

GREATER OVERBERG FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION PACK

**In event of the detection of a fire immediately report it to:
028 425 1690**

Aim of this document

To improve FPA member communication and readiness

This document was developed as part of the FPA's function to assist its members to adhere to the requirements of the National Veld and Forrest Act 101 of 1998 and to prepare for incidence of wild fires.

What is the responsibility of the Landowner?

The *responsibility (in terms of the Act) of the Landowners is to:*

- Inform the Fire Brigade and all neighbours of a fire
- Do everything in his/her power to stop the spread of a wildfire
- Ensure that in his/her absence responsible persons are present on or near the land to fight fires

Prevention:

The Act states that any landowner on whose land a fire may start, of from which it may spread, must take actions to prevent destruction from runaway wildfire. This includes:

- Preparing and maintaining firebreaks
- Training staff to start fighting such fires
- Ensuring that staff have the necessary equipment and protective clothing

Refer to [Annexure A](#) for full set of legal obligations of a landowner

What is the purpose of the Greater Overberg FPA?

A FPA is an organisation formed by landowners to predict, prevent, manage and reduce the damaging effect of veldfires. The FPA helps you to fulfil your legal obligations by sharing information, organising landowners, training and pooling resources in a specific area. The FPA represent the member's needs and challenges at large stakeholders level to the benefit of its members. One of the FPA's main objectives for this fire season is to improve the communication between the landowner and Fire Brigade services.

When is the fire season?

The fire season is from the 1st December until the end of April. **PLEASE NOTE: No planned burning will be allowed from 15 November to 5 January. Only “stoppellande” will be allowed burning with a valid permit. PLEASE contact your local Fire Brigade for more info if you are uncertain.**

When and how to report a fire

Report a veld fire to the Control Room - 028 425 1690 - as soon as it is observed. The control room will initiate the fire services and advise the relevant Fire Management Unit (FMU) leader.

Please refer to the [FMU Leadership contact details](#) section. The FMU leaders will contact the relevant members.

What benefits do Members receive?

- Assistance in achieving legal compliance (fire awareness and readiness; guidelines)
- 1st hour of [fire suppression](#) free
- Assumed legal accountability is shifted away from the member
- Training in firefighting, management and fire prevention
- Daily FDIs during the summer season

Refer to [Annexure B](#) for the full list of benefits.

Your FMU area, FMU Leadership and Members

Your FMU member's details was email to you or refer to our website – www.overbergfpa.co.za/members for more details.

Refer to Section 1 in this document for the [FMU Leadership contact details](#) in your area.

Refer to Section 2 in this document for [Protocols](#) agreed at an event.

What happens when fire is reported in your FMU area?

The Control Room will initiate the Fire Services and advise the relevant FMU leader. The [FMU Leader](#) will then initiate the relevant FMU communications procedure (e.g. telephone tree)

Pre-Fire Season readiness information

The aim of this section is to highlight important tasks and to develop the landowners' fire awareness and readiness. This document also includes specific information as requested by members.

Table of Content

Glossary.....	4
1. FMU Leadership.....	6
2. Protocols at an incident (wildfire)	7
3. Pre-Fire Season information.....	8
3.1 Awareness and Readiness	8
3.2 Main causes of veld fire origin that based on insurance claims	9
3.3 Fire Brigade service charges	11
Annexure A: The legal responsibilities of land owners.....	12
Annexure B: Benefits of GO FPA membership:	13
Annexure C: Fire Management Units (FMUs).....	14
Annexure D: Incident Command Systems (ICS)	16
Annexure E: Fire Risk check list.....	17

Glossary

AFIS	Advanced Fire Information Systems. Satellite fire detection system. www.afis.co.za . App can be downloaded
BBV	<i>Brand Beskermingsvereniging /FPA</i>
Burn Permit	A permit that is required before any planned open burning/fire. The burning of a bonfire, vegetation debris or other fire in an outdoor location where fuel burned is not contained in an incinerator or outdoor fireplace. Burn permits are obtained from the ODM (no charge) or Overstrand Local Authority (R250)
Control Room	24hr manned call centre receiving and dispatching all emergency calls (focus on fires) in the Overberg District Area. Situated at the Fire Station in Bredasdorp. The number is: 028 425 1690
ICS	Incident Command Systems is an emergency management tool that is used by all types and levels of emergency services at incidents to ensure standardisation and efficiency. Refer Annexure D for more details
IC	Incident Commander. The person in charge of the fire/incident
Incident	In this context it refers to a fire (also known as a “wild fire” or “veld fire”
NVFFA of 1998	National Veld and Forest Fire act 101 of 1998. This Act governs FPAs and landowner responsibilities in terms of fire prevention
FDI	Fire Danger Index is an index created to measure the degree of danger of fire in an area. The index combines a record of dryness, based on rainfall and evaporation, with meteorological variables for wind speed, temperature and humidity.
Fire Season	A formally identified period in a year during which the fire danger is the highest and special rules and practices apply
FPA	Fire Protection Association in terms of the NVFFA. Afrikaans “BBV”
FPO	Fire Protection Officer of a FPA under the NVFFA. Performs the function of chief executive officer of the FPA.

