascertained, police officials said and added that while the two

victims were killed on the spot, the other three died at the hospital.

Normalcy returned to the Idduki district a few days after the landslide. "Things are returning to normal. Search and rescue work by National Disaster Response Force and army personnel are almost over," said Chief Minister, Oommen Chandy.

Chandy said government gave sanction in principle to Public Works Department to take up repair works of roads damaged in the rains.

It has also been decided to incorporate a provision of performance guarantee in the works contract agreement with contractors, he said. ▲

Daring midnight sea rescue conducted by NSRI

The National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI), in a daring rescue operation, saved the lives of 12 fisherman from a shipwreck on Robben Island in Cape Town, South Africa in a dramatic midnight ordeal in August this year.

The dozen men from the 19,6-metre Hout Bay fishing trawler, Claremont, were taken to hospital where they were treated for hypothermia and shock.

The exhausted NSRI boat crews and rescue swimmers were being lavished with praise for their efforts. "They did unbelievably well, it was a mammoth effort, swimming, wading and hopping from rock to rock, in foul weather, pouring rain, with huge waves breaking over them for more than an hour-and-a-half. These guys deserve massive praise," said NSRI's media spokesperson, Craig Lambinon.

The NSRI's Table Bay station commander, Pat van Eyssen, said the distress call came at four minutes after midnight. "It appears that the vessel lost motor power and they were drifting ashore in stormy seas with five-to-six-metre breaking swells," he said.

On board were the skipper and owner, Marcelino da Silva, 49, of Tableview and 11 crew, aged 18 to 52.

Crews from three NSRI stations namely Table Bay, Melkbosstrand and Bakoven, launched four vessels, while the Western Cape Government Health Emergency Medical Service set up a joint operations centre.

The skipper told the NSRI by radio that waves were breaking over the vessel and that the vessel was being battered against rocks and was breaking up.

"Efforts to get the crew off from the sea side, with rigid inflatable rescue craft darting in between wave sets under the illumination of white illuminating flares proved fruitless, as waves of between five- and six-metre sets rolled in forcing our craft to abandon the efforts to avoid being capsized or rammed into rocks," explained Van Eyssen.

The crew began to panic, but the NSRI urged them to stay calm. The situation intensified when it became clear that the vessel was hard aground on rocks and listing to a 40 degree angle. The casualty crew had no choice and they began to abandon ship under their captain's instruction.

"NSRI rescue crews raced into Murray Bay Harbour and summoned the Robben Island Security who ferried



Twelve fisherman were saved in a shipwreck by the NSRI on Robben Island

them to the far side of the island," reported Van Eyssen.

He added, "At first only one of the casualty crew managed to get to shore and NSRI rescue swimmers waded, swam and jumped from rock to rock, in between crashing waves to reach the ship where four casualty crew members were found perched on a rock. They were helped ashore," said Van Eyssen.

In relays, all 11 casualty crew were helped ashore, while the skipper remained at his wheel house. He was exhausted and suffering from hypothermia.

By 04H17, all 12 crew members had been taken to Murray Bay Harbour, before being hospitalised.

The SA Maritime Safety Authority is monitoring the vessel, which remains wrecked on the island.▲

US military helicopter crashes near base in Japan

A US military helicopter crashed at an American base on the southern island of Okinawa, Japanese in August this year.

The HH-60 rescue helicopter crashed in a training area at Camp Hansen with four crew members on board, the US Air Force said in a statement.

The helicopter, which belongs to US' Kadena Air Base in Okinawa was on an unspecified training mission. The cause of the crash was not specified by the US military.

Japanese defence minister, Itsunori Onodera, told local reporters that three of the four crew members survived. The condition of the fourth crew member was not immediately known.

Onodera said the accident was 'regrettable' and that he was asking the US to provide information promptly, as well as conduct a thorough investigation and take preventive measures.

The crash comes amid strong local opposition to the US Marine Corps'

additional deployment of Osprey transport aircraft on the island. About half of the 50 000 US troops in Japan are based on Okinawa under a Japan-US security pact.

Anti-US military sentiment on the island is a longstanding issue and many residents have complained about base-related crime, noise and accidents.

Local media said the crash revived memories of an accident in 2004, when a CH-53 helicopter from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma crashed into a nearby university building, triggering a huge anti-base uproar although there were no civilian injuries and the crew survived.▲

State-of-the-art helivac unveiled

The Wellmont Health System in Bristol, Tennessee, unveiled its new state-of-the-art mobile ambulance helicopter in August this year.

The Bell 407 called Wellmont One is one of the fastest medical helicopters and increases the transport distance for patients within the region. It replaces the previous air transport helicopter.

With Bristol Motor Speedway as a backdrop, David Brash, Wellmont's senior vice president of business development and rural strategy, said time is a critical factor when dealing with major health emergencies.

"We are acutely aware of the need for speed," said Brash. "In emergency care, speed is crucial to better outcomes and in some cases survival." Brash said a regular ambulance ride



Bristol Regional Medical Centre staff stand alongside the Bell 407 ambulance helicopter

from some rural areas of Southwest Virginia and Northeast East Tennessee can take more than an hour. With the helicopter ambulance, patients can reach Bristol Regional Medical Centre (BRMC) in a matter of minutes.

The helicopter has been based at the motor speedway in Bristol before it was used to fly as many as half a dozen patients to the hospital in Bristol during race week twice per year.

Patients are transported for anything from a heart attack to injuries in an accident. "This is an excellent new helicopter that will build on the superior care we are privileged to deliver to patients in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia," said BRMC's interim president, Greg Neal.

The new helicopter is equipped with an autopilot feature as well as a collision-avoidance system and radar altimeter. The mobile helicopter service is a partnership between Wellmont and PHI Air Medical, a leading air ambulance provider.

"This location permits quick response and serves not only the Tri-Cities area, but a lot of the more rural areas," said Bristol Motor Speedway vice president and general counsel, Julie Bennett. ▲

Train derailment causes chemical scare in US state

An emergency was declared in Louisiana, US, as hundreds of locals were unable to return home after a freight train derailment in August this year.

Louisiana-state governor, Bobby Jindal, declared a state of emergency as specialists continued to assess the wreckage of the derailed 78-car freight train that was leaking chemicals.

More than 100 homes were evacuated after the Union Pacific locomotive came off the tracks on a Sunday afternoon near the capital city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Two of the 27 cars on the locomotive began leaking chemicals, including the substance sodium hydroxide, which can cause injuries if it touches the skin and death if it is inhaled. Another car was emitting lube oil, while a fourth containing vinyl chloride was damaged, although it was not leaking any of the chemical.

St Landry Parish president, Bill Fontenot, stated that authorities began evacuating homes near the site within an hour of the crash. The first order of business was making sure people were safe," he said. "So, we evacuated 101 homes within a 1,6-kilometre radius to make sure that no one could come into contact with the chemicals."

Fontenot added that Union Pacific had put up most of the residents in nearby hotels, although some had gone to stay with relatives or friends. "Every carriage has to be checked before people can go back," he said.

Rain hampered attempts to secure the crash site and authorities had been forced to dig dams to prevent the harmful chemicals from entering the water supply.

"We're working hard with both state and federal hazmat teams to secure the situation," said Union Pacific spokesperson, Mark Davy. He said repairs were being made to the



Chemicals leaked from a freight train derailed in Louisiana, US prompting emergency declaration

300 metres of track damaged by the accident.

Governor Jindal authorised state assistance in his emergency declaration. "Any time you have chemicals leaking into the environment, that's a serious issue," he said upon a visit to St Landry Parish. ▲



MSF play an integral role in a failing health-care system in war-torn Syria

Syria

health-care system breakdown

Humanitarian group, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), otherwise known as Doctors Without Borders, says the health-care system in Syria has collapsed after being inundated with military and civilian casualties of war.

Everyday medical conditions, such as pregnancies and chronic illnesses add to the strain put on the war-torn country's health-care system.

In an open letter to the global community, MSF implored the US and Russian Governments to apply the same level of diplomatic energy to addressing an increasingly unstable humanitarian situation in Syria that they did to secure a deal on the control of chemical weapons.

"Given the multiplicity of States and non-State actors involved in the Syrian conflict, it is imperative that the Russian and US Governments work with their respective political allies to develop a strategy for facilitating a massive infusion of humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed in Syria," wrote the humanitarian group's international president, Unni Karunakara.

The letter, dated 27 September 2013, was widely distributed to diplomatic missions at the United Nations (UN), including the Canadian mission and Governments and non-State actors, such as Hezbollah, that have weighed in on the Syrian conflict.

The executive director of MSF Canada, Stephen Cornish, recently returned from three weeks in Syria and neighbouring countries and described scenes of devastation and desperation. "Just to carry out medical activities is a challenge in itself," said Cornish. "The reality is the health-care system has all but collapsed."

Once-stable families relegated to vagrancy have been toting what belongings they have in rented blanket tents that double as overnight shelters. Pregnant women routinely return to urban-area war zones for medical care because of a scarcity of other options. Children prepare to live in open barns with mud floors for a second winter.

Cornish called on governments to better target their aid. For instance, he said, countries like Canada could assist in winterising accommodations for displaced Syrians.

Of the 91 public hospitals across Syria, MSF says 55 have been damaged or destroyed. Doctors have fled the country in huge numbers, according to the group.

MSF says it runs six hospitals and two clinics in Syria and sees about 10 000 patients and conducts 430 operations per month.▲



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CTFRS seeks to be a progressive and proactive service



The evolving of a fire and rescue service

Fire and Rescue International (FRI) recently visited the City of Cape Town (COCT) where chief fire officer, Ian Schnetler, provided us with a tour and insight into the COCT's Fire and Rescue Service (CTFRS).

FRI magazine was fortunate enough to also get a tour of the COCT's Fire and Rescue Service (CTFRS) headquarters at the Goodwood Fire Station, as well as one of the City's first central fire station in Roeland Street in the city centre. A museum of vintage fire fighter uniforms and memorabilia is housed at the Roeland Street Fire Station, which is still operational, along with antiquated fire engines

dating back to the early 60's, when the Roeland Street premises was founded.

Established in 1845, Cape Town's fire service has developed into an interconnected network, consisting of 30 fire stations. These fire stations are located in three districts and service delivery areas, spanning 2 455 square kilometres across the region.

The respective districts each have a district headquarters with Bellville in the Northern district, Belhar in the Eastern district and Roeland Street in the Western district, all of which is headed by the headquarters in Goodwood, situated between the

northern and southern suburbs of Cape Town. There are also nine divisions of the CTFRS, with divisional headquarters in each.

Prior to 1997, Fire Services in Cape Town were made up of a number of municipal fire service contained within the current city boundaries. In 2006, Cape Town became a Unicity, which refers to reforms in the structure of a metropolitan government. The advent of new legislation and demarcations resulted in the amalgamation of these previous fire services into a single Fire and Rescue Service. In essence the single service was officially functioning as a metro with the appointment of a permanent Chief Fire Officer in 2006.

"We amalgamated from 18 different municipalities into one Metro," explains Schnetler. "There were a lot of people replaced in different positions after the amalgamation. In terms of a Unicity, we are one of the first Metropolitan cities to amalgamate effectively."

The first officially appointed fire chief of the City, Piet Smith, worked out of the Goodwood Fire Station with the advent of the Unicity. "Prior to this, there were only acting or interim fire chiefs, at the headquarters of the fire and rescue service," mentions Schnetler. ▶

Service delivery areas

Variable risk area = 2456 Km²

- 3 Districts
 - (District HQ in each)
- 9 Divisions
 - (Divisional HQ in each)
- 30 Fire Stations
 - (Community stations in each division)





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Spring to the challenge

Fire service

► Since becoming a Metro in 1996, there have been a number of new pilot projects and systems undertaken by the CTFRS, done in order to achieve a wholly efficient fire service cross all the regions in the COCT. Schnetler says that the CTFRS is changing its focus from becoming purely operational service to being a preventative fire service.

A 'really robust communication system' has been adopted by the service since the change to a Metro. Schnetler says that it has become difficult to 'see every person at every fire station' in the region'. This vast operational network and area of coverage by the CTFRS calls for a sophisticated communication system. The service uses the Tetra communications system and all CTFRS fleet vehicles are on global positioning system (GPS) tracking. Schnetler mentions that the handover periods between various shifts across all fire stations are imperative.

"There are 1 100 plus staff, but I try and get out there amongst the guys a lot," says Schnetler. "We are quite a large fire service with 35 fire stations and 900 plus fire fighters."

Multifunction

The CTFRS has a multi-thronged approach to fire fighting in Cape Town that requires not only structural fire fighting capabilities, but a comprehensive fire fighting focus.

Schnetler says that the CTFRS is not just a city fire department. "We

are evolving as a fire and rescue service to include all areas or fire occurrences," he says. "We have developed our service. We had to adapt to our environment."

The fire fighting vehicles in the City of Cape Town are positioned in such a way that would best serve their respective regions, reports Schnetler. "We have to adapt our vehicles for specific regions," he says. An example of this is the challenge created in fighting fires at informal settlements, where there is a lack of water and houses are in close proximity to one another. A big fire tanker is used for these areas, mentions Schnetler.

A 57-metre Bronto Skylift hydraulic platform kept at the Roeland Street Fire Station, is one of seven hydraulic platforms currently in service in and around the City to cover the risks and any potential fire occurrences in the high rise buildings of the city centre and elsewhere.

The range of risks and infrastructure in the region that is covered by the CTFRS include five harbours in two districts, as well as the Port of Cape Town and the South African Naval Base. There are also refineries, an expansive mountain region and the Cape Town International Airport, wildlife, a National Park and conservation areas, as well as the Koeberg nuclear power station, which is the only commercial nuclear station in the country and on the African continent.

Another risk among the unique challenges faced by the service include the rural/urban interface and urban/industrial interface. Schnetler mentions that the Cape Peninsula fires in 2000 counts among the most significant fire incidents faced by the CTFRS. A total of 8 370 hectare was burned in the Peninsula, with fourteen structures including houses destroyed and over 50 other structures badly damaged.

Other major incidents in the City include a wildfire in a wine producing region in the Western Cape. The Heldeberg wildfire had 100 fire fighters, as well as farm workers and Volunteer Wildfire services and other agencies battling the blaze for 12 days.

