LAUNCH OF THE WESTERN CAPE SUMMER FIRE SEASON 2013/14

Provincial Wild Fire Programme

The veld fire situation has reportedly worsened significantly across South Africa during the past several years. There have been major and catastrophic fires in many areas and the fire response capacity was overwhelmed throughout the region. The Western Cape Province has been identified in South Africa’s Initial National Communication on Climate Change as the most vulnerable region in the country with respect to disaster risks from veld fire due to patterns of urbanisation, agriculture and potential impacts upon water catchment areas. Fires in the central parts of the Fynbos Biome are projected to continue to increase in the future.

As air temperatures and the frequency of heat waves continue to increase, and rainfall decreases, the occurrence of high fire danger and the likelihood and frequency of fires is likely to increase substantially.

The Western Cape Government identified the need for a rapid response to wild land fires in their early stages and established its rapid response programme during summer fire season 2013/14.

Join us for a fun filled, action packed day where you will see firefighting aircraft, bomber loaders, firefighters and public information officers in action and find out more about our brave rescuers.

Date: 2 December 2013
Venue: Stellenbosch airfield (map to follow)
Time: 10:00 till 12:00
Please RSVP by 18 November 2013 - CONTACT: liesl.brink@wofire.co.za

On Show:
- Firefighting Aircraft
- Bomber Loaders
- Firefighters
- Public Information Officers

We are launching the Summer Fire Season for 2013. Join us on this exciting day to demonstrate how ‘First Hour Saves Lives’ and keep our Province safe BETTER TOGETHER.
the 2011/12 wildfire season. This programme is designed around the principle of responding to the maximum amount of aircraft and ground teams to a fire in its early stages. By gaining control within the first hour of the fire the possibility of a major incident is minimised.

To this end the Western Cape Disaster Management Centre provided 24 aircraft consisting of 8 Cesna spotter aircraft, 8 Bell UH-1 helicopters and 8 fixed wing Dromader water bombers. A scientific GIS based method of determining the optimal placement of these resources is used which takes into account the veld type and age and risk profile of the area. The available resources are then placed in areas where they will be able to respond in the shortest possible time to the maximum effect.

For the 2012/13 season it was decided to increase the number of runways from 26 to 36 which significantly improved the response times for the bombers. A very busy season saw the province approve 110 aerial responses with a 95% first hour success rate.

The province experienced its highest intensity of fires at the end of January 2013 when four major fires flared up simultaneously in various parts of the province. A large scale aerial support capacity was activated and this led to 26 aircraft operating at the same time.

For the coming fire season WCDM will increase its fleet with the addition of 2 new “Attractor 802” fixed wing bombers which have a larger capacity and longer range than the current aircraft.

Roles and responsibilities in the fire fraternity

Big veld fires present authorities with the opportunity to rise to the occasion and prevent confusion amongst our citizens by communicating effectively whilst minimising loss of life, infrastructure and biodiversity. To achieve these goals various authorities work together to maximise service to our citizens.

The Western Cape’s Disaster Management and Fire Brigade Services are responsible for monitoring of Municipal Fire Services, coordination of fire fighting activities and the administration of the Fire Services Act.

In order to achieve this, the following activities are performed:

- Coordination of Provincial Wildfire Aerial Support Programme.
- Fire prevention and public information programme.
- Informal settlement fire safety.
- Special operations response coordination.

During wildfire operations, like the big Franschoek fire of December 2012 – January 2013 in terms of the Fire Brigade Services Act, 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987) the District municipality fire services are responsible for the management of the actual incident.

In the Western Cape, CapeNature and Cape Pine as well as other agencies play a role as landowners or service providers in terms of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, 1998 (Act No. 101 of 1998).

Every landowner must do everything in its power to stop the spread of fire from its land or that of adjoining land. Failure to do so is an offence and may result in legal action.

The public has the right to know what is happening during wildfires and it has happened that the media sometimes sensationalises the event. Most role players and public would be interested in the actions taken by the various parties at both wild fires and controlled burns.

For this reason, Public Information Officers, trained to deal with members of the media, will be stationed at incident Command Centres at big fires.

Working on Fire is a key partner and stakeholder.