FMU	Fire Management Unit consists of a localised area in which integrated fire management efforts between individual land owners can be most effectively co-ordinated. Refer Annexure B
FMU Leader	Leadership chosen by members of that FMU. Represent members in their areas regards FPA matters
Ladder fuel (mostly used in forestry)	Ladder fuel is a firefighting term for live or dead vegetation that allows a fire to climb up from the landscape or forest floor into the tree canopy. Common fuel ladders include tall grasses, shrubs, and tree branches, both living and dead.
Fuel loads	The amount of flammable material that surrounds a fire is referred to as the fuel load. Fuel can include everything from trees, underbrush and dry grassy fields to homes.
Greater Overberg FPA	District-wide Fire Protection Association in term of the NVFFA for the Overberg District area. Refer to www.overbergfpa.co.za or 028 425 1690 x 216
Initial attack	The actions taken by the first resources on arrival at a wildfire to protect lives and property, and prevent further spread of the fire. Usually done by trained and experienced crews and takes place immediately after size-up.
Member	A register and paid-up landowner of the FPA
National Umbrella Fire Protection Association (NUFPA)	Committee representing all FPAs on a national level. Provide guidance, input and opportunity to share best practices to all member FPAs
Prescribed burn	Deliberately ignited fire for the purpose of veld management, often to remove heavy fuel buildup or simulate natural cycles of fire in an ecosystem. Also called "controlled burn", even if it becomes uncontrollable.
Fire tender	A wildland fire tender is a specialized vehicle capable of bringing water, foam, or dry chemicals to fire trucks in the field that are engaged on the fireline.
Suppression	Putting out the fire, Actively fighting fire
Tracer	Access road to fight a fire from
WoF	Work on Fire team - An Extended Public Works Programme providing trained fire fighters and fire management services

Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association

Fire Station, Long Street, Bredasdorp, 7280. Tel: +2728 425 1690

www.overbergfpa.co.za

1. FMU Leadership

2. Protocols at an incident (wildfire)

- Report a fire/smoke immediately to the Control Room at 028 425 1690
- The Control Room will contact the local Fire Station Commander and the FMU leader
- That FMU Leader / FPA (or member) will contact the rest of the members via cell and/or radio
- That FMU member will contact the rest of the members via cell and/or radio

Summary of other important decisions

- FMU will arrange that their radio-system are checked and working arrangements are known to all members
- An Incident Command System (ICS) will be in used when larger incident. First person on the scene will hand over command to the Fire Brigade upon their arrival
- The Incident Commander will liaise with the identified FMU leader for that incident. They will arrange communication protocols. This will include the sharing of progress info, briefing sessions, mobilizing of resources, etc.
- The intention is that the Fire Brigade will make use of the FMU leadership to help determine the size of the incident and resources required and as currently the “Initial Attack” force.
- Fire Brigade responsible
 - IN EVENT OF A FIRE CONTACT 028 425 1690

Our focus for this season is to improve detection, response and communication at an incident. Please refer to [Annexure D](#) to gain a better understanding of how the firefighting leadership decisions are taken at an incident (summary of the Incident Command System (ICS)).

Commitment has been given that the IC will set the objectives of the fire suppression with the FMU leader and land owner (or their delegated persons).

3. Pre-Fire Season information

3.1 Awareness and Readiness

The aim of this section is to highlight important tasks to develop the landowners' fire awareness and readiness. The items are in order of importance.