Schnetler says that the CTFRS is equipped in all specialised fire services and functions, although aerial fire fighting is the one function that is outsourced to a service provider by the service.

He says that structural fire fighting is more straight forward and 'easy' to manage as opposed to wildfires in that predicting fire travel and conditions are relevantly stable as opposed to conditions encountered with wildfires. "Our staff is becoming more proficient in dealing and understanding wildfires in the City. The unpredictability of Cape Town weather adds many challenges to fighting wildfires in the region," says Schnetler.

The service employs 120 seasonal fire fighters every year to assist ►



The Scania Bronto Skylift located in Cape Town's city centre on Roeland Street



The approximately 253 informal settlements in the COCT put a strain on the City's resources



One of the fire fighter teams of the City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service

► in combating the occurrence of wildfires in the region. These fire fighters are on contract for six months from 1 November through April.

In addition to this project, the CTFRS also makes use of the expanded public works programmes (EPWPs), a Government initiative geared towards employment and economic growth. Schnetler says that through these projects, the service employs 66 workers and 60 Hydrant staff to supplement the support functions of the service. This allows fire-fighters to get on with the business of fire fighting. The recruitment of 30 disabled staff is another employment initiative that is currently being undertaken by the CTFRS. These disabled individuals will be placed at the watch rooms at each of the fire stations in the City, which then enables the 30 fire fighters, who normally carry out these functions, to be available for fire fighting purposes.

Fire safety

The City of Cape Town's fire and life safety operations is an area that has a shortfall of personnel and is marked for improvement. The fire and life safety campaign is a two-pronged approach namely, inspectorate and awareness. "In terms of fire services we cover the full spectrum. We have awareness and inspectorate activities," says Schnetler. "I am trying to implement a fire safety message."

Schnetler adds, "The focus has always been on a specialised fire and life safety inspectorate carrying out inspections in terms of the

National Building Regulations and local fire safety by-laws. We are trying to change that focus, so that traditional operational fire fighters need to become involved in carrying out fire safety functions on a more regular basis."

Operations personnel in the fire services industry generally do not understand that fire and life safety is critical to operations. "It is not an easy function," says Schnetler. "Fire and life safety has a very high responsibility and accountability factor. The idea is to proactively increase fire safety operations to eventually reduce the number of fires encountered, rather than continuously boosting reactive operational fire fighting. Better to prevent a fire from starting than deal with one that has already started."

There are approximately 253 informal settlements in the COCT, putting a real strain on the City's resources. An occurrence of fire is reported in these informal communities nearly every day, mentions Schnetler.

The service has undertaken a fire safety campaign that is specifically aimed at these informal communities. Schnetler says that fire service representatives go out every Friday and Saturday morning to spread a fire safety message in the informal settlements.

- CTFRS fire safety programme:
- Fire extinguisher handling
 - Fire safety
 - Provision of literature

"We try to tell staff that 'every opportunity you should get a fire safety message across'," says Schnetler.

The CTFRS has appointed a person to head up the fire and life safety operation in Ignatius Smart. Schnetler says that fire and life safety awareness and inspectorate services are based at various stations across the City.

There are crews that focus on operational activities in fire and life safety at the Goodwood Fire Station, where the head of the division resides. However, members of staff also provide assistance in awareness programs, says Schnetler. This includes instructing various organisations and schools on basic fire safety prevention measures. ►



The Roeland Street Fire Station museum of fire fighter memorabilia

► Interagency relations

The City of Cape Town's Fire and Rescue Service has a close working relationship with the local disaster management centre (DMC), which is housed on the premises of the fire station, along with the control centres of the CTFRS. The service also has a working agreement with South African National Parks (SANParks).

Schnetler mentions that the National Veld and Forest Fire Act and Fire Brigade Act are still not in alignment, which has given rise to potential conflict in certain areas in Cape Town. "It can cause friction between fire and rescue services and the fire protection associations (FPA) side," he says. "I am supposed to be the fire protection officer (FPO) for any FPA established within my area of jurisdiction. However, if there are three or four FPAs established, one cannot be the FPO for all of them. In the City, the previous FPA's are now under an umbrella FPA for the region and an FPO has been appointed by the FPA."

In terms of the City of Cape Town, the responsibility for fire fighting services rest with him as the CFO of a Municipal fire service and any other fire fighting agency or FPA, established, only play a supplementary role to that of the City's fire and rescue service.

Schnetler says that the City of Cape Town is unique in that FPAs are essentially not required within the boundaries of the City as a fully-fledged professional fire and

rescue service exists and he has indicated that there are areas where potential friction exists where supplementary fire agencies do not engage with the fire and rescue service.

Fire training

The CTFRS has developed its training academy that is based at the Epping Fire Station, located in an industrial area of Cape Town.

The CTFRS Training Academy was enabled for the City of Cape Town's fire services, but each respective fire station in the City of Cape Town is required to conduct their own training as well.

"The fire stations will have training modules made available to them and the training academy will then act as moderators and assessors," states Schnetler. He says that the CTFRS Training Academy is accredited by the South African Emergency Services Institute (SAESI) and Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA).

The training courses provided at the academy is an eight-month induction course that involves a practical assessment and a medical. The academy provides instruction on fire fighter one and two, vehicle extrication and hazmat, pump operator course, trench collapse and rope rescue, among other specialised courses. "The only time we do outsourcing is when they go for drivers licence," says Schnetler.

Challenges

"In terms of dealing with informal settlements, this has proved to be one of our biggest challenges," says Schnetler. He says that a large majority of the fires that the fire service responds to at present are in informal settlements.

"The high rate of informal settlements in the City is still a concern. In the winter time there are not too many incidents, but in December it becomes very busy," says Schnetler.

Budget constraints

The operating budget of CTFRS ranges between R650 million and R700 million, while the capital budget varies according to the available budget of the City. However, this has averaged around R18 million over the past five years, reports Schnetler.

The optimum service delivery of the CTFRS is affected by budget shortcomings, which is much the ►



The CTFRS' training academy at the Epping Fire Station

City of Cape Town fire prevention:

On average every year:

- 40 000 water hydrants are inspected and tested
fault units repaired
- 14 000 premises are inspected to ensure compliance with national building regulations and other bylaws and municipal regulations
- 4 000 storage facilities for flammable substances are inspected to ensure compliance with safety regulations and authorised stock levels
- 250 night inspections social clubs, restaurants, cinemas, theatres and other places of public entertainment to ensure compliance with safety requirements
- 1 400 plans of buildings and storage facilities for flammable and explosive materials are scrutinised

The Incident Command Bus at the CTFRS headquarters in Goodwood



The Goodwood Fire Station fleet of emergency vehicles



CTFRS CFO Ian Schnetler and GIS specialist, Ricardo Fourie

▶ same for most fire and rescue services, states Schnetler.

To address this challenge, the City of Cape Town's Fire Service has begun to tap into Government-funded programmes, such as the EPWP programmes, to supplement the support side of the service, explains Schnetler.

Schnetler says that the CTFRS benefits from the vast experience gained by the operational personnel within the service from other local, national and international services.

"As a chief fire officer, I have had the opportunity to visit the Los Angeles County Fire Department (US), Munich Fire and Rescue Services (Germany) and many local fire and rescue services and learn some innovative and new ideas for implementation into our service, some of which have already been implemented."

Other innovative ideas and programmes adopted by the CTFRS to mitigate its budget shortfalls is the introduction of volunteer initiatives for the City.

The service will recruit 240 volunteers within the next three years to add extra capacity to the service, states Schnetler. "They don't have to be fire fighters, but can be utilised and trained to perform supplementary functions, such as operators in the command and control centre or in other areas of the service.

"We are not just a traditional fire service. We are trying to be progressive and proactive in what we do," concludes Schnetler. ▲



Uniform personnel; a family legacy

The City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Services Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ian Schnetler, is from a long line of uniform personnel, affording him a clearer vision of the future and career that he would embark on in Cape Town, South Africa.

He has made the journey from fire fighter, a vocation he took up while the results of his final Matric exams were still being tallied, donning the fire fighter uniform almost as soon as he wrote his last exam paper as a high school student in Cape Town in 1979.

Schnetler soaked up all he could from his experiences as a young fire fighter, observing the protocols and modus operandi of the officers and fire chiefs under whom he served in his career.

"Throughout my career, I learned from many officers and fire fighters and tried to use the best qualities from all of them to learn and understand my trade," recounts Schnetler.

He lists the individuals who have had the most impact on his career and these include the now late ex-fire chief of Cape Town, Joop Hamel, retired chief Donald Sparks and the first official chief of the metro in Cape Town, Piet Smith. "These were men with discipline, knowledge of fire services and life in general and characters in their own right," says Schnetler.

Fire fighting is a calling that requires 'hard yards' before any young fire

fighter and aspiring fire chief should expect any rewards, says Schnetler. "Becoming a fire fighter must be a calling and not be just another job. There must be a passion and understanding that we will put our lives on the line for others."

This passion for the fire services industry has been evident throughout Schnetler's career, as he was seemingly destined to take up the role, which he currently holds at the apex of the City of Cape Town's fire service operations.

Schnetler developed an ambition to reach the pinnacle of a fire fighters career early on in his journey, recalling the exact moment when he first envisioned himself as a fire chief in the City of Cape Town. "I recall being invited to an interview for the post of station officer around 1989, where one of the questions posed by Joop Hamel, (then chief fire officer) was where would I see myself in a few years' time or in the future," says Schnetler.

It was at this point that the desire to eventually be a fire chief in Cape Town was conceived by Schnetler. He responded to Hamel's question by saying that he would one day be in the seat of chief fire officer of the fire service. "Little knowing that in later years, this dream would come true and would be of a much larger and more complex fire and rescue service than the smaller services at the time," says Schnetler.



**CTFRS Chief Fire Officer (CFO),
Ian Schnetler**

Schnetler has developed his own ideology and management style after many years in the service and is now able to advise burgeoning officers and fire chiefs. "Stay true to your calling and remember the days when you were a fire fighter and how you overcame the challenges placed before you," says Schnetler.

"Above all, remember your roots and stay true to yourself and this noble profession," he concludes.

Ian Schnetler timeline:

1979 – Joined the City of Cape Town as a fire fighter

1989/90 – Appointed as station officer at the fire service headquarters in Cape Town

2007 – Appointed as chief fire officer of the City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service ▲

Fire fighter training from a desktop or iPad



Linda Botha

Multimedia training products company, Skills Train, recently launched an online web-based fire fighting training academy in South Africa.

The elearning academy for the emergency services industry is the latest product offering by Skills Train. It is an official import of niche market training products and represents over 20 specialised publishers and producers from the international industry.

The online elearning academy for fire fighters is being used in various countries around the world including India, Australia, Canada and the US and is now made available in South Africa by Skills Train founder, Linda Botha.

As more and more people gain access to the internet, online initiatives such as the elearning academy is a growing trend in different industries, as the need for skills development and education arises. Botha says that the elearning academy courses are the first comprehensive offering of specialised product in an elearning platform with more than 1 500 online courses.

"The world is definitely moving towards a blended classroom approach through online learning programmes," states Botha.

The elearning academy adopted for the local industry by Skills Train is drawn from Critical Information Network (CINet) Academy's fire fighter training network of elearning programmes. CINet is a US organisation that has been providing fire fighter training solutions since 1991.

Botha says that it was an arduous task to 'put together the ecommerce website', which was launched in August this year as a pay-per-use model for online trainees or the further developed Training centre licence option.

Certification

The courses are world class and consist of online streaming video, online interactive courses, as well as text, pre-and post-tests, multiple choice questions and upon completion, a certificate is presented to those who successfully complete the course. There are also full instructor resources available with ATS online in the form of lesson plans and PowerPoints.

"An international certificate of completion will be awarded to students and a certain number of points awarded for completion against that standard within the chosen course," explains Botha. She says that Skills Train is currently working on getting accreditation for the elearning courses it offers.

Botha says that the elearning academy is aimed at learners from an entry level fire fighter upwards, and on the ATS EMS medical side these courses meet the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and 2009 National Emergency Medical Services Education Standards (NEMSES).

Industrial Television Network offers a post-graduate technical course, as well as an entry level security course

(PSTN). Learners are able to go through the course more than once, which allows upskilling by groups of people within an organisation.

"We have also established that more and more senior fire fighters and operations managers are consistently being head hunted for contract work overseas. This is an ideal platform to upskill in your own time and allows one to train at your own pace," states Botha.

Skills Train has provided niche training products for various industries and organisations and Linda says her organisation is honoured, humbled and proud to work with Government, Treasury, Departments of Health, Municipal and private and Industrial organisations. Other entities, for which she provides training products include educational institutions, petrochemical and mining industry, as well as many specialised consultants.

The flagship training modules offered by Skills Train's newly launched elearning academy is the CINet fire and emergency training network (FETN) and includes CINet's industrial skills training network (ISTN), emergency medical training network (EMTN) and professional security training network (PSTN) programmes.

ATS Online provides all the accredited training centres with firefighter I and firefighter II and all the recommended rescue and fire fighting courses required for instructors and students.

Botha mentions that the elearning platform is currently being tested by various members and stakeholders in the industry, including fire chiefs, industry consultants and municipality managers. "We have been in discussions at various levels with the role players and they see all forms of training as an extension to what is available and a need to have more of a product offering out in the marketplace." ►



A strong command with access to all the information relevant to the product involved and its hazards is the key to a successful response

Commanding a hazardous materials emergency – some random thoughts

By Colin Deiner, Chief Director, Disaster management and Fire Brigade Services, Western Cape Government

In a previous article I dealt with the steps needed to be followed in establishing a hazmat team in a fire service. In this article, it is assumed that your department already has a hazmat capability and is called upon to respond to incidents involving hazardous materials.

This is not a concise standard operating procedure for hazmat response (there are enough text books on this). What I hope you will get out of this article is some extra

food for thought about how you manage your hazardous materials responses and hopefully some ideas on improving on it.

Initial response

The time honoured phrase 'every incident is a hazmat incident until proved otherwise' is true and should always be uppermost in the minds of responders. This, to an extent, leads me to my next thought, which is that the vast majority of hazmat incidents that you will respond to will not require

you to have a minimum of twelve crew members, entry teams dressed up in level A, fully encapsulated, gas-tight personal protective equipment (PPE) and establish a 15-stage decontamination line prior to making that first entry.