Special Operations Response Team

During the last three years WCDM together with the province have established a special operations response team that consists of highly trained rescue specialists who are capable of responding to major disasters involving collapsed buildings. There are currently 80 of these people working at various municipal fire services and rescue bases in the province and can be called upon at any time to respond to emergencies not only within the Western Cape but also in South Africa and internationally.

Fire Prevention

There is also evidence that veld fire events are increasing and some areas of the Fynbos Biome areas that are located close to major population centres and is probably largely due to human ignition of fires.

The WCDM Fire Brigade Services have initiated several community based interventions that focus on the prevention and protection of life and property due to this risk. Some of these initiatives include collaboration with the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the adaptation of an evidence based wildfire prevention programme, training of public information officers and fire and life safety educators from fire services throughout the Western Cape and the development of a provincial wide veld fire prevention campaign.

Fire Prevention Strategy

A significant focus on fire prevention arises out of recognising the gaps in the provinces prevention responses and the widespread fire related injury mortality and morbidity, associated physical disabilities and psychological suffering, and the urgent need for a co-ordinated and seamlessly functioning evidence-led strategy for fire prevention. Experience from a number of countries indicate that fire related injuries are not random, but predictable events that are preventable and that prevention strategies can and do work. Over the past 10-20 years, many industrialised countries have reduced their fire related injury death rates, some by as much as half. These reductions can be attributed to concerted and sustained prevention efforts, often initiated by Government as part of a national strategy or programme.

Our approach to fire related injury prevention encompasses the following key principles:

- Population-based: It targets the safety and extends better care to, whole populations.
- Multidisciplinary: Draws on knowledge from many disciplines including medicine, epidemiology, engineering, sociology, psychology, criminology, education and economics, to promote safety.
- Evidence-led: Based on scientific methods, it draws on research data and evidence to plan, implement and evaluate services.
- Inter-sectoral collaboration: It emphasises collective action with cooperative efforts from various sectors such as health, education, social services, justice and policy.
- Prevention: The approach emphasises prevention. Its starting point is that fire related injury events and their consequences, can be prevented and controlled.

Fire Prevention Campaign

Fires can be prevented and everyone has a role to play in ensuring they are prevented. The fire prevention campaign will use a wide range of resources to communicate the importance of taking action to protect ourselves and the people we love from the dangers of fire.

We recognise the power of partnership as a critical means of marketing and delivering accurate and consistent safety messages into the community. This can be accomplished using a number of strategies, such as sharing...
The fire prevention campaign must be designed to get every man, woman, and child thinking about the importance of fire prevention based on social marketing research. Specific objectives include:

- Reducing fire injury related deaths in informal settlements
- Reducing property loss from wild land / veld fire
- Reducing residential fire loss

Accomplishing these objectives will take a concerted effort by fire departments, government agencies, non-profit organisations, private companies, and communities across the province. This plan requires a wide range of approaches that will help partners and stakeholders understand that fire is everyone’s fight—and the actions we can take to protect ourselves, the people we care about, and our homes.

The theme of the campaign must create a new social norm, such as fires can be prevented, and we all have a role to play in ensuring that they are prevented. They must be an easily understood and memorable and encompasses a range of potential actions we can take to prevent fires or mitigate loss if they occur. The fire prevention theme must be used on all prevention materials so that it becomes highly recognisable over time—and when people see or hear it, they immediately think of actions they can take to make their homes and property fire safe.

Objectives of the Fire Prevention campaign
The fire prevention campaign must

Working on Fire and WCDM&FBS
First hour saves lives

The Western Cape province is getting hotter and drier and has been identified as South Africa’s most vulnerable region to disaster risks from veld fires due to climate change, urbanisation and impact on water catchment areas.

“Authorities charged with the responsibility to manage fires need to respond swiftly and decisively to suppress unwanted veld fires” said Mr Ronnie Kasrils, founding father of Working on Fire (WoF) the government funded fire support services programme.

Kasrils was speaking at an event arranged by WoF and the Western Cape Disaster Management and Fire Brigade Services (WCDM&FBS) to launch the start of the Western Cape summer fire season, December to May in Stellenbosch on Monday.

“During the upcoming fire season our strategy is to respond with the maximum amount of aircraft and ground teams to a fire in its early stages” said Mr Anton Bredell, Minister of Local Government responsible for WCDM&FBS, who was also speaking at the event.