- **Arrangements when landowner is not on his farm. Duty roster, inform neighbours, ensure person responsible has airtime and contact numbers**
- **Identify danger areas:** Refer to [Annexure E](#) helpful list. This list also includes the Insurance claim statistics
- **Access;** when suppressing a fire it is most valuable to be able to access it by vehicle.
 - Inspect roads regularly and more often in the fire season
 - Remove obstacles such as fallen trees (especially in high fire danger areas on your land)
 - Make sure roads can accommodate fire tender
 - Fit skeleton locks and ensure that vehicles carry tools (e.g. bolt cutters and saws)
 - Identify access roads by numbering the farm gates
 - Make sure farm signage is visible
- **Firebreaks:**
 - We recommend that fire breaks and/or tracer roads be planned and constructed as a group of neighbouring land owners. This ensures that the members are well informed and that the fire break is affordable and achievable.
 - Establish what direction a veldfire is most likely to approach from (prevailing winds and topography) during the fire season months and plan firebreaks if possible to run at an acute angle to the prevailing wind.
 - Because vehicle access is so important, plan firebreaks along existing roads
 - We recommend clearing around your workers' and guest houses.
 - Decide on appropriate specifications. Please contact the FPA office (info@overbergfpa.co.za) or visit our website (www.overbergfpa.co.za) to obtain the FPA's rules for Fire Breaks
 - Use appropriate methods and timing for making firebreaks
 - Implement a firebreak maintenance plan
- **Prepare information required during fire suppression:** Map of items that will assist with fire suppression on your land. The map/schematic illustration/document to show the fire dangers (fuel load, buildings, other fire hazards), access roads (highlight if locked), fencing (especially wall, game and electrical), water points and where firefighting equipment is.

- **Water supply:**
 - Establish a network of water supply points and check regularly
 - Check water levels in reservoirs daily during the fire season
 - Ensure that adequate pressure can be maintained
 - Ensure spare water pumps using an independent power supply are available (tested)

- **Maintenance of equipment and vehicles:**
 - Review annually (quantity and appropriateness)
 - Dedicate equipment and vehicles to the veldfire task during the fire season
 - Ensure adequate training in the use of the equipment
 - Do servicing and repairs before the fire season
 - Do daily inspections during the fire season
 - Make use of checklists
 - Equip vehicles with basic fire tools so that staff can respond immediately
 - Fill fuel tanks before each weekend
 - Keep radio batteries charged
 - Check, Maintain and repair equipment after a veldfire

- **Fire danger index:**
 - Obtain fire danger index ([FDI](#)) daily during fire season from FPA website (www.overbergfpa.co.za) or [AFIS](#)
 - Communicate the FDI to key staff
 - Take prescribed actions in accordance with the FDI (Determine level of readiness)

3.2 Main causes of veld fire origin that based on insurance claims

The following section has been provided by:

John Smit | Senior Legal Advisor | Mutual & Federal Insurance Company Limited

Authorised Financial Services Provider | A Member of the Old Mutual Group

John can be contacted via Mr Abri Dickason, Bestuurder: Versekering, Overberg Agri Bedrywe –

028 2413829

The main causes of veld fire origin that we experience in the insurance industry and in litigation matters, are the following:

1. Lightning

As discussed, it will not be possible to hold a landowner legally liable for the origin of the fire, as lightning can be qualified as “vis major” in legal terms, which means an occurrence that is neither caused by or preventable by humans. It is *however possible to hold a landowner legally liable for damages suffered as a result of the spread of fire caused by lightning*. This is however quite a difficult cause of action to prove.

2. Cooking fires

We find it very often that cooking fires or the discarding of hot ash causes fires in the vicinity of labourers' cottages. The labourers are often forced to make fires outside their cottages due to a lack of electricity or proper cooking facilities. We also find that the two basic preventative measures are often absent, namely:

- *proper instructions to labourers in the making of fires; and*
- *firebreaks around labourers' cottages.*

3. Smoking

Fires caused by the discarding of burning cigarette butts by landowners or their labourers.

4. Debris Burning/"Asgate"

This is a major risk, especially in windy regions. There is usually undetected smouldering and windblown embers are then deposited into un-cleared vegetation, causing fires.

5. Equipment use

Fires that occur from the operation of mechanical equipment, for example tractors, chainsaws, etc. If these types of equipment are not serviced regularly it often happens that there is a carbon built-up in the exhaust system. Hot carbon particles may escape from the exhaust during operation, causing fires.

6. Railroads

Although less prevalent these days, there is still reported cases where veld fires have occurred in the vicinity of railroads. The causes seem to be friction, as well as hot brake shoe particles.

7. Electric fences

8. Rekindle fires

These fires are mainly caused by previous fires not being extinguished properly. Undetected smouldering in plant material, dry cow dung, etc. flare up again in especially windy conditions.

9. Controlled burning getting out of control

3.3 Fire Brigade service charges

This section aims to give more details on the charges for provision of Fire Fighting Services. Answers to questions like: What are the charges? What is the service I can expect? Benefits to FPA members -1st Hour free for members; What is a call out fee?; When will I be charge?

