

must be taken not to start a runaway veldfire. Picture: Tiaan Pool

Be prepared

Tisha Steyn

Be prepared, is the motto of the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA).

The Southern Cape has an all-year fire season due to bergwind conditions during the winter season.

These bergwinds can dry out so-called one-hour fuels, such as fine grass components, which become burnable after one hour in bergwind conditions. These components grow alongside and under other fuels, which when set alight can cause the other fuels to burn.

Landowners must always ask permission and obtain a burning permit to burn fire breaks or do prescribed management burning. Apply for the burning permit from your local municipal fire brigade services.

HERE ARE SEVERAL RULES TO ADHERE TO IN ORDER TO ENSURE PREPAREDNESS IN THE CASE OF FIRE:

- Have emergency contact numbers at hand, namely local municipal fire service, neighbours, estate and farm managers, and labourers;

- When a fire or smoke is spotted, immediately and firstly inform the local municipal fire services and provide information on position, size, wind direction, access roads, identifiable reference points;
- Inform your neighbours. If you are part of a Fire Management Unit (FMU), notify your FMU representative, who will contact the SCFPA, who will also relay the message to the local and district municipality fire services;
- If you have personnel and fire fighting equipment, proceed to fight the fire;
- As soon as local fire services arrive, they will take command of the fire - do as they say;
- Remember that the safety of your workers comes first;
- In advance: check your fire fighting equipment and ensure it is in good working order;
- If possible, do simulation training with your workers/ family members;

Ensure you family, friends and workers know and understand emergency procedures for your property - i.e. how to react, emergency escape routes, and other safety measures.

Think before you start a fire

Tisha Steyn

Prevention is better than cure, so think before you strike a match. These are the general rules set down by the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA) for the prevention of a veld or fo-rest fire.

- Do not make a fire when conditions are conducive for a runaway veldfire;
- Do not use mechanical tools in the veld if when the Fire Danger Rating is high or extreme - one spark is enough to set a veld or forest on fire;
- Do not allow open fires in the veld/near a forest, but ensure fires are only made in designated places;
- Set out rules for residents, workers and visitors on your property regarding fire safety - i.e. no smoking or open fires in the veld;

- Landowners may not burn fire breaks or carry out controlled burns without permits. Special burning permits will be issued during the high fire season, but only in co-ordination and consultation between local and district fire services, conservation organisations (CapeNature, Sanparks), and the SCFPA;
- Some areas may be burned during warm and windstil conditions to ensure the correct outcome regarding veld management;
- Contact your local municipal fire services to determine the daily fire rating. Rating changes from day to day depending on current weather and forecasted weather conditions.

SCFPA members can also make use of the SCFPA website. The Fire Danger Index (FDI) is communicated via the website on a daily basis and is updated twice a day.

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2013/06/17