“By gaining control within the first hour of the fire the possibility of a major incident is minimised” the Minister said.

“WoF is a leading job-creation and poverty alleviation programme and recruits and trains young people into becoming professional veld and forest fire fighters” he went on to say.

Kasrils confirmed that WoF, funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs plays a key role in the provision of both aerial and ground crew support during fires.

During the upcoming fire season WoF will have the following resources available for utilisation by District Municipalities, WCDM&FBS and Fire Protection Associations (FPAs):

- A total of 26 aircraft (11 helicopters, six fixed wing bombers and nine spotters) based in Tulbagh, Porterville, Donkerhoek, Stellenbosch, Bredasdorp, Stilbaai, Newlands, Plettenbergbay and Knysna;
- A total of 703 fully trained and super fit fire fighters based at 25 bases across the Western Cape.

WoF also prides itself on its partnerships with the following parties where some of our fire fighters are based: CapeNature (eight teams), SANParks (three teams), Southern Cape FPA (four teams), Overberg District Municipality (two teams), Cape Peninsula FPA (two teams), Greater Cederberg FPA (three teams), Tulbagh/Wolske FPA (one team), and City of Cape Town Nature Conservation (one team).

During the last Western Cape fire season, WoF through its aerial and ground resources were instrumental in the suppression of 193 fires and managed to limit the size of the areas burnt to 173 654 hectares.

“Our pilots are on standby 24/7 and could reach a fire within 30 minutes of call-out, depending on the risk (Fire Danger Index). The deployment of aerial resources is part of the rapid initial attack on fires and prevents fires from spreading and becoming bigger” Kasrils said.

Further background
It is important to note that of the areas burnt last year and also previous years, the largest portion was within our protected areas that also act as Mountain Catchments responsible for producing water for the citizens of the Western Cape.

Many of these Catchments, like the Wemmershoek area had experienced fires within seven year intervals, which could have adverse impacts such as the promotion of alien plants that in turn negatively affect the flow of water as well as the biodiversity from this area. Our fire fighters thus not only protect the lives of citizens, infrastructure and properties, but also our biodiversity that supplies us with essential services.

Working on Fire 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 in all the provinces of South Africa. This year, the programme celebrates 10 years of its existence.

“By gaining control within the first hour of the fire the possibility of a major incident is minimised”
The rationale for the fire prevention campaign arises out of recognizing the gaps in the provincial prevention responses and the widespread fire related injury mortality and morbidity, associated physical disabilities and psychological suffering, and the urgent need for a coordinated and seamlessly functioning evidence-led strategy for fire prevention. Experience from a number of countries indicate that fire related injuries are not random, but predictable events that are preventable and that prevention strategies can and do work. Over the past 10-20 years, many industrialised countries have reduced their fire related injury death rates, some by as much as half. These reductions can be attributed to concerted and sustained prevention efforts, often initiated by Government as part of a national strategy or programme. Our approach to fire related injury prevention encompasses the following key principles:

- **Population-based:** It targets the safety and extends better care to whole populations.
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- **Evidence-led:** Based on scientific methods, it draws on research data and evidence to plan, implement and evaluate services.
- **Inter-sectoral collaboration:** It emphasises collective action with cooperative efforts from various sectors such as health, education, social services, justice and policy.

**Prevention:** The approach emphasises prevention. Its starting point is that fire related injury events and their consequences, can be prevented and controlled.

**Goal Statement**

Fires can be prevented and everyone has a role to play in ensuring they are prevented. The fire prevention campaign will use a wide range of resources to communicate the importance of taking action to protect ourselves and the people we love from the dangers of fire. We recognise the power of partnership as a critical means of marketing and delivering accurate and consistent safety messages into the community. This can be accomplished using a number of strategies, such as sharing information, joint development of targeted messaging and implementing multi-level behaviour modification interventions. By leveraging the fire prevention campaign resources, supporting dissemination or advertising efforts, and encouraging private and government agencies to join the initiative, the fire safety community can present a consistent, repetitive message. This content messaging will help diverse members of our society personalise and take action to reduce their risk of fire. This includes support for public service announcement placements, educational outreach to community organisations, local media relations, activities, and much more.

**Objectives of the Fire Prevention campaign**

The fire prevention campaign must be designed to get every man, woman, and child thinking about the importance of fire prevention based on social marketing research. Specific objectives include:

- Reducing fire injury related deaths in informal settlements
- Reducing property loss from wildland / veld fire
- Reducing residential fire loss

Accomplishing these objectives will take a concerted effort by fire departments, government agencies, non-profit organisations, private companies, and communities across the province. This plan requires a wide range of approaches that will help partners and stakeholders understand that fire is everyone’s fight—and the actions we can take to protect ourselves, the people we care about, and our homes.

The theme of the campaign must create a new social norm, such as: fires can be prevented, and we all have a role to play in ensuring that they are prevented. The theme is intended to be an easily understood and memorable phrase that encompasses a range of potential actions we can take to prevent fires or mitigate loss if they occur. The Fire Brigade Services envisions the theme being used on all prevention materials so that it becomes highly recognisable over time – and when people see or hear it, they immediately think of actions they can take to make their homes fi re safe.

**Resources and Interventions**

The fire prevention campaign will have a strong online presence that will enable organisations and the public to refer to and download key campaign information. Essential intervention resources and tools need to be developed and packaged.

Our goal is to implement a mix of multi-level interventions that will help reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation. Every disaster is local and personal, and being prepared is both an individual and collective responsibility. Prevention has to be a part of the public consciousness, automatically applied, regularly practiced, and always respected.

The fire prevention campaign must be a national model and advocate for local, provincial and national activities that develop, promote, enforce, and reward awareness, preparedness, and prevention.

**Timeline for Implementation**

A multi-level staggered approach to reducing home fires and their consequences will need to be developed. The Fire Brigade Services will act as a catalyst and convener, bringing together individuals and organisations who want to play a role and have the resources to do so. It is envisaged that the roll out of this campaign will be implemented over a 5 year period.
Former President Nelson Mandela was South Africa’s first democratically elected Head of State. His five-year presidency from 1994 to 1999 was regarded as one of reconciliation by both black and white South Africans. The people’s president was revered the world over for his fight against apartheid and commitment towards liberating all South Africans. Through his principled stance on various issues, South Africa’s profile was enhanced internationally as a leading emerging democracy.

“The march towards freedom and justice is irreversible...I have spoken about freedom in my lifetime. Your struggle, your commitment and your discipline has released me to stand before you today.”

These were among the first words that Nelson Mandela uttered as a free man on February 11, 1990. For 27 years, Mandela had been locked behind bars and publicly silenced for his political views.

But his long life and incredible story began 71 years earlier, on July 18, 1918, in the rural Eastern Cape village of Mvezo. It was innate in him, or how much of this can never know how much of this caring for those around us. We sharing ourselves with others, and that we achieve ourselves by there is a oneness to humanity; that we are all bound together in ways that can be invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others, and caring for those around us. We can never know how much of this was innate in him, or how much of was shaped and burned in a dark solitary cell. But we remember the gestures, large and small - introducing his jailors as honoured guests at his inauguration; taking the pitch in a Springbok uniform; turning his family’s heartbeat into a call to confront HIV/AIDS - that revealed the depth of his empathy and understanding.

He not only embodied Ubuntu; he taught millions to find that truth within themselves. It took a man like Madiba to free not just the prisoner, but the jailor as well, to show that you must trust others so that they may trust you; to teach that reconciliation is not a matter of ignoring a cruel past, but a means of confronting it with inclusion, generosity and truth. He changed laws, but also hearts.

As a child born in Qunu, Nelson Mandela reminds us that it always seems impossible until it is done. What a great man he was. We will miss him deeply. May God bless his memory!

Mandela showed us the power of action; of taking risks on behalf of our ideals. Certainly he shared with millions of black and coloured South Africans the anger born of, “a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments ... a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people”.

Moreover, he accepted the consequences of his actions, knowing that standing up to powerful interests and injustice carries a price. “I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination,” he said at his 1964 trial. “I’ve cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

Finally, Mandela understood the ties that bind the human spirit. The word “Ubuntu” recognises that we are all bound together in ways that can be invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others, and caring for those around us. We can never know how much of this was innate in him, or how much of was shaped and burned in a dark solitary cell. But we remember the gestures, large and small - introducing his jailors as honoured guests at his inauguration; taking the pitch in a Springbok uniform; turning his family’s heartbeat into a call to confront HIV/AIDS - that revealed the depth of his empathy and understanding.

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State funeral: 9-16 DEC 2013

While the rest of the country and world was mourning the passing of former President Nelson Mandela, The Western Cape Disaster Management Joint Operations Centre (JOC), the Disaster Management Centres of the four district municipalities (Western Cape) as well as the City of Cape Town (CoCT) was activated for the duration of the state funeral.

The rationale for the activation of the centre was to ensure that all information regarding the state funeral in the different municipal areas was collated and submitted to the provincial disaster management centre. This was in line with the national directive and aligned with the State Funeral Plan.

The Western Cape Disaster Management, the Head of Centres of the five district municipalities, the City of Cape Town and all the relevant stakeholders can be proud of the work they put in to ensure that everything went according to plan with regard to the State Funeral and giving this great statesman the send-off that he deserved.

Management Centre. The lady on the other end must have thought this woman is rude because I just went quiet and cried. I was so overwhelmed.

My experience at the Disaster Management Centre has been the best so far and I have learned a lot during the three years that I have been here. I have had great opportunities and I work with a great bunch of people and in the process have gained a lot of knowledge and experience. I work in the Fire Brigades Services Sub-directorate and enjoy every moment of every day.

Future goals
I would like to complete a degree in Business Administration. This has always been a strong passion, but due to circumstances I have not yet reach that goal.

My highlights
The highlights at this point for me, is to ensure that I am the best parent I possibly can be and to make my children understand how important education is. To also make them understand to have faith in themselves and in GOD and everything they do, as only they have the power to create their own future.

Miracles do happen
The day I prayed and the phone rang and I got the job at Disaster Management. That for me was truly miraculous. Things truly happen when you least expect it.

A project to remember
Heritage Day - The day of giving. I remember this day, as the Department took the time to go out and do wonderful things for people with needs. The Disaster Management team specifically did some outreach for the members at Place of Hope, painting, renovating, etc... We also handed out soup at the Tygerberg Hospital. It was a wonderful feeling to help other people.

Lessons I’d like to share
No matter the circumstances, to always motivate yourself and have faith in your ability and to never doubt yourself. And for those with responsibilities, to never take your job for granted, I gave up my job without thinking of the consequences. Please learn from my mistake. Work is hard to find, appreciate what you have.

Improvements I would like to see
I would love to see more development with regards to job creation especially for members outside of Government who is currently unemployed. This for me is a very sensitive issue and I would love to see more things put in to place to assist the unemployed in this regard. My wish is that Western Cape Government open more doors for the unemployed.

Rowena Page

A FEW good WOmen - Rowena Page

My career path
In 1996 I decided that I wanted to join the SA Navy and made this a personal goal of mine. After three attempts I was finally approved for the January 1999 Basic Training intake in Saldanha. By then I was 22 years of age. I was both excited and afraid as it was going to be the first time I would leave home and be on my own for four months.

During this period I became one with myself, more reflective and I learnt what my weaknesses are as well as my strengths. “Discipline”, “dedication” and “determination” was one of the Navy’s most famous motto’s. I have known it as the triple “D”. These three words are imprinted in my head since my school days so I was well familiar with the concept.

During this period I have learned how to control myself mentally, emotionally, physically, but most of all, spiritually. If you did not have these four components, you would clearly not make it through the grueling four months of training.

I was a faithful soldier for 10 years and earned my 10 year medal for good service conduct. Due to my experience in the navy, I have met important people during our Presidential Fleet, like President Mandela, President Mbeki, etc. In 2003, I decided to give up my career in the Navy to explore other options. Unfortunately for me it was not that easy. I struggled for two years to find a job. I applied for vacancies and finally I received a call from the Department of Local Government for an interview. By this point I have applied for so many posts, I did not even know what “Disaster Management” was, but I was just so glad to have been invited for an interview. A few months down the line as I was about to give up all hope, I prayed and asked that GOD help me as I could no longer sit at home. It was at this time that my phone rang and someone from the Department of Local Government said that I was accepted for the Senior Admin Clerk position at the Disaster Management Centre.

Western Cape Disaster Management and Santam have committed to a strategic partnership geared at achieving greater impact in disaster management and sustainability throughout the province. Through pooled resources and shared objectives, the partnership aims to assist municipalities and the

WCDM & SANTAM

Province in addressing capacity constraints, increasing risks and service delivery challenges.