- The Overberg District Municipality and Overstrand Local Municipality Fire Brigade Services (FB) are now charging for services as from the 1st of July 2014. It is important to note that the Overberg District FB and Overstrand FB have different charge structures. We will inform affected members (mostly on the boundary in Overstrand LM) which jurisdiction they are in.
- Below you can find a summary of the potential costs that can be incurred during a wildfire suppression operation on your land and some basic explanatory notes. This is new to all of us and we hope to learn from this first season to influence the system to the benefit of improved fire prevention and suppression support to our members. Please do not hesitate to contact us with comments, concerns or suggestions.

Overberg District Municipality

- 1st hour fire suppression service is approximately R3 800 and free for FPA members.
- Thereafter approximately R2 500 per hour. This difference is due to the call out fee that's not included in the second hour of suppression.
 - 1) Average rate based on 1 truck, 1 bakkie unit and crew
 - 2) 1st hour starts at arrival on site
- From our meetings with members and FPA leadership we want to highlight the following items. These are the issues that if resolved or better understood will ensure better cooperation and improved suppression.
 - It is the Fire Brigade's decision when to **leave the incident**/site and this decision will be made with the Incident Commander (IC), FMU leader and Landowner
 - It is the IC's decision, with agreement by the Chief Fire Officer, if and when **aerial support** will be required. Additional aerial support will be based on a signed MOU with WoF Dispatch, but only with agreement by the IC and Chief Fire Officer (mainly due to safety confirmation).
 - Aerial support paid for by your **Insurance** will be a valuable asset. This support will also be subjected if it will be safe and agreement of the objectives of the support.
 - Requesting a **waiver of charges** will be an option in instances of disaster or other exceptional circumstances.
 - **BENEFITS for FPA** member is that the 1st hour of suppression is free
- Burn permits at no charge

Annexure A: The legal responsibilities of land owners

More information can be obtained from the FPA's website, nl. www.overbergfpa.co.za. Below is a short summary of the responsibilities of landowners to provide context to the content of the overall document.

What are landowners' legal duties as per National Veld and Forest Fire Act of 1998 regarding wildfire prevention?

- You may not start a wild fire.
- You may only start a fire, including cooking or braai fire, in a designated area.
- Every landowner must have equipment available to fight wildfires.
- Every landowner must have personnel available to fight wildfires.
- Every landowner must have a person on their property who keeps a lookout for fires.
- Every landowner must establish a system of firebreaks.
- A landowner may not burn firebreaks or carry out controlled burns when the Fire Danger Index is high.
- Land users must manage the fuel load on land under their control. They must remove invasive alien vegetation from the land.

What are the legal liabilities of landowners as per the NVFFA (Chapter 9 section 34)?

If a person brings civil proceedings and proves that:

- a) he or she suffered loss
- b) the loss was caused by a wildfire, and
- c) the wildfire started on or spread from land owned by the defendant, the defendant is presumed to have acted negligently in relation to the wildfire unless:
 - i. the defendant proves that he or she was not negligent, or
 - ii. the defendant is a member of a FPA in the area where the fire occurred, in which case the person bringing the claim must prove that he or she was negligent.

Annexure B: Benefits of GO FPA membership:

- Reduced costs in the event of a fire incident – first hour of firefighting free to FPA members only.
- Enhance coordination and mobilization of resource for Integrated Fire Management.
- Increased awareness and management of Social, Environmental and Economic risks of wildfires.
- Reduction of fire related risk by various means eg: risk mapping, fuel load management and improved planning.
- Provision of a platform with which to raise issues with local and provincial government structures.
- Access to national and international funding wherever possible to enhance Integrated Fire Management.
- Provide management services, training and support for communities in their efforts to manage and control veldfires

Annexure C: Fire Management Units (FMUs)

A Fire Management Unit of the Fire Protection Association-

- Consists of a localised area in which integrated fire management efforts between individual land owners can be most effectively co-ordinated.
- Gives strategic guidance to the Association on integrated fire management in the area covered by the Fire Management Unit.
- Is to hold bi-annual meetings for the purpose of pre-fire season planning and post-fire season feedback.
- May require that the Association ring-fences assets provided and funds raised by the fire management unit as being for the benefit of that Fire Management Unit.

These Fire Management Units are then the “first response” on a fire which starts in their area of responsibility.

Implementation and activities of FMUs

Background and Understanding

Already established FMU boundaries, as was in place or identified by the former FPAs, will be the starting point. We will assist the identified areas to confirm, validate or change their boundaries by engaging with the FMU members, fire experts and local knowledge of the areas. The FