

MOPANI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY



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MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

TO: All Media

DATE: 31 July 2019

SUBJECT: FIRE SEASON ADVISORY

The summer rainfall areas of Southern Africa, including the Mopani District Municipal area have entered the annual fire season. This typically spans the months of August, September and October, or until the first substantial rains occur. The fire season is an annual event which is largely driven by low rainfall and other adverse weather conditions, such as low humidity, increasing daytime temperatures and frontal systems, which are prevalent at this time of the year. Due to the prevailing drought conditions, vegetation is extremely dry and the risk of veldfire occurrence is high. Landowners are thus advised to be vigilant and ensure that they comply in terms of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (101 of 1998) as well as the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (10 of 2004) Regulations.

The Mopani Fire & Rescue Services wish to advise landowners of their legal obligation under the Veld and Forest Fire Act (101 of 1998) to prepare and maintain firebreaks on their property. Such firebreaks must be prepared as contemplated in the Veld and Forest Fire Act, with due regard for weather, climate, terrain and vegetation of the area. Firebreaks must also be wide and long enough that there is a reasonable chance of preventing the spread of a fire to or from neighbouring land. The onus of veldfire prevention thus rests with the landowner, who must also ensure a state of fire-fighting readiness should a fire occur, or threaten to occur, on their property. This fire-fighting readiness includes the landowner making provision for appropriate fire-fighting equipment, protective clothing and trained personnel for their property.

In terms of the NEM Biodiversity Act Regulations, it is the responsibility of landowners to remove alien invasive plant species, such as lantana (*Lantana camara*), trifid weed (*Chromolaena odorata*) and bugweed (*Solanum mauritianum*) from their property. These invasive species often form impenetrable barriers which hamper fire-fighting activities and access to fires. *Chromolaena odorata*, in particular, is known to constitute a fire hazard, is highly flammable and is known to facilitate the development of crown fires. It has also been

demonstrated that the presence of *Solanum mauritianum* in plantations creates difficulties in fire management since it increases fuel load and can result in a greater loss should a fire occur. The removal of these plants is thus imperative in proper fire management.

Mopani Fire & Rescue Services remain committed to serving the community, prioritising the protection of life and infrastructure. Please report emergencies to the Mopani Centralised Communication Centre (CCC) on (015) 307-5555 or (015) 306-7000.

END

Issued by the Mopani District Municipality's Communications Unit. For more information, kindly contact Spokesperson Witness Tiva on 071 2492 178. Email tivaaw@mopani.gov.za or witnesstiva567@gmail.com.