Within this context, fire risk has been identified as a priority for the Western Cape. It is of utmost importance to generate greater awareness on fire safety to all citizens throughout the Western Cape. Therefore, the partnership has implemented a radio campaign, in three official languages, to highlight the emergency numbers: 112 from a cell phone and 10177 from a landline.

The radio campaign emphasises that everyone can fight fires from their phones. This content messaging will help diverse members of our society personalise and take action to reduce their risk of fire.

Rowena Page

formal President: Nelson Mandela

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OVERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
Disaster Management Risk Assessment

The Western Cape has a full complement of disaster risk assessments at District and Metro level. However, due to lack of resources the majority of the district level risk assessments have not been updated in excess of four years. From an operational point of view, it is crucial to have current and verified risk assessments since risk assessments inform all other risk reduction initiatives and to promote sustainable development.

To assist district municipalities in updating their risk assessments Western Cape Disaster Management (WCDM) reviewed all District level disaster risk assessments during the 2011/2012 financial year (FY), as evaluated against the standards laid down in South Africa’s Policy Framework for Disaster Risk Assessment. The standardised disaster risk assessment methodology was developed so that all risk assessments in the province conforms to a standard so that the provincial risk profile can be easily updated. Since 2012/2013 FY, West Coast DM, Central Karoo DM, Eden DM and Mossel Bay Local Municipality (LM) have been assisted in updating their risk assessments.

The update for Overberg DM, which should be completed by March 2014, focuses on the gaps as highlighted in the respective disaster risk assessment review document. Following the review, the priority risks were identified as follows:
- Fire
- Floods
- Drought
- Road accidents
- Shipping incidents
- HAZMAT
- Storm surges
- Severe weather
- Human diseases and
- Animal diseases.

Once the risks have been identified, Development Framework.

In addition to the Overberg DM risk assessment, similar assessments are currently being conducted for Cape Winelands DM, George LM, Bitou LM - representation at LM-level workshops is an important part of the process. WCDM is looking forward to the plans to assist other high risk LM’s.

Staff

LISA – A FOND LOOK BACK

It is always sad to say goodbye to a colleague, especially a well-liked one like Lisa Geswindt. Lisa started her stint at disaster management in November 2011 and left our shores for greener and better pastures in January 2014.

During Lisa’s very short tenure at Disaster Management, she was tasked to do marketing and awareness as well as research for the risk reduction directorate. Apart from this, Lisa was also our “go-to-gal” where it came to all things communications/media related for the Chief Directorate. Lisa also had a pioneering spirit as she was also instrumental in doing public relations for Western Cape Disaster Management – a first for the Chief Directorate. She was articulate which served her well as she was also the spokesperson for the Chief Directorate.

Lisa brought a certain kind of elegance and youthfulness to the Chief Directorate and especially to the open plan. Which in itself is a plus as the open plan is filled with over 30 year olds. What struck me most about Lisa was her maturity and willingness to accept and listen to others’ point of views. She also had the ability to put a fresh (youthful) spin on things.

She was also our resident “lang asem” – taking part in marathons and big walks and an expert in healthy and clean living. She is now plying her trade for a big media house. The world is her oyster and we wish her happy trails and much success.

I am, when thinking of Lisa, reminded of a quotation by William Shakespeare which states, “...though she be little, she is fierce”.

Public Information
Can save lives!

Disaster may strike at any time and any place. Whether caused by the forces of nature or precipitated by the actions of man, disaster can take lives and destroy property. Our best defence against this devastation is an informed public. Information helps empower people to make effective decisions.

The public information function described in the Incident Command System (ICS) is designed to effectively manage public information at an incident, regardless of the size and complexity of the situation or the number of entities involved in the response.

As part of the role out of a standardised ICS, position specific training was conducted on Public Information Officer (PIO) by The Western Cape Disaster Management’s Fire Brigade Services, from the 28th to 29th November 2013 at the Newlands Fire Base in Cape Town.

The goal of the course was to facilitate ICS implementation by providing participants with the basic information and tools that they will need to apply ICS public information best practices and protocols during incident management. The course was presented according to the Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Information Officer as indicated in the NEPA 1035.

Lisa Geswindt