By understanding the product and its properties, you will be able to make a quick assessment of the risk involved and be able to formulate an action plan in a relatively short space of time.▶

▶ **Elearning benefits**

There are 1 500 courses to choose from in the elearning academy and these range from the FETN bouquet of fire fighter programmes, which includes hazmat, aircraft rescue fire fighting (ARFF) and basic and advanced fire fighting and the full product offering for ATS online .

Botha says that the learning management system and the course content is quality tested and user friendly, with an easy dashboard to get around. "Course content meets all International Standards as required by the registered International authorities. It is easy to train at any

time, wherever you are, provided you have an iPad or desktop and meet system requirements," she explains.

Listening to feedback and gauging the wants and needs of the industry, especially in the challenging economic climate in South Africa and globally is critical to Skills Train business outlook. "We need to become more price conscious for our clients," states Botha. "We also have to continue to present new and exciting platforms for learning experiences."

The learning programmes offered by SkillsTrain are affordable and reliable resources and trainees are able to

access different courses that would cost the same as a two-week session in one single discipline.

Botha says that the elearning experience will merely enhance your training course, the practical component, will always need a facilitator, so traditional in-classroom led instruction will always be necessary.

"The academy elearning courses will merely allow one to up their game and hopefully present a better resume' at the cost of purchasing a single textbook. It is definitely the way forward," she pronounces.▲

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It is always a big decision to close a freeway or major route but if necessary, the decision must be taken

► How do you do this?

Firstly, try to determine state of the product involved ie solid, liquid or vapour. Obviously, a vapour or volatile liquids would constitute the highest risk. Is it a pressure or non-pressure vessel? Do you detect any vapours around the container?

If you receive a call from the product owner or company transporting it, you should be able to determine its identity and properties quite easily. You can also identify the product by its container shape or label. If you have no information and are not sure of what material is involved, try to identify the above facts from a safe distance. How many fire services still have a good pair of binoculars on their first response vehicles and Hazmat units for this purpose?

We unfortunately have to contend with the many other services who respond to accidents involving hazardous materials on our roads and who have a) no hazmat training; b) no PPE; c) no idea (in many cases). This does making parking a safe distance away and trying to identify the product while five other services are already on top of the scene seem a bit foolish. As I have mentioned many times before, it is up to us as hazmat first responders to make contact with our brothers and sisters in other services and agencies and plan our responses to these incidents properly. With the kind of communication devices available

to us today, we should be able to convey the message of a possible hazardous materials presence at an accident scene to all responders quite easily. I'm sure the D-Day Normandy invasion would never have worked if the Germans had Twitter! If you have gone the extra mile and worked through some hazardous materials awareness training with the local police, EMS, vehicle recovery and roads maintenance people, they should all respect the system and also stage themselves in a safe area until the 'all clear' is given.

It is always a big decision to close a freeway or major route but if necessary, the decision must be taken. As the knowledgeable person on scene, the incident commander should use his/her legislative mandate to deny entry for as long as it is necessary and should have the courage of his/her convictions to stay with the decision. Remember that an inconvenience is temporary. Death is forever.

Other important clues as to the properties of the materials involved and to better clarify the hazards involved will include container marking, placards, labels, shipping papers and material safety data sheets (MSDSs).

Ultimately, the best source of information on the product will be the manufacturer. Responsible manufacturers generally have an

all-hours helpline that will provide extensive information on the product, its properties and reactivity under certain conditions and how to manage it once it has been released from its container. Unfortunately, you will find that in many instances the number provided for emergency assistance may be useless if the incident happens after office hours, which it inevitably does. It is for this reason that you have all the other options available to you. Chemical databases are either commercially available or can be downloaded as open source software on the internet such as the 'Wiser' chemical hazard information system. The ones that cost you money will obviously be more specific and provide you with more details and will definitely be worth the investment.

The key here is to gather all the information you, as incident commander, would need to allow you to commit responders to the incident. The first entry team can then confirm or adjust the information when they enter.

Reconnaissance

The product involved in the incident will dictate the level of protection to be utilised. Considering that the first team to enter the incident site will be a reconnaissance team and will not be utilised to do positive intervention work in the hot zone, it may not be necessary for them to have the highest level of protection at this stage. During the initial recon, the focus should primarily be on respiratory protection and the team should at the very least have adequate protection in this area.

Your standard turn-out gear should be adequate if you are dealing with a flammable, explosive or reactive substance. If it is a toxic material, your level of protection should be a level A gas-tight suit. Fortunately, not many products are flammable and toxic however, when you do get to the incident where you might be dealing with such a substance, you need to be sure you have the correct protection.

Your recon team should primarily be allocated the following tasks:

- Further identification/confirmation of the product involved;
- Risk evaluation; ►

- ▶ Rescue needs determination;
- Product control measures to be implemented and
- Identification of safe zones and evacuation routes.

In order to achieve all of this, the recon team should have the necessary monitoring equipment. This should include pH paper, a four gas detector, photo ionisation device, temperature measuring detector and if radiation risks are anticipated, a radiological meter. By having a good understanding of the purpose of each one of these devices and taking careful note of the environment into which you are moving, you will be able to make an accurate investigation of what products are involved and what level of protection would be required to deal with them.

Entering an area assumed to be flammable, explosive or reactive, you might consider your standard bunker gear to be sufficient. By using the pH paper on any encountered liquids you can ascertain whether it is corrosive. This could badly damage your bunker gear and cause severe injuries. Your recon team should withdraw from that point immediately.

Remember to always have enough chemical tape at hand when using bunker gear for hazmat response. By taping up the space between your gloves and sleeves and also the front of your bunker jacket you are immediately providing extra protection to your teams entering the incident site.

The array of detection equipment carried by the recon team should provide sufficient clues as to the presence of organic vapours, radiation, exothermic reactivity and flammability. Any warnings provided by any of the equipment during the recon phase should signal an immediate withdrawal to a safe zone. If this does not happen, the recon team should take careful note of the readings at each identified point and report them as they go along. Upon returning to the cold zone the recon team should make as detailed report as possible to the incident commander on all their findings including the labelling on any containers, shapes of containers etc.



Consider including a small diameter rope and some patches with a measure of chemical resistance

Whereas in the past, hazmat responders have always responded with a 'worst case scenario' in mind, we know that this is in most services no longer possible. Services today do no longer have the budgets to equip and maintain multiple hazmat units strategically placed in their operational areas. In many cases nowadays, services tend to identify which first due pumpers would most likely respond to hazmat incidents and then equip these units with a limited amount of product control materials and some (usually level B) chemical protection. We do however, have to understand that we need highly trained individuals to man these vehicles and that their input in the recon phase of a hazardous materials incident could mean the difference between a relatively minor incident and a potential disaster.

Finally: your recon team cannot work in isolation. At the very least you need to ensure that before the recon team enters the incident site that you at least have an incident commander and safety officer present and one hose line deployed to act as an emergency decon team and double as a rescue back-up for the recon team. As the incident command system escalates and more units arrive, the required positions must be filled and all sectors, which will include safety, operations, decon, medical, information etc, must be established.

A word on personal protection

As mentioned above, you will only have to deploy full level A protection

in only a small minority of incidents. If the day comes when you have to do so, you must understand that there are no shortcuts.

I have often walked through fire stations housing hazmat units and upon taking a look at the PPE available been interested to note that although the unit has a fair amount of level A suits, there is little other to support this garment, except maybe a hard hat and standard breathing apparatus.

Firstly, when a hazmat technician starts kitting up to enter a scene, he/she will need to have adequate breathing air to support the time spent waiting to enter the hot zone after the suit has been zipped up and sealed off with chemical tape, time spent entering and working in the hot zone and then finally time spent exiting the hot zone and going through the decon procedure. The standard open-circuit, structural breathing apparatus is not going to do it, considering your maximum working time is approximately 20 minutes. For this you need to consider an airline system or longer duration breathing apparatus cylinder. An airline system is restricted by its length; the actual airline could present a snag hazard and you will need to run in excess of six lines to support all your entry teams. It is however, the best source for continuous air throughout the incident. The composite-construction breathing apparatus cylinder will give you a longer working time, but is also limited if your team is compromised through time in any way while in ▶

Hazmat incident command

► the hot zone. The solution: an airline for provision of primary air with a breathing apparatus to be used as a back-up.

There are also many recent innovations, such as the rapid fill devices available from some suppliers that enable the wearer to quickly hook up to an air source and replenish his/her supply. The problem here is that if that supply is at a staging area and you are in the hot zone, you will need to go through a decon procedure first before being able to access the source.

In many parts of South Africa temperatures could go up to the mid-to-high thirties (and even higher) on a summers day. Wearing a gas-tight level A suit in this temperature will rapidly fatigue the wearer and cause him/her to possibly lose consciousness. Various types of cooling vests consisting of ice packs fitted into an undergarment are available. These will provide adequate protection although the ice will melt after a while. The time should however, be sufficient for the wearer to achieve his/her objectives.

Talking of hot days. Make sure you have enough cotton under gloves available for wearers to put on under their suit gloves to ensure that their hands are kept dry at all times. The weakest part of the level A suit are

in two places: the seams and the gloves. A durable chemical resistant 'overglove' will be needed to be placed over the suit glove to protect against any mechanical damage.

All of the above makes for a very hot, very stressed fire fighter who should be well trained to work in this environment and become used to seemingly trivial things, such as managing their airline, working with three layers of gloves on their hands etc.

A clever idea would be for suit wearers to stick a few strips of duct tape or chemical tape to their suits somewhere around their sleeves or another place that is easily accessible. Should you have to pick anything up that has been dropped and will pose a problem while you are wearing three gloves, simply pull one of the strips off your suit, stick it to the tool you need to pick up and voila.

My final thought on chemical protection: if an incident requires the use of level A protection, it is important that your rescue team and decon team is also wearing level A protection. You can't have them set up in a safe space adequately distant from the hot zone in turn-out gear only to have people in contaminated suits bring the methyl-ethyl bad stuff to them.

Incident command

As with fire attack the most important initial decision the incident commander will have to make is whether to go defensive or offensive. Deciding to go offensive might be as simple as entering the hot zone and isolating a valve. You must appreciate that this simple task will carry with it a whole range of other skill sets that, if neglected and not executed properly, could lead to serious injury or death. Responders need to correctly don their PPE, manage their air supply while moving through a confined area, perform technical work in a highly restrictive garment and proceed through a multi-stage decontamination system.

When operating in offensive mode, always anticipate that it is a dynamic situation and that things could change very quickly. When dealing with an overturned truck transporting compressed gas, anticipate that damage to the pressurised container could cause a sudden rupture that could subsequently lead to an immediate and rapid release of extremely cold or extremely flammable gas that will harm everything and everyone it touches. The tension that might be created when uprighting a vehicle that has ended up on its side, could cause the necessary distortion of the tank to make it go boom. Similarly, a vehicle transporting flammable liquid ►

Hazardous materials spillages will occur in all sorts of places and in many varied ways





It must be ensured that when a decision is made that an area is out of bounds, measures are put in place to positively ensure that NO ONE enters the area

► needs to have its batteries isolated to ensure that no accidental movement or fire happens during product control work.

I have mentioned scene control earlier, but would just like to add that it must be ensured that when a decision is made that an area is out of bounds, measures are put in place to positively ensure that NO ONE enters the area. This will mean that more must be done than taping the area off with barrier tape. Law enforcement officers might have to be placed in strategic positions to ensure this.

Some simple ideas may be very useful in dealing with minor incidents and this should be explored further (more of this later). In a major incident however, a wide range of equipment and resources might be needed that might not be readily available. The operations section must ensure that all this equipment must be available before commencement of operations and account for the safety of personnel.

Medical sector

Prior to entry into the hot zone all responders must undergo a proper

medical screening. This will be made much easier if staff is on a good health and wellness programme and good records are kept on them throughout their careers.

The medical sector manager must have information relevant to the health hazards of the product involved and the required emergency care. He/she must also be capable of communicating with the chemical manufacturer, local hospital emergency room staff and representatives from the local poison control centre. Some responders may be nervous when dealing with a chemical they are encountering for the first time and must therefore be confident in this person's ability to manage patient care effectively.

The medical officer will also ensure that patients are decontaminated prior to receiving any further medical care and as always must exercise close control over all the medical people assigned to his/her sector and ensure that they don't lose focus and zero in on a single patient. He/she must be organised, disciplined and capable of thoroughly documenting all activities that take place in the medical sector.

Public information

I remember an incident on the East Rand in the late nineties when a private waste management company (who shall remain nameless) decided to move a truckload of 210 litre drums containing all sorts of highly toxic chemical waste early one morning before rush hour. It all proceeded according to plan until their luck ran out and 12 drums ended up in various states of disrepair all over the N12 freeway. The fire department hazmat response was quick and efficient, but unfortunately the rush hour had already started and upon arrival a large number of cars had already gone through the scene. The incident was quickly reported to the media and very soon and it wasn't long before emergency services were confronted with questions from the public regarding chemical exposure and possible health effects.

A combined information service was subsequently set up between both the fire service involved and the waste company, which provided information and advice to the public and managed to control and dispel many of the rumours that were beginning to circulate at the time. ►



► The critical lesson here was that the people providing the information were able to establish confidence within the public due to their knowledge of the risk and experience in dealing with the incident. When dealing with a highly technical incident, it is important to realise that this cannot always be accomplished by the department's public information officer, since he/she may not be familiar with how to describe a chemical's health effects in a manner that does not create unnecessary panic. The person who responds to the public concerns question needs to have the facts and the ability to communicate in an informed and compassionate manner.

Product control: tips and tricks

Hazardous materials spillages will occur in all sorts of places and in

many varied ways. Most of the time you won't need any space-age equipment to deal with them and if you are part of the first-in engine company, you won't have any space-age equipment. Think about how you would emergency-plug a fuel leak on an external fuel tank while touring Africa in your 4x4. That should get you on the road to thinking about this problem.

It would be good to carry a few golf tees on you for plugging that small leak or pipe that can't be crimped. You should also consider including a small diameter rope and some patches with a measure of chemical resistance. Leaks in piping often occur at pipe junctions, bends, and other locations where conventional pipe sleeves will not work. A patch can be applied over the leak and the

small-diameter rope lashed over the patch to stop the leak. Remember, you only need to stop the leak temporarily. After this it becomes the hazmat team with its entire custom made leak sealing kits or the private hazmat contractor's problem.

A visit to your local hardware mart or plumbers supply shop will provide you with a myriad of ideas for low cost, but effective materials that can be used to plug leaks in many different positions.

Another control technique that should be considered is that of auto-refrigeration, which can be used specifically to deal with a small liquid petroleum gas leak. By covering the leak with a length of mutton cloth and applying water to the affected area. As the pressure around the hole lowers so does the temperature. The lowering of the temperature will freeze the mutton cloth and thereby temporarily stop the leak.

The level of training of the responders will cause a problem to many services who have a limited training budget and do not have many people trained to 'hazmat technician' level on their staff establishment. There are many examples of responders only trained up to 'operations' level getting involved in technician level activities and injuring themselves. This level of training is non-negotiable and must be a high priority with all fire services who respond to hazardous materials incidents. A programme of ensuring that sufficient technicians are available on shift daily and a medium to long term capacity building programme should be in place at these services.

Finally

The old adage 'knowledge is power' is nowhere in emergency response more true than at a hazardous materials incident. A strong command with access to all the information relevant to the product involved and its hazards is the key to a successful response. Emergency services must ensure that their most vital asset, their staff, are adequately trained and protected to work safely and come home healthy.

And most important, don't send an operations guy to do a technicians job. ▲

Can public fire safety education reduce deaths and injuries?

By Rodney Eksteen, Assistant Director: Fire Brigade Services, Disaster Management and Fire Brigade Services, Western Cape Government



A general awareness of fire should be instilled in the people of a community, adults and children alike

The fire problem

The complexity of fire prevention and control has increased dramatically with the construction of larger, more closely spaced structures and an ever-increasing population, which, even today, does not understand the constant danger fire presents to them.

According to the Integrated Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Injury and Violence in South Africa, March 2012, Pretoria, South Africa has one of the highest levels of death and disability from injury in the world. The burn mortality rate of 8,5 per 100 000 is greater than the world average of 5 per 100 000 and the African region of 6 per 100 000. Billions of Rands are consumed every year due to fire and many lives are taken.

One needn't look very far to find a sensational story of the death and destruction caused by fire. One recent tragedy that comes to mind, broadcasted extensively by the media, was the New Year's Day fire in the sprawling township of Khayelitsha in Cape Town. However, each one of us knows of many more incidents that have occurred unnoticed by the media.

One look at all the commonly listed causes of fire and burns indicates that human carelessness is, indeed to

blame. Examine all fire and injury causes and you will find a wrong human behaviour of some sort, either accidental or intentional, behind most incidents.

Reduction of fire deaths in the United States

The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control in the United States published a significant report in 1973 called America Burning. In this report it is mentioned, "Among the many measures that can be taken to reduce fire losses, perhaps none is more important than educating people about fire. The population must be aware of the magnitude of fire's toll and its threat to them personally. They must know how to minimise the risk of fire in their daily surroundings. They must know how to cope with fire, quickly and effectively, once it has started. Public education about fire has been cited by many commission witnesses and others as the single activity with the greatest potential for reducing losses."

In the preface of the Public Fire Education manual it clearly states, "The fire service must share the greater part of the responsibility for the public attitude toward the fire problem. If we are to reduce the incidence and severity of fire, it must be achieved by methods other than the conventional attack by fire suppression forces." ►



Skilled public fire safety education includes knowing how to listen and talk

► Before the early 1970s approximately 12 000 people were being killed annually in residential fires throughout the United States. By 1972, the Federal Government, under the direction of President Richard Nixon, had studied America's fire problem and produced a landmark report entitled *America burning*. The report called for an integrated approach to fire prevention using a combination of preventive interventions.

It took until the mid-1980s for residential fire deaths to fall to an annual occurrence of between 4 000 and 6 000. Over the next twenty years, this rate would drop even further. According to the US Fire Administration (USFA), 3 320 civilians lost their lives as a result of fire in 2008. This is a momentous achievement, considering that the population of the United States mid 2008 was 305 million (PRB datasheet 2008).

Fighting fire with education

One of the most dangerous fire hazards in the country is the attitude that 'It won't happen to me'. We know, however, that it can and does happen at the rate of thousands yearly. Because this attitude does prevail, one of the primary responsibilities of a fire department is to acquaint the public with the fire problem and then to educate them on how to avoid and survive the tragedies of fire.

A general awareness of fire should be instilled in the people of a community, adults and children alike. By teaching children the skills of fire prevention and survival, adults of the future will be safer. Children will also very likely take home fire safety skills and education, and perhaps influence parental behaviour to some extent. Training teachers in fire safety is aimed at having maximum impact for minimal cost by reaching many children. Therefore the fire department has a responsibility to teach people fire

prevention and survival skills, which can save their lives. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled during one week, which is designated as 'Fire Prevention Week'. It must be an all year-round, day-to-day effort.

Fire fighters must have an awareness of the overall fire problem as well as all the prevention and survival measures that can be taken, so that they can pass it on to the public. Each department must learn everything possible to help the public in their designated communities and teach them so that they know how to protect themselves. It is far better to meet a smiling and excited child in a fire safety education classroom than to meet a burned and dying child on the fire ground. The practice of knowing how to prevent something from happening and then waiting for things to go wrong and then respond to sort out the mess, can be considered as criminal or negligent at the very least.

Having said this, many fire departments make significant contributions to public education, through inspections and cooperation with the community and schools. The very fact that these efforts come from the fire department heightens public awareness on fire safety. What is still needed is a well-coordinated, structured educationally-based approach, so that weak efforts can be replaced by efforts of proven effectiveness.

Often a fire department has the opportunity to have children come into the station for tours. Many times the only thing that is accomplished with this opportunity is an explanation of the vehicles in terms that are unfamiliar to the children. Showing a fire engine is an important part of an overall fire safety programme, however, it cannot take the place of proper fire safety education. Often fire fighters on light duty are assigned to conduct these tours and visit schools, before happily returning to their 'real' ►

► jobs. Specific training and education is not readily available to the fire fighters responsible for these tours or school visits and much of the information delivered to the public is based on their operational training and experiences.

Today's fire fighter must become a communicator of facts relating to the causes, hazards and survival of fire. Skilled public fire safety education includes knowing how to listen and talk; how to see that the message is being received and transmitted. Skilled techniques are as important as the message itself. Just as the fire fighter is trained in the nuts and bolts aspects of their profession, we also need to be trained in effective public fire safety education. Deciding carefully what to teach and how to teach it successfully to the public takes training, research and continuous evaluation. Such training should be at the core of any fire department's fire safety education commitment.

The fire and life safety educators programme

Fire and life safety educator training is designed to impart the skills and knowledge necessary to design, develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive public safety education programmes intended to eliminate or mitigate situations that endanger lives, health, property or the environment.

NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualification, requires new fire fighters to have the skills to deliver a public education presentation from a prepared lesson plan. NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officers, specifies the requirement of the ability to deliver presentations and also to develop a department public education programme. The most recent performance, training and evaluation requirements for fire and life safety educators is included in the 2010 edition of the NFPA 1035 standard for professional qualifications for fire and life safety educator.

These skills can be included in job descriptions and specified as a prerequisite for promotion. Every emergency service provider is a public educator at some level and can benefit from public education training.

The primary target of this programme are those who practice and provide public fire safety education, including permanent and volunteer emergency service personnel and others from outside the service. The purpose of this programme is to educate the educator to be able to apply his or her knowledge and skills to many different areas all under the 'umbrella' of community risk reduction (CRR).

Community risk reduction is a growing profession, both inside and outside the fire department. Some practitioners are uniformed fire fighters, disaster management officers and others are civilians that have identified the need. Still others work for non-government organisations, health departments and so on. The fire and life safety educators programme will most certainly contribute to the fire department's war against fire and significantly aid in the saving of lives.

Conclusion

There needs to be more emphasis on the prevention of fire and its destructive consequences. Fire departments, many of which confine their roles to putting out fires



By teaching children the skills of fire prevention and survival, adults of the future will be safer.

and rescuing its victims, need to expand more effort to educate children and adults on fire safety. Many fires caused by faulty equipment rather, than carelessness, could be prevented if people were trained to spot the faults before it's too late. Many injuries and deaths could be prevented if people knew how to react to a fire, whatever its cause.

Finally, It must be realised that not everyone will respond to or even be reached by public fire safety education, but I firmly believe that if conducted effectively, it can contribute significantly to the reduction of the fire losses in South Africa as well as benefit the fire service positively at a local as well as national level.▲

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037 FR Vol 1 No 9

Volunteer EMS nearing two decades of service



The Hout Bay VEMS ambulance provides support to Metro EMS in Cape Town

Founded in 1994 by a small group of Hout Bay residents that identified a need for an emergency medical service (EMS), Hout Bay Volunteer Emergency Medical Service (HBVEMS) in Cape Town, South Africa, is the only EMS dedicated to serving the Cape Town suburb of Hout Bay, says Hout Bay VEMS volunteer paramedic, Matthew Rosenberg.

The geographical location of Hout Bay, situated in a valley surrounded by mountains with only three access roads and about five kilometres from other suburbs, results in delayed response from EMS resources in the event of any emergency in the valley.

"It was with this in mind that HBVEMS was started, as a way of serving the local community quickly and efficiently, to act as a resource for the Department of Health's Metro EMS," explains Rosenberg.

He adds, "The large underprivileged populations of Hangberg and Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay require numerous call outs from the Metro EMS and the constant trips into the valley, particularly on weekends, placed a strain on the resources of the Government service."

Hout Bay VEMS responds to any medical emergency as dispatched by Metro EMS. "Our volunteers regularly respond to heart attacks, chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and asthma, as well as AIDS and HIV related problems, assaults and car crashes," reports Rosenberg.

Volunteering

All the medical personnel working at the EMS organisation are volunteers, who make themselves available to work at least one shift every three weeks, explains Rosenberg.

He says that the service runs up to four shifts every weekend. "On these shifts the three crew members are on standby with the ambulance for eight-to-twelve hours per shift. A number of members who live in Hout Bay may assist at other calls during the week."

Each shift is run by two or three volunteers with a minimum basic life support (BLS) or intermediate life support (ILS), with back provided by advanced life support (ALS) volunteer members at Hout Bay VEMS and Metro EMS or private services.

The four shifts run each weekend by Hout Bay VEMS are the Friday night, day time and night shifts on Saturday and the day time on Sunday.

All the volunteers at Hout Bay VEMS are either studying or have day jobs during the week. At present, Hout Bay VEMS has around 30 active volunteers, the majority of whom



Hout Bay VEMS on standby at the Cape Argus in March 2013



The new Philips MRx donated to HBVEMS by Rotary International

► are medical crew who run shifts on the ambulance.

Rosenberg says that a number of members provide support with the maintenance of the base and equipment and the organisational management and administration duties are performed by the volunteers. He mentions that Hout Bay VEMS has an executive committee consisting of seven members who perform functions, such as public relations, equipment officer and training operations, which is done with the assistance of other members.

"The entire service is run by volunteers with no paid staff," says Rosenberg.

The organisation works closely with Metro EMS for the medical requirements of the region. National emergency medical care network, ER24 and other emergency services provide additional support where necessary.

Area of coverage

HBVEMS covers the entire Hout Bay community, including Llandudno, for any and all calls. If there is a priority call outside of Hout Bay and no vehicle available, the HBVEMS ambulance is dispatched to provide assistance. "In these instances the crews often assist at calls all over the southern suburbs in Cape Town, from Claremont to Lavender Hill to Muizenberg and Kommetjie," says Rosenberg.

All the volunteers within the organisation have a basic ambulance assistant (BAA) qualification as a minimum requirement and are registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. "We create awareness of the service through online media and have a good working relationship with the other emergency services in Cape Town. Volunteers approach us wanting to offer their time and gain experience," says Rosenberg.

Rosenberg says that Hout Bay VEMS aims to provide the highest quality medical service to the community it serves, irrespective of race, culture, background or financial status. "Within the greater context, the service aims to assist Metro EMS in achieving its targets of providing medical assistance as fast as possible. We work closely with them and the other services in Cape Town to help as many patients as possible," he says.

Growth

In the past year the service has welcomed a number of new members and these include newly trained medical volunteers as well as experienced personnel.

"It's great to have new members to train and grow the organisation. We are privileged to have the support of a number of brand new sponsors, without which

the service could not function," states Rosenberg.

The organisation received its largest donation in many years from Rotary Hout Bay and Rotary International. Rosenberg says, "They very generously donated a brand new Philips MRx monitor with three-lead electrocardiography (ECG), blood pressure and oxygen saturation monitoring and automated external defibrillator (AED) function. It is extensively used by our members on each shift and plays a big part in saving lives."

The other significant donation was from financial development services company, Nucleus, who donated the ambulance the volunteer EMS uses. The ambulance is the primary vehicle used by Hout Bay VEMS, which is a converted Toyota Quantum that has been in operations for seven years and will need further sponsorship to replace, states Rosenberg. He says that one of the members of the volunteer EMS also runs his own response vehicle in support of the service. This is a converted Audi Q5 vehicle.

"It is very important to understand the large role the community plays in supporting the service. It is only through the support and donations from individual members of the public and businesses that the service is able to run," concludes Rosenberg. ▲



Hose reel-run challenge

Toughest Fire Fighter Alive hosted in Cape Town

The City of Cape Town hosted its third annual Toughest Fire Fighter Alive (TFA) challenge at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town over two days from 30 to 31 August this year. Fire and Rescue International attended this arduous contest and congratulate the participants on their excellent performance.

Various fire fighter teams representing municipalities from across the country showcased their prowess over the very challenging four-stage obstacle course. The City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service had various teams made up of fire fighters from its 30 stations within the City's jurisdiction. They competed against various fire fighter teams from Gauteng, Bloemfontein, Free State and Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Many were tested to the peak of the abilities on the gruelling four-stage course. Some were unable to complete all aspects of the challenge.

Also competing in the event and expanding on previous years' attendance were fire fighters from the armed forces, ports authority and the aviation industry also took part in the challenge. City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue

Service media spokesperson, Theo Layne, says that the annual challenge aims to solidify relationships between the various organisations. He says that the strenuous course is based on international standards.

City of Cape Town Safety and Security executive director, Richard Bosman, presented the welcome to all the different fire fighter teams to the TFA event on behalf of the City of Cape Town. "Thank you to Chief Ian Schnetler for hosting this event. Without him the competition would not be possible," stated Bosman. "Compete in the best spirit you can", he added.

Speaking at the opening of the fire fighter challenge at the Good Hope Centre, the City of Cape Town's Mayoral Committee Member for Safety and Security, Alderman JP Alderman, said that it was 'encouraging to see the event grow since last year's event'.

Alderman Smith says that events like this are 'incredibly valuable', because they not only ensure the 'fitness of our fire fighters', but also serve to boost their morale. Alderman Smith mentioned that the

TFA competition started in the US and the City of Cape Town plans to host the event 'year-after-year'. "It is truly an exciting event," he said. "Last year, the event was very gruelling on all four stages of the fire fighter challenge. This means you have to push on when you're absolutely bone tired."

TFA four-stage course:

- Hose run - competitors carry a breathing apparatus set, while being tested in hose-running
- Obstacle course - competitors negotiate tunnels and walls, while carrying various pieces of equipment
- Tower - competitors handle and pitch ladders and carry fire fighting equipment with ropes
- Stair climb - competitors run up the 23-floor fire escape at the Cape Town Civic Centre with full fire fighting gear, including a breathing apparatus set

"We hope the event will grow in popularity over time, but the most important aspect of the challenge is to build camaraderie," stated Alderman Smith.

City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue chief fire officer Ian Schnetler addressed the fire fighters competing ▶



Chief Ian Schnetler and Alderman J P Smith having a go on the tower



Toughest fire fighter challenge opening ceremony



COCT Fire and Rescue Service CFO, Ian Schnetler



Steers marketing executive, Lou Boxell-Davies



Media spokesperson, Theo Layne



Reverend Linda Idas



Event announcer, Toivo Ngqwebo



COCT safety and security executive director, Richard Bosman



Alderman JP Smith

► in the TFA challenge at the Good Hope Centre, saying that it is good to see that the fire and rescue industry in the country is healthy.

He said to all fire fighters' competing in the event that it is about saving lives. "This is our calling", stated Schnetler. He commended the female fire fighting contingent competing against one another in the gruelling challenge.

The City of Cape Town's fire service 'would like to have this be an international competition', after having hosted the TFA challenge for two years prior, stated Schnetler. Event organiser and station

commander at Milnerton Fire Station for the City of Cape Town, Mark Smith, corroborated this saying that the City planned to invite fire fighters from other countries and he says that this will be a feature in the future staging of the TFA challenge in Cape Town. "This will be done so that these fire fighters can compete against the best internationally. That is what it is about," says Smith.

The male and female fire fighters competed for the honour of being the TFA champion for 2013 and for a cash prize of R5 000, sponsored by popular food franchise, Steers. "This event is a preferred synergy

for our brand, since Steers flame grills its burgers, making us different from any other burger," quipped Steers marketing executive, Lou Boxell-Davies.

Media spokesperson Layne thanked the sponsors of the event who provided fire fighting equipment, props, scaffolding and the various prizes and medals for the Toughest Fire Fighter Alive competition.

The event also featured various exhibitors and was attended by the fire fighters' family members and the general public on a very wet and chilly weekend in August. ►

Toughest Fire Fighter Alive 2013



All competitors in the TFA challenge in Cape Town



Overall male winner – Emile Conraad (City of Cape Town)



TFA 2013 female competitors



Overall female winner – SC Mbanjwa (eThekwin)



Jean-Pierre Raath and Emile Conraad



SN Mjana, Ryan Abrahams and Deon Stoffels



Rudi van der Berg, Hermanus Gouws, and C Bishop



Kenny Alberts and M Molero



Russel van Deventer, Saleem Julius and Shane Woolstencroft



Skonyane Radebe and A Thabede



DR Nkabinde



N Nqoro and SC Mbanjwa



Women individual senior (30-34) X Abdool



Male relay team winners - City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service



Female relay team winners - eThekwin Fire Service



Leandra Booysen and GT Masango

► Overall winner male category

1	Eden Municipality	Eden Fire Station	Emile Conraad	18-29	0:08:27:43 sec
2	West Rand District Municipality	Gauteng	Hermanus Gouws	35-39	0:09:55:65 sec
3	City of Cape Town	Lakeside Fire Station	Rudi van der Berg	35-39	0:10:07:05 sec

Overall winner female category

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	SC Mbanjwa	18-29	0:24:46.55 sec
2	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	N Nqoro	18-29	0:28:10:78 sec
3	City of Cape Town	Milnerton	Tracey Whittaker	35-39	0:28:23:63 sec

Men's individual open (18-29)

1	Eden Municipality	Eden Fire Station	Emile Conraad	18-29	0:08:27.43 sec
2	City of Cape Town	Ottery Fire Station	Jean-Pierre Raath	18-29	0:10:28.05 sec
3	City of Cape Town	Seasonal fire fighter	Cheron Hendricks	18-29	0:10:53.18 sec

Mens individual senior (A 30-34)

1	Ethekwini Municipality	Durban Central	SN Mjana	30-34	0:10:30.08 sec
2	City of Cape Town	Hout Bay Fire Station	Ryan Abrahams	30-34	0:11:08.18 sec
3	Eden Municipality	Eden Fire Station	Deon Stoffels	30-34	0:11:11:32 sec

Mens individual senior (B 35-39)

1	West Rand District Municipality	Gauteng	Hermanus Gouws	35-39	0:09:55.65 sec
2	City of Cape Town	Lakeside Fire Station	Rudi van der Berg	35-39	0:10:07.05 sec
3	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	C Bishop	35-39	0:10:50.12 sec

Mens Individual Master (A 40-44)

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	M Moloro	40-44	0:19:12.53 sec
2	City of Cape Town	Hout Bay Fire Station	Stanford Malloy	40-44	0:19:23.56 sec
3	Stellenbosch Municipality	Stellenbosch Fire Department	Kenny Alberts	40-44	0:22:23.22 sec

Mens individual master (B 45-49)

1	Mangaung Municipality	Bloemfontein Central	Russel van Deventer	45-49	0:13:21:45 sec
2	Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality	Port Elizabeth	Saleem Julius	45-49	0:16:12.26 sec
3	City of Cape Town	Roeland Fire Station	Shane Woolstencroft	45-49	0:14:44.50 sec

Mens individual master (A 50-54)

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	A Thabede	50-54	0:17:06.82 sec
2	City of Cape Town	Milnerton Fire Station	Deon van Vuuren	50-54	0:25:21.76 sec
3	Mangaung Municipality	Bloemfontein Central	Skonyane Radebe	50-54	0:28:45.97 sec

Mens individual grand master (C 55 and over)

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban Central	DR Nkabinde	55-59	0:28:06.72 sec
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Females individual open (18-29)

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban	SC Mbanjwa	18-29	0:24:26.55 sec
2	eThekwini Municipality	Durban	N Nqoro	18-29	0:28:10.78 sec

Women individual senior (30-34)

1	eThekwini Municipality	Durban	X Abdool	30-34	0:29:47.48 sec
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Women individual senior (B 35-39)

1	City of Cape Town	Milnerton Fire Station	Tracey Whittaker	35-39	0:28:23:63 sec
2	eThekwini Municipality	Durban	GT Masango	35-39	0:32:50.78 sec
3	City of Cape Town	Durbanville	Leandra Booyesen	35-39	0:34:06.07 sec

Relay team: Male

1	Team 11	City of Cape Town 5	Relay	0:09:23.08 sec
2	Team 8	Midvaal Municipality	Relay	0:09:59.53 sec
3	Team 5	Eden Municipality 2	Relay	0:10:26.03 sec

Relay team: Female

1	152 Ladies 1	eThekwini Municipality	Relay	0:18:46.49 sec
2	151 Ladies 2	City of Cape Town 1	Relay	0:20:28.74 sec

Stage winners

City of Cape town	Hout Bay	Ryan Abrahams	Stage 1
Eden Municipality	Eden Fire Station	Emile Conraad	Stage 2
Eden Municipality	Eden Fire Station	Emile Conraad	Stage 3
West Rand District Municipality	Gauteng	Hermanus Gouws	Stage 4

Toughest Fire Fighter Alive 2013



Getting in the zone for hose reel-run



Fire fighters pull hose reel for about 25 metres



80kg fire fighter dummy drag challenge



Hose reel roll up challenge



At the end of the line, hose challenge



Obstacle course weight-pull



The Keiser Force machine sponsored by FES Manufacturing



Fire fighter clearing the obstacle wall



Cape Town and Mangaung go head-to-head



Climbing tower with a 20kg weight



Intense tower-challenge ahead



Tower weight pull



Grueling tower weight challenge



Final hurdle in tower challenge



Fire fighters take on stair-climb



Alderman JP Smith visiting the Cape Town Metro Police stand



City of Cape Town Traffic Services stand



Ian Schnetler and Richard Bosman



Timeless Technologies' Deon Schoeman



Fremtac's, Jimmy Croucamp and Fire Raiders', Johan Miller



Dirk Putter and Mike Feldon at the DoseTech exhibition stand



Members of Cape Town's fire service personnel



Marce' fire fighting technology stand representatives



Hose manufacturers financial director, Jon Barnard



Cutters' sales representative Daniel LeClos



Working on Fire team at the TFA exhibition stand



Task Force Tips distributor, Angus Steven

Knots in the fire service

By Lenny Naidoo

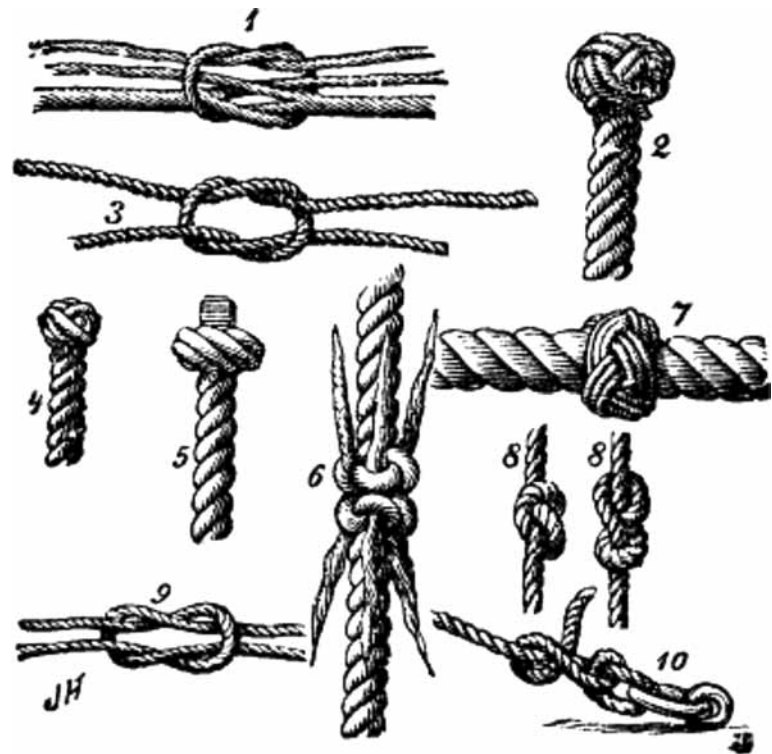
The ability to tie a knot in the fire service could make the difference between life and death. Using the correct knot could be the difference of a quick operation being completed or one that is delayed because an improper knot was used.

Knots are used for life safety or hauling/securing purposes. This article focuses on knots used for hauling and securing purposes.

Many of the fire service traditions originated from the Navy and knots used in the fire service have a close association with the Maritime Services. South African fire services has a somewhat unique background when one considers we grew up following the British (Home Office) standards and then in 1996 changed to the American (IFSAC) system. We thus have the best of both worlds and I personally believe that we should use both methodologies.

The common fallacy about knots is that once certification is done, then one is competent and can effectively function at the fire ground. The question must be asked under what conditions certification took place. There is a huge difference between passing an assessment under 'controlled conditions' at the fire training college and real life operations.

Food for thought would be to take the fire fighter that has satisfied the criteria to pass knot tying and throw him or her into the deep end. An example would be to monitor knot tying when it is 2h00 am in total darkness and freezing cold or in a confined space using full protective clothing including a breathing apparatus set and the ambient temperature is 50 degrees centigrade. Assessments have to be done under realistic conditions. Then, consider the fact that we may go for weeks even months before knot tying skills are to be used. These factors could have a detrimental effect on the ability to tie a knot speedily and safely. Regular drills are mandatory to keep skills sharp. I always use the



example of doing up your boot laces. Every person that wears boots can quickly tie up their boot laces whilst talking or even watching television, simply because it is done everyday. Practice makes perfect is such a valid saying for fire fighter skills. All fire fighters should carry a piece of rope that can be used for knot practice whenever there is spare time available.

The British system back in the day hinged on 11 basic knots for the fire service and it is debatable on how many knots are essential. It can become daunting when you are taught too many knots and then become uncertain which knot to use.

The eleven knots back then were:

- Clove hitch to temporarily secure end of a line around a fixed object
- Clove hitch on the bight temporarily secure end of a line
- Bowline to form a an eye at the end of the line
- Rolling hitch for wet and slippery surfaces eg suction hose
- Chair knot for rescue purposes
- Sheet bend to join two lines of unequal thickness
- Running bowline for lassoing purposes

- Timber hitch to haul timber aloft
- Reef knot to join two lines of equal thickness
- Round turn and two half hitches to permanently secure the end of a line
- Scott knot to haul hose aloft

The American system uses the sheet bend, reef, clove hitch and bowline from above and very popular is the family of eights.

The 'Pareto principle' states that 20% of activities is done 80% of the time and if one uses this principle with reference to knots then the 20% of knots that you will be required to use 80% of the time would be the clove hitch, bowline and figure of eight. It is therefore imperative that these knots be continually mastered to achieve a state whereby the knots can be tied whilst blindfolded and satisfying time, safety and other prescribed conditions.

I have found the clove hitch with a safety knot is the most common and practicable knot to be used at the fire ground.

Remember, always check your knots and use a back up safety knot so that your knot does not become undone.▲



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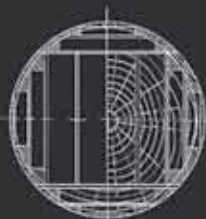
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High fuel loads has resulted in large fires in the Eastern Cape in 2013

Work cut out for new umbrella FPA for Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape Umbrella Fire Protection Association (UFPA) is only in its second year of operations since it started in 2012, but the Eastern Cape UFPA has been hard at work in its attempt to reduce the damages caused by wildfires in the region.

Fire protection officer (FPO) for the Eastern Cape UFPA, Thinus Botha, says that the South African province has been marked by high fuel loads, resulting in the occurrence of larger fires in 2013.

He says that extreme dry conditions, combined with strong winds have contributed to the greater number of fires that have been prevalent in the region in 2013, when compared to previous years.

"The indication and feeling is that over the last few years we were able

to reduce the number of fires and contain it quicker," says Botha. This resulted in smaller fires that ultimately meant that less area or hectares burnt. However, owing to good summer rainfall over the past two seasons, along with the reduction in burnt area, has resulted in a build-up of biomass, explains Botha.

He says there has not been any reliable statistics garnered by the Eastern Cape UFPA in 2012, but the UFPA is now starting to build up a long term database for the province.

The key areas that the UFPA will focus on in its attempt to reduce the wildfires and the subsequent damage to property, infrastructure and subsistence in the region, is the supply and distribution of quality fire weather forecasts, among other key elements.

These elements include an integrated approach in terms of fire awareness campaigns, building an informative online presence on social media platforms, such as the UFPA's website and its Facebook page, as well as building a quality and detailed mapping system for use by local fire protection associations (FPAs).

"We believe that these practices will bring about a higher level of awareness and assist in an integrated and proactive approach," says Botha.

Role of the UFPA

There are 63 FPAs in the area, covering an area that spans about 91 000 square kilometres in the province. Botha says that the aim of the Eastern Cape UFPA, which covers the entire province, is to act as a management organisation with the aim of assisting local FPAs in performing their fire fighting functions. ►



The UFP management team with the local WoF team based in Stutterheim, Eastern Cape



Administrative assistant, Candice Smith and FPO, Thinus Botha

► The aim of the umbrella FPA is to assist in tackling the 'universal challenges on a higher level', states Botha. "The UFP may or will become involved in a coordinating role like incident command system (ICS), but no physical fire fighting apart from the aviation it managers."

The UFP has, however, acquired a 4x4 vehicle that is used by the manager of the association and is equipped with all the necessary radio equipment. "This enables the UFP to establish an incident command post at any incident in the province and have radio communication with all the relevant role players," states Botha.

Resources

The Eastern Cape UFP holds an office in the town of Stutterheim, situated in the border region of the province. Botha is the full time manager at the UFP base, that also has an administrative assistant and financial officer roles taken up by Candice Smith and Sarita Botha, respectively.

While the UFP only assists local FPAs in their fire fighting efforts, Botha mentions that the UFP has one Working on Fire (WoF) team that is based in Stutterheim. He says that the WoF team is available to be utilised as a support team for existing fire fighting operations across the province.

Aviation resources in the province are managed by Eastern Cape UFP, which currently has two helicopters and one spotter plane, which count

among national resources and a further three Huey helicopters and one spotter that is owned by forestry companies. "These aircraft are based in the North-East Cape region in Ugie and Langeni, while those in the Amathole region are based in Stutterheim," he says.

The balance of fire fighting capacity in the province is based with the individual fire brigades. In addition, there are 26 WoF teams based with FPA's, municipalities, forest companies and conservation companies.

Botha says that the forestry industry is well equipped and has its own fire fighting resource. He mentions that the Eastern Cape UFP also works closely with the National Veld and Forest Protection Advisory Forum (NVFPAF) for fire prevention activities in the province.

Biome

The Eastern Cape can be roughly divided into a summer rainfall region in the north and a winter to all year rainfall in the south. Botha says that the northern part is mostly covered by sour grassland with an extreme high fire danger during the winter months. "The southern region has mainly a fynbos biome with an all year fire season peaking during the summer months," he explains.

The northern or grassveld area has a higher fire frequency compared to the fynbos region, owing to the different ecosystems, states Botha. "Traditionally more fires occur

around rural communities, due the custom of burning for grazing. Unfortunately, some of these fires cause extensive damage due to the uncontrolled nature."

Challenges

There are very few FPAs that have been established in the former homeland areas that make up an area spanning 50 000 square kilometres. This presents many difficulties in managing the fire risks and fire incidences in the region. "Major fires often occur in this densely populated deep rural area with very few firebreaks. The protection of these rural communities should be high on the priority list of Government structures as these communities stand to lose an entire livelihood in the event of a disastrous fire," states Botha.

"The high fire danger periods are normally during the Northerly winds and can spread fast over vast areas," reports Botha. "Most of the strategic firebreaks are created in an East-West direction in an attempt to stop these disastrous fires."

One of the major challenges of the UFP, as with most other FPAs, is financing, highlights Botha.

Additional funding is a requisite for FPAs to establish an effective management structure for their respective jurisdictions. To this end, the importance of getting all role players in particular the governmental departments and parastate's on board can't be stressed enough, states Botha. ▲

Fire fighters show their mettle in SAEC challenge



Ofentse Sam Masibi



A 9/11 commemoration ceremony held by the SAEC



Teams dig deep to complete the challenging obstacle course

South African Emergency Care (SAEC) hosted an array of fire fighter teams at its Modderfontein, South Africa training facility for the annual SAEC fire fighter challenge.

Along with the teams of professional fire fighters, SAEC hosted various corporate fire fighter teams, who took part in the exhaustive and challenging course that test the mettle of all the competitors.

As in previous years, the event was held from 11 to 13 September and scheduled to coincide with the 9/11 memorial events that take place in the US on 11 September each year.

A moment of silence was held by the SAEC to commemorate the fire fighters who lost their lives in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York.

Fire fighters stood in full uniform in the scorching heat as SAEC founder, Jan Liebenberg, convened the memorial event and the opening of the fire fighter challenge, which was attended by chaplain, Joe Adlem and South African Emergency Services Institute president, Ofentse Sam Masibi.

Chaplain Adlem observed the SAEC's 9/11 memorial and addressed the fire fighters at the event, saying, "Ten years ago 9/11 people were going about their business at the World Trade Centre in New York." He added, "If they knew what was going to happen many more fire fighters might have died, or responded to the incident, because that is in our blood."

Chaplain Adlem proceeded to encourage the fire fighters in a message titled 'What is our legacy', quoting a passage of Biblical scripture that read; 'Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing'. Chaplain Adlem proceeded to challenge the fire fighters to not only perform their duty fighting fires, but also to 'use your tongue to help people', since they typically come into contact with people who are in distress. In conclusion he posed the rhetoric, 'When you die today, what is your legacy?'

SAESI president, Masibi, had a blithe message for the fire fighters who were set to compete for top honours in this year's challenge, saying, "Success here is measured by participation, fun and enjoyment of this event. Take time to celebrate your skills, absorb and enhance your skills and knowledge." Masibi said that being a fire fighter is being part of a family. "When you join emergency services you join a family. You join up for a life experience."

The fire fighter challenge was a hive of activity as an array of special events and attractions was held by SAEC. This included a parade by the Kempton Park Pipe Band, who played a medley of songs on the opening day of the challenge. The public was invited to don the fire fighter supplied by Scott Safety for the event and test their grit on the course and Fire and Rescue International's (FRIs) own, Mark Raath, did us proud. He completed the very strenuous course and earned the respect of professional fire fighters, who themselves were tested to their limits on the very same obstacle course. Also part of the action, were the two search and rescue dogs from Ekurhuleni's emergency services. The dogs were taken through the confined rescue section of the course.▶



Fire fighting challenge obstacle course



Search and rescue dog, Buddy, on obstacle course



Fire fighter grit



Jan Liebenberg



Paul Rotherham, interviewing one of the fire fighter challenge participants



Confined space challenge



The opening ceremony of the SAEC fire fighter challenge



Lanseria Airport Team 1 won the professional fire fighter challenge



The Festive Fire Team were the winners of the corporate fire fighter challenge



The Kempton Park Pipe Band



SAEC held a burnout on the final day of the fire fighter challenge

► On the final day of the fire fighter challenge a spectacular burnout and foam party was held at the Modderfontein facility to the glee of the spectators and visiting public.

Victors and runners-up

The winning team in SAEC fire fighter challenge for 2013 for corporate teams was a fire fighter quartet from Lanseria Airport, which had two teams participating in the challenge. The Lanseria Airport 1 team retained the winning trophy, which they also won 2012.

Lanseria Airport 1 is made up of a team of four fighters from the based at the privately owned international airport, situated northwest of Johannesburg. Lanseria Airport 2 were placed fifth in the challenge, which featured eight different professional fire fighting teams competing for the winning trophy.

The runners-up in the professional fire fighter challenge were two fire fighter teams from Midvaal Fire and Rescue, namely Midvaal 1 and Midvaal 2, who took the first and second runner-up spots, respectively.

An individual fire fighter challenge was hosted as well and this solo contest was won by a fire fighter from the West Rand District Municipality, Mannie Gouws, who came out trumps against professional fire fighters from Lanseria, Ekurhuleni and Airports Company South Africa.

The fire fighter challenge included a corporate fire fighter element, many of whom received fire training at SAEC's Modderfontein facility, which also provides fire fighter training for fire marshals and professional fire fighters.

Festive Fire Team, from Earlybird Farms, were the winners of the corporate fire fighter challenge for 2013. Following hot on their heels in the challenge were the fire teams of pie company, Pieman's and bread producer, Albany Pretoria, who were the first and second runner-up's, respectively.

Showcasing skillsets

Speaking to FRI, SAEC founder Liebenberg, says that one of the goals of hosting the fire fighter challenge is to have people 'understand what fire fighting is all about'. He says that the skills displayed by all the fire fighters in the fire fighter challenge are the skills they are required to possess in real life emergency scenarios.

The fire fighter obstacle course was enhanced this year, owing to the SAEC's partnership with fire fighting equipment supplier, Scott Safety.

Scott Safety Africa regional manager, Mike Alho, says that the company joined forces with SAEC in order to create an event that matches up to the fire fighter challenge event in the US, which inspired SAEC's event and which was coincidentally created by Scott Safety USA.

"We came together at SAESI 2013 to put on an event equal to the overseas standards," stated Alho. He says that Scott Safety South Africa provided a range of fire fighting equipment and other products that added to the visual appeal and integrity of the challenge. "We ►



Event MC, radio personality,
Paul Rotherham



Tower challenge



Corporate fire team challenge



Paul Rotherham taking on
tower challenge



Hose reel challenge



FRI's Marc Raath gearing up

► provided course layout equipment and various other times on course, such as paraphernalia, visual stop watch and electronic time boards. We also supplied all the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)," says Alho.

Liebenberg says that this year's event had a strong emphasis on the use of fire equipment. "We added hose reels and fire fighter extinguishers, which is what they will encounter in real life scenarios."

In a newly inspired development, Scott Safety South Africa will in the future sponsor a local fire fighter team and ideally a future winner of the SAEC fire fighter challenge, to appear in the US version of the contest, reports Liebenberg. He says that finalists will compete at the 2015 SAESI conference and exhibition, where one winner will be chosen to South Africa in the US version of the event, the Scott fire fighter combat challenge.►



The confined space course proved a mighty challenge for the professional fire fighters



Focus wins the battle of the traits at Centrum Guardian

Winners of the Centrum Guardian Project 2013 at an awards ceremony at Emperor's Palace, Gauteng

The winner of the Centrum Guardian project 2013 was announced in September at a lavish awards ceremony at Emperor's Palace in Johannesburg, South Africa, after more than two months of voting by both the public and an independent voting panel.

Team Focus, made up of various emergency rescue personnel, was announced as the winners of the

annual project for their collaborative rescue efforts in a bus tragedy that took place on the R59 near Vereeniging, Gauteng.

One of eight finalists, Team Focus were ultimately adjudged as the winners of the coveted Centrum Guardian project, receiving a grand prize of R61 009 that will go to respective base stations and emergency teams that made up Team Focus.

The group was made up of fire fighters from Meyerton Fire Station in Vereeniging, Johannesburg, medical personnel from national emergency medical care networks ER24 and Netcare 911, as well as members of Gauteng Emergency Medical Services and Vaal Emergency Ambulance Services.

The Centrum Guardian winners responded to a bus accident at the ▶



Buddy the dog had his moment in the spotlight

▶ National awareness

SAEC seeks to expand the challenge to a national platform. "The objective is to bring the challenge to fire fighters," states Liebenberg. He concedes that it may not be possible to reach all provinces and fire fighters in the country.

However, Liebenberg says that there are plans to have at least five events in different regions of the country in 2014. This will be done in order to get the best fire fighter team from South Africa to take on their counterparts in the US version of the fire fighter challenge event.

Liebenberg says that fire fighter events will be held in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and KwaZulu-Natal in 2014.

SAEC seeks to increase public awareness and showcase the skills and abilities fire fighters possess. "The event will be hosted at shopping centres and other public spaces and in this way the public will know what fire fighting is all about," he concludes. ▲

► Verwoerd off-ramp of the R59 in the early hours of a chilly winter morning in June this year. The passenger bus had crashed over the edge of an embankment with 72 people on board.

In the intense six-hour rescue operation, emergency rescue personnel drew on their training, stamina and rescue equipment on hand to assist in saving the lives of many people as could be saved in the incident. Sadly, 19 people were killed in the accident and a further 53 passengers were injured.

A total of 23 people were trapped by the seats of the bus and needed to be cut loose by using extrication equipment. According to reports, drowning, blunt trauma or suffocation was the main cause of death.

The bus incident involving the respective emergency personnel was reenacted, along with the eight other finalists, in a seven-week documentary series on national television broadcaster SABC 3, showing the instinctive rescue efforts of Team Focus as they saved those who survived the bus crash from amongst those who had already passed.

The physical exhaustion and emotional strain on the crew after an incident of this nature was extraordinary, reports Centrum. A young fire fighter from Meyerton Fire Station, involved in the rescue incident, said that this was the first time he had to deal with this kind of pressure, adding that he has learned the importance of physical fitness and the discipline of listening to and following instructions.

The heroics of Team Focus in this horrific incident made an impression on the judging panel, made up of an independent panel from the media fraternity, which was assembled for the first time this year to contribute to the judging process. Their votes accounted for 50 percent of the finalist voting tally that incorporates a public voting system along with voting by industry professionals. These EMS industry professionals and stakeholders included national emergency care network, ER24; Fire Protection Association of South Africa (FPASA); National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI), Institute of



Team Focus – Centrum Guardian winners

Fire Engineers (IFE); South African Emergency Services institute (SAESI), South African Petrochemical Fire Chiefs Association, South African Red Cross Air Mercy Service (AMS) and South African Private Ambulance and Emergency Service Association (SAPAESA).

Popular television personality and the television presenter of the Centrum Guardian project, Ruda Landman, expressed gratitude towards EMS personnel on behalf of SABC 3 and Centrum, for being willing participants in the project. "We are glad to be associated with a noble industry," said Landman at the awards ceremony at Emperors Palace. "We have come to the end of a roller coaster ride. We have stepped out of our lives to share this experience with EMS, which has been astonishing and humbling."

The total R61 009 cash prize awarded to Team Focus is made up of a R10 000 prize from Centrum that will be divided amongst the individuals of the team, as well as a R35 000 for the team's base stations and R15 000 and R10 000 from media and advertising healthcare organisation, One Lady and a Tribe and gifting, advertising and events management agency, Enkosi Agency, respectively.

Centrum Guardian brand manager, Natasha McDonald, says that Centrum is honoured to be part of the project to honour members of the EMS industry. "Since 2008, Centrum Guardian has grown to a

phenomenal TV project. The whole process started with nominations from industry, which helps us a great deal. A panel of judges revise the nominations and narrow these down to the finalists," she explained at the awards ceremony.

Pharmaceutical company, Pfizer Consumer Healthcare country manager, Paul Longmoor, says that the Centrum Guardian project has been about showcasing the phenomenal work done by emergency management services personnel. Speaking at the 2013 Centrum Guardian awards ceremony, Longmoor, said, "It's been a roller coast ride. This event provides insight into work at EMS personnel do on an unrelenting basis."

Many sponsors pledged to provide training and support of the Centrum Guardian project finalists, offering various career advancement training. These training programmes will include health and safety courses, advanced 4x4 off-road driver and advanced heavy duty vehicle training courses, urban search and rescue and advanced fire fighter courses, including a one-day basic petrochemical fire fighting programme.

The Centrum Guardian project is a cause marketing initiative by multivitamin producer, Centrum, launched with humble beginnings in 2008, it has grown into a large scale and prolific television project, reaching a national television audience. ▲



Serendipitous meeting inspires global disaster relief group

GOTG medical volunteers at newly renovated medical facility in Syria in 2013

The largest disaster response non-governmental organisation (NGO) of African origin on the African continent, Gift of the Givers (GOTG), has been providing humanitarian relief around the globe for the past 21 years.

The organisation, based in South Africa, has disbursed more than R1-billion in aid to millions of people in 40 different countries since its establishment, says Gift of the Givers founder, Dr Imtiaz Sooliman.

The organisation has provided emergency aid to countries and people in distress in the form of search and rescue teams, medical support and intervention, as well as food and water supply to millions of people around the world. Gift of the Givers were the innovators of the world's first and only containerised mobile hospital comprising 28 units in 1993, which was used in the organisation's response to the armed conflict in Bosnia, Europe in the mid-nineties.

Gift of the Givers also commissioned the development of the world's first containerised primary health care unit for its humanitarian efforts around the world.

These were 'state-of-the-art' medical facilities developed in South Africa, says Dr Sooliman. Being an organisation with a strong medical focus, Gift of the Givers also developed a world first groundnut-soya high energy and protein supplement for use in cases of severe malnutrition in third-world countries, such as Malawi, Somalia, Niger and South Africa.

The organisation has launched numerous feeding campaigns and medical and search and rescue projects over the past 21 years, earning GOTG 82 different

individual and organisational accolades and awards, including an Outstanding Service to Mostar (Bosnia) award in 1994 and an award from the Gujurut City and Pakistan Muslim League for the group's efforts in the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005. The organisation has also received four presidential awards over the years and includes recognition from former South African presidents Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk, as well as former Pakistani president, Pervez Musharraf.

Genesis

After making a pilgrimage to Turkey, where Dr Sooliman met the Islamic spiritual teacher, Sheikh Mohammed Saffer Effendi, the seeds of the internationally recognised South African disaster NGO were sown.

The fateful interaction between Dr Sooliman and the Sheikh Effendi was the inspiration for the eventual formation of Gift of the Givers.

Dr Sooliman recalls the fateful meeting between himself and Sheikh Effendi in 1992 in Istanbul, Turkey. "He said 'my son, I am instructing you to form an organisation. The name will be called Gift of the Givers. You will serve all people of all races, all religions, colours, classes, political affiliation and geographical location. You will serve them unconditionally. You will not expect anything in return, not even a thank you'," remembers Dr Sooliman. "He told me to never forget to uphold the dignity of man, especially of those in difficult circumstances."

Today the organisation has amassed an extensive footprint in its global response projects and set up four offices in South Africa, with 60 full time staff. The organisation also has offices in other African regions namely, Malawi, Somalia and Mauritania.▶



Dr Imtiaz Sooliman with Gift of the Givers members of staff at the Johannesburg office

► **Responding to disasters**

A call for assistance is the prerequisite of disasters response in the international community. Following this call, Gift of the Givers assesses how big the disaster is, so that the resources that are available to the organisation is not mismanaged. The response to disasters in another country also depends on the infrastructure, capabilities and skills resource in the country, says Dr Sooliman.

The earthquake in Haiti was one such disaster that required immediate response from disaster relief and search and rescue organisations from around the world. Gift of the Givers was compelled to respond and did so along with many international disaster response organisations.

The organisation was ultimately lauded for its search and rescue efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake, when they pulled a person from the rubble who had been trapped for eight days. This incident underpinned the role and the need for disaster response organisations across the international community.

"There are never enough organisations," states Dr Sooliman. "For example, in the Tsunami that hit Thailand and a few other Asian countries in 2004, there were so many people affected by that disaster. If I can help save only one life, that is enough. If my child's life is saved and somebody else is responsible for that, it would mean the world to me," says Dr Sooliman.

Gift of the Givers decided to invest in its own search and rescue equipment, following the experienced gained in Haiti in 2010, says Gift of the Givers head of search and rescue and EMS, Ahmed Bham.

"When we got back from Haiti in 2010, Dr Sooliman decided that Gift of the Givers should get its own equipment. If there was a need to deploy, we would have all our own equipment ready. We made ourselves very mobile and today we can deploy within 24 hours to anywhere in the world," states Bham.

He says that the organisation has become self-sufficient. "This means we can set up clinics and hospitals within two hours in any location," states Bham.

This system was tested during the Somalia drought and humanitarian crisis in 2011, which is one of the pan-African disaster response projects undertaken by Gift of the Givers. The NGO provided emergency food aid and medical support to four hospitals in the country, adding up to a substantial R100-million spend over a one-year period in Somalia.

The explosion of an ammunition dump in Brazzaville, DRC, in 2012 was another of the NGO's recent disaster response projects in Africa. More than 200 people were killed in the incident and hundreds more were injured. Gift of the Givers responded by sending a team of medical doctors and surgeons to treat those injured in the blast, says Bham.

Gift of the Givers are able to set up a mobile medical clinic, complete with four theatres, paediatrics, preop and postop facility, female and male wards, notes Bham.

International disaster relief projects:

- Medical support in Bosnia armed conflict (1993)
- India earthquake (2001)
- Iraq War relief (2002)
- Iran earthquake search and rescue (2003) ►



GOTG search and rescue crew in Haiti in 2010

- ▶ • Sri Lanka Tsunami (2004)
- Pakistan earthquake (2005)
- Humanitarian aid in Israel/Gaza conflict (2009)
- Haiti earthquake search and rescue (2010)
- Somalia famine emergency food aid and medical support (2011)
- Syria war (2013)

Disasters in South Africa

The NGO is ubiquitous in local disasters and in providing humanitarian relief and other social development projects in South Africa. The organisation has responded to the plight of many that have experienced devastating fires and floods, such as the New Year's Day shack fires in Khayelitsha, Cape Town and the extensive flooding in Limpopo this year.

In 2011, Gift of the Givers also assisted the people of Duduza in Nigel on the East Rand, Gauteng after a tornado tore through people homes in the township. Gift of the Givers responded by building Zozo huts, which are wooden structure with corrugated iron roofs, for those affected by the tornado in the region.

"During the shack fires in Cape Town, we said 'we will go one step better'. We provided green houses at our cost for people that lost their homes. We had 103 homes built," states Dr Sooliman.

After pledging to build 100 homes for the people of Khayelitsha, Gift of the Givers handed over the first 24 houses on 22 March 2013 and a subsequent 79 houses on 9 May this year. The housing included 'gifts', such as bedding, blankets, mattresses, crockery, detergent and personal hygiene packs, as well as a four-week food parcel supply.

Khayelitsha housing specifications:

- 100 green houses
- Six by three metres in diameter
- Colour coded 0,5-millimetre corrugated sheeting
- Two windows
- Stable door with lock
- Ceiling lined with Aerolite
- Solar panel with two lights
- Cell phone charger fittings



GOTG staff members assist in food parcels distribution at the NGO's warehouse



Ahmed Bham at the GOTG warehouse in Johannesburg

The NGO's first disaster response work in South Africa was in the hurricane in Impendle, KwaZulu-Natal on Christmas Eve in 1994. Gift of the Givers responded to the disaster by providing 300 families affected and displaced in the disaster with food parcels and blankets.

The following year the organisation responded to floods in the Edendale Valley in Pietermaritzburg on Christmas Day in 1995, in which 1 000 people were left homeless across a string of rural townships in the region.

Building communities

Gift of the Givers again outdone itself after building new housing for people in Alexandra Township that were affected by the flooding of the Jukskei River, which is one of the largest rivers in Johannesburg, in 2013. "We are opening a housing village for people who were affected by the Jukskei River flooding in Alex. We built a village with 70 homes. It is a state-of-the-art rural village with gardens, park, ablution facilities and we paved the roads as well," enthuses Dr Sooliman.

"Disasters are not the only thing we do," he says. "We have several projects over 21 categories of our work. It includes bursaries, counselling services, agriculture, water provision and support of medical facilities."

Dr Sooliman says that over the years the organisation has built up a database of people and communities who request assistance. Gift of the Givers assists these people through various feeding schemes and job creation initiatives, as well as through mentoring and counselling programmes with doctors, as well as prominent personalities in sports, music and arts and culture.

Dr Sooliman says, however, that the NGO is mostly a disaster response organisation to medical and humanitarian emergencies around the world, including South Africa.

Volunteers

Gift of the Givers is operational in all provinces of South Africa and this widespread reach is made possible by volunteers like the NGOs head of EMS, Bham, who is a lecturer in the Department of Health's emergency care technical training programme. ▶

► Bham says that the Gift of the Givers has accumulated an extensive database of medical volunteers and search and rescue technicians, who have availed themselves to the organisation.

"These volunteers are able to continually update their qualification and experience directly on our database. We have training sessions taking place every three months, in order to the guys on par with technology and systems," says Bham.

He mentions that the organisation is equipped in all 12 urban search and rescue (USAR) modules that includes high angle rescue, aquatic and mountain rescue. "We have also invested in a Geographical Survey Systems Inc (GSSI) life locator, which is a valuable piece of equipment worth R400 000 that GOTG has invested in. It can be used in mining industry as well as in disaster management teams for search and rescue operations. We welcome any calls to assist using this equipment in any way we can," says Bahm.

Multi-million rand facility

To support our work internationally, Gift of the Givers will be building a new R35-million facility at King Shaka Airport, KwaZulu-Natal wherefrom the organisation will be deploying its international disaster response efforts.

The construction of the facility will start towards the end of the year. This project is being funded by the Dube Trade Port, who recognised the humanitarian work that the organisation does in this country and internationally.

The bulk of the funding that the organisation receives is from the ordinary people of South Africa. "We are a transparent organisation. Our success is transparency and delivery," states Dr Sooliman.

The NGO also makes cash donations to various other humanitarian projects in the country, such as the Red Cross Memorial Children's Hospital that received a donation of R230 000 for its Saturday Surgery initiative. According to the hospital, this donation would help alleviate the waiting lists for ear, nose, throat and paediatric surgeries.

Challenges

The biggest challenge and the vision for Gift of the Givers is the lack of development in Africa. Dr Sooliman seeks to play a role in developing the medical resources and skills base of medical industry in the most stricken regions on the continent.

The NGO seeks to address the prevailing issues that permeate across that continent, such as water provision, disease, as well as developing skills and equipping hospitals.

"The health of a nation depends on the medical and health status of the people," says Dr Sooliman. "I have been to countries where South African nurses are more qualified than the most qualified medical person in that country. In everything we do, there must be a transfer of skills," he emphasises.

An example of this skills transfer was the recent armed conflict in Syria, where the organisation responded to a

need for medical assistance for scores of injured civilians in the ongoing war. Gift of the Givers galvanised a team of 52 South African specialist medical volunteers, consisting of 40 specialist medical volunteers of various disciplines, to treat the many refugees and victims of the Syrian war.

The organisation recruited Syrian medical students and other local doctors in Syria, where it set up a hospital in an abandoned old-age home. The NGO renovated the building into a full-equipped hospital that was transferred to the local medical personnel, who were training during the two-week stay by Gift of the Givers' medical volunteers.

Gift of the Givers continues to play a notable role in disaster response and humanitarian relief efforts around the world, including South Africa. The organisation is driven by its motto that reads, 'Best among people are those who benefit mankind'.

"It is a calling and not a human thing," states Dr Sooliman, attributing his personal commitment to the organisation to his spiritual mandate and conviction. He recalls the final words spoken to him by his spiritual teacher, Sheikh Effendi in 1992, who said that 'whatever is done is done through you and not by you'.

Dr Sooliman has taken these words to heart and it is this outlook and selfless dedication to helping humanity that defines the legacy of Gift of the Givers. ▲

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www.saif.org.za

The Southern African Institute of Forestry (SAIF)

038/REV1 FR V01M07

2013

November

4 – 8 November 2013

Rural Metro Emergency Management Services Level III First Aid Course

This comprehensive course covers everything from describing first aid equipment and explaining their basic application to intervening in minor medical emergencies and carrying out CPR

Venue: Grey town Training Academy

Contact: Germaine Gilbert

Tel: 033 345 0080

email: GermaineG@ruralmetrosa.com

For more information visit:

www.ruralmetrosa.com

4 – 15 November 2013

Advanced Fire Prevention

The content was fully revised in 2011 and now addresses fire risk management, fire safety legislation, suppression system, fire growth and development, means of escape, flammable liquids and gases, structural protection, business continuity and fire safety management

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa

Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen

Tel: 011 397 1618/9

email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpsa.co.za

4 – 29 November 2013

Rural Metro Emergency Management Services Fire Fighter II Course

This comprehensive course covers everything from rescue and extrication to foam and foam making equipment

Venue: Grey town Training Academy

Contact: Germaine Gilbert

Tel: 033 345 0080

email: GermaineG@ruralmetrosa.com

For more information visit:

www.ruralmetrosa.com

5 – 7 November 2013

4th Biennial Emergency Medicine in the Developing World Conference

The theme for the conference will be 'Opportunity and Innovation' and a wide range of expert speakers will be covering extensive topics in emergency medicine, which will be of relevance to prehospital, nursing and medical emergency care workers

Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town, South Africa

For more information visit:

www.emssa2013.co.za/

5 – 8 November 2013

A+A 2013

A+A is the world's largest and most important specialist trade fair for all aspects of safety, security and disaster management with quantitative and qualitative first class product ranges, numerous special events and informative meetings

Venue: Dusseldorf, Germany

For more information visit:

www.aplusonline.com/

6 – 8 November 2013

NYS OFPC 39th Annual Arson Seminar

Venue: Watkins Glen Community Centre, Montour Falls, New York, USA

Contact: Tel 607 535 7136 or fax 607 535 4841

7 – 10 November 2013

The VCOS Symposium in the Sun

This is the only national symposium devoted to the leaders of volunteer and combination departments. The education offered at the symposium is designed to enhance your leadership skills in a way that will motivate your department and create a greater impact on the entire community you serve

Venue: Hilton Clearwater Beach, Clearwater Beach, Florida, USA

For more information visit:

www.iafc.org/microsite/VCOSSymp/

7 – 10 November 2013

International Technical Rescue Symposium 2013

The International Technical Rescue Symposium gathers persons from across the spectrum of rescue disciplines, including mountain rescue, the military, law enforcement, park services, water rescue, outdoor recreation, fire service and rescue teams, along with equipment manufacturers and distributors. It provides an open forum through which to share news and views on advances in equipment and techniques, technical problems, and issues of mutual concern

Venue: The Albuquerque Marriott, 2101 Louisiana Blvd,

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

For more information visit:

www.cmcrescue.com/ITRS-W14.aspx

7 – 10 November 2013

2013 Colorado State EMS Conference

The conference audience includes emergency medical service (EMS) providers, managers, administrators and allied health professionals involved in some aspect of emergency care in Colorado and the western United States.

Venue: Keystone Resort and Conference Centre, Keystone, Colorado, USA

For more information visit:

www.speakerready.com/abstracts/EMSAC/

8 – 22 November 2013

Emergency Medical Care Programme

ATA International Training offers the following courses International Trauma Life Support and Advanced Trauma Life Support courses with practical experience training in an observer capacity and an extended course in a volunteer capacity, which would include registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa

Venue: 11 Riley Road, Bedfordview, Johannesburg, South Africa

Contact: Nicole de Montille

Tel: 011 450 4263

email: nicole.demontille@ata-international.com

For further information visit:

www.ata-international.com

11 November 2013

South African Qualification and Certification Committee

This is an assessment session only

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa

Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen

Tel: 011 397 1618/9

email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpsa.co.za

12 – 13 November 2013

Chief Brunacini's No Brainer Management

Venue: Clay Fire Command Training, 18355 Auten Road, South Bend, Indiana, USA

For more information visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/p3j5yu5>

12 – 16 November 2013

Backyards and Beyond Wildland Fire Education Conference

Experts and stakeholders will gather to discuss wildfire safety issues and best practices for reducing risks with more than 50 breakout sessions in five educational tracks

Venue: Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

For more information visit: www.nfpa.org

13 November 2013

Hurricane Sandy's Impact and the Role of Private EMS in New York City

Venue: 899 Tenth avenue, New York, USA

Contact: Ankit Malik Tel: 646-557-4430

email: malik@jjay.cuny.edu

13 November 2013

Fire Protection Institute of Southern Africa Fire Fighting Evacuation Training

Basic theory and practical exercises for the use of portable fire extinguishers and hose-reels on incipient stage fires, duties and responsibilities of fire marshals during an emergency and practical evacuation exercise

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa

Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen

Tel: 011 397 1618/9

email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpsa.co.za

13 - 15 November 2013

International Conference for Fire & Rescue Executives

Venue: Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel, Massachusetts, USA

For more information visit:

www.internationalfireconference.org

14 – 16 November 2013

Backyards and Beyond Wildland Fire Education Conference

With more than 50 breakout sessions in five educational tracks, the Backyards and Beyond conference offers leading wildland fire experts an opportunity to build relationships and explore answers to important wildland fire safety questions that can be taken back to communities and the workplace

Venue: Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

For more information visit: www.firewise.org

18 – 21 November 2013

Workplace Fire Fighting I

A programme covering practical fire fighting for incipient stage/small fires including the use of extinguishers, foam equipment, large diameter hose

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa

Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen

Tel: 011 397 1618/9

email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpsa.co.za

18 – 22 November 2013

Fundamentals of fire investigation

This course promotes a clear understanding of fire investigation and the rendering of opinion regarding origin and cause. This includes practical investigation exercises and is now aligned with NFPA 921

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa

Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen

Tel: 011 397 1618/9

email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpsa.co.za

20 - 22 November 2013

Fire Australia 2013 Conference

The program will incorporate two and a half days of presentations, workshops and social activities, including a cocktail reception, conference dinner and farewell lunch ensuring plenty of networking opportunities

Venue: Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia
For more information visit:
www.fireaustralia.com.au

25 November 2013

Basic Fire Fighting Module

The basic theory of fire, methods of extinguishment, components, operations and practical use of fire extinguishers and hose reels. This is a suitable annual continuation or refresher training for persons who have attended the fire fighting and evacuation module

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa
Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen
Tel: 011 397 1618/9
email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpassa.co.za

25 - 29 November 2013

Fire prevention and safety strategies

Content fully revised in 2011, now covers the theory of fire, legislation, components, operation, use of extinguishers, flammable liquids and gases, hot work, fire hazards of electrical equipment, installations, components, operation, site control of sprinklers and automatic fire detection systems, the organisation and management of fire teams and occupational fire brigades

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa
Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen
Tel: 011 397 1618/9
email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpassa.co.za

25 - 29 November 2013

Confederation of Fire Protection Association's (CFPA) Fire Prevention and Safety Strategies Course

The course will cover the theory of fire legislation, flammable liquids and gases, fire hazards of electrical equipment, sprinklers and automatic fire detection systems, the organisation and management of fire teams and occupation fire brigades

Venue: FPASA College, 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, Gauteng, South Africa
Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen
Tel: 011 397 1618
email: college@fpasa.co.za

For more information visit: www.fpassa.co.za

26 - 27 November 2013

Basic Ambulance Assistant (BAA) Refresher/ Update Course

A course aimed at all basic ambulance assistant health care professionals and developed to update/refresh all skills and BAA protocols as according to The Health Professions Council of South Africa. CPD points will be awarded

Venue: Life Med Ambulance Services c/o Michael Brink (Nico Smith) and 19th Avenue, Villieria, Pretoria, South Africa
Contact: Charmaine Oosthuizen
Tel: 012 330 9413
email: training@lifemed911.co.za

For more information visit:
www.lifemed911.co.za

27 November 2013

Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers' Course

This course is intended for participants who provide health care to patients in a wide variety of settings. The course teaches the skills of CPR and choking for victims of all ages, including ventilation with barrier devices, pocket masks, bag-valve-mask devices with supplemental oxygen and the use of automated external defibrillators

Venue: 16 Lotus Street, Roodepoort, South Africa
Contact: Heather Roestorff
email: heather@emergency-care.co.za
For further information visit:
www.emergency-care.co.za

29 November 2013

Ethics Course

This course is developed to update/refresh legal and ethical issues for all health care professionals and is a vital element of the ambulance practitioner's daily life. Ethics Human Rights and Medical Law points awarded

Venue: Life Med Ambulance Services c/o Michael Brink (Nico Smith) and 19th Avenue, Villieria, Pretoria, South Africa
Contact: Charmaine Oosthuizen
Tel: 012 330 9413
email: training@lifemed911.co.za

For more information visit:
www.lifemed911.co.za

December

1 - 3 December 2013

Remembering When conference on fire and fall prevention

Venue: Marriott Long Wharf Hotel, Boston, USA
Contact: Lorraine Carli Tel: 001 617 984 7275

2 - 6 December 2013

Rural Metro Emergency Management Services Hazmat Operations Course

This comprehensive course covers everything from tactical priorities and defensive control strategies, incident control strategies and tactics to decontamination techniques and includes practical activities such as working in full encapsulated suits to working in the warm zone

Venue: Greytown Training Academy
Contact: Germaine Gilbert Tel: 033 345 0080
email: GermaineG@ruralmetrosa.com

For more information visit: www.ruralmetrosa.com

4 December 2013

Fire Protection Institute of Southern Africa Fire Fighting Evacuation Course

Basic theory and practical exercises for the use of portable fire extinguishers and hose-reels on incipient stage fires, duties and responsibilities of fire marshals during an emergency and practical evacuation exercise

Venue: 105 Springbok Road, Bartlett, Boksburg, South Africa
Contact: Christine van der Westhuizen
Tel: 11 397 1618/9
email: college@fpasa.co.za
For more information visit: www.fpassa.co.za

5 December 2013

Learning from Hurricane Sandy: FEMA's After-Action Report

Learning from Hurricane Sandy: FEMA's After Action Report
Venue: 899 Tenth avenue, New York, USA
Contact: Ankit Malik Tel: 646-557-4430
email: malik@jjay.cuny.edu

5 - 7 December 2013

Fire and Disaster Asia 2013 Indonesia

Held concurrently with Safety and Security (SSA) Indonesia, FDA Indonesia is the premier exposition encompassing safety and security; disaster management and fire prevention measures. This event serves as a key platform for leading fire and safety industry professionals to source for new products and suppliers; to hear from experts on the industry's frontline and to foster new business ties with fellow industry friends

Venue: Jakarta Convention Centre (JCC) Jakarta, Indonesia
For more information visit:
www.firedisasterindo.com

6 - 7 December 2013

Company Officers Leadership Training (COLT)

Venue: Rye Brook, New York, USA
For more details visit: www.nysfirechiefs.com

9 - 13 December 2013

Rural Metro Emergency Management Services Level III First Aid Course

This comprehensive course covers everything from describing first aid equipment and explaining their basic application to intervening in minor medical emergencies and carrying out CPR

Venue: Greytown Training Academy
Contact: Germaine Gilbert
Tel: 033 345 0080
email: GermaineG@ruralmetrosa.com

For more information visit:
www.ruralmetrosa.com

9 - 13 December 2013

Rural Metro Emergency Management Services Fire Instructor I Course

This comprehensive course, the Fire Instructor I program consists of 13 Sections of which five weeks require self-study and thereafter it consists of theory and practical simulations, exercises and case studies

Venue: Greytown Training Academy
Contact: Germaine Gilbert
Tel: 033 345 0080
email: GermaineG@ruralmetrosa.com

For more information visit:
www.ruralmetrosa.com

9 - 13 December 2013

LifeMed First Aid Level 1 to 3 course

Time: 09h00 to 16h00 everyday
Venue: 770 Michael Brink Street, Villieria, Pretoria

For more information contact Tel 012 330 9413 or email training@lifemed911.co.za.

2014

February

4 - 8 February 2014

EMS Today - The JEMS Conference and Exposition

EMS Today is the event that provides manufacturers and suppliers of emergency medical products and services the opportunity to meet and conduct business with a diverse audience of EMS professionals

Venue: Walter E. Washington Convention Centre, Washington DC USA
For more information visit:
www.emstoday.com/index.html

A fire fighter's wife

A special kind of woman; a cut above the rest
that's A FIRE FIGHTER'S WIFE
rating her among the best

How many good byes are shouted
without a fond embrace, as duty steals her man
for the danger he must face

How many meals are ruined...
or tender moments disturbed
by the wail of a distant signal, sparking loyalty answered

It's a devil of a job, for an angel like this,
who... for the love of her man, must forsake that kiss

She can run a garden tractor; even paint a room in need
how she can stretch a dollar is a miracle indeed

She is mother, lover, chauffer and nurse
a living symbol of: 'for better for worse'

Rich is the man, reaping his rewards in life
who chose to be the other half of a fire fighter's wife

Author unknown



FIRST IN INTEGRATED FIRE MANAGEMENT

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03 Rev PR Vol260

BC-300 Combi-Tool

Ogura BC-300 Combi-Tool
The BC-300 Combi-Tool is absolutely unique for the following reasons:

1. The lightest
2. The only one using Makita Li-Ion batteries and offering in-vehicle charging
3. The only tool to use removable, field-replaceable blade inserts

At only 14.2 kg, this is the lightest battery powered Combi-Tool around. As Ogura is the only rescue tool manufacturer with access to Makita batteries, the BC-300 can boast the most advanced power source available with in-vehicle charging options. Able to cut 24 mm bar with a spreading distance of 300 mm at over 5 tonnes, this battery Combi-Tool will not let you down.

Very narrow in profile, the BC-300 can be held close to the body whilst in use which maximises control and user safety.

In short, the Ogura tool is the most ergonomic of all battery powered Combi-Tools.

Features

- Low cost removable blade chips significantly reduce cost of ownership
- Field-replaceable blade inserts
- Lightweight and compact: offers real portability
- Revolutionary hydraulic pump gives incredible power
- No trailing hoses to trip over
- Immediate deployment
- 300 mm 5.9 tonne spread
- 32 tonne cutting pressure



Established 1928
Ogura



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FREMTAC
fire and
rescue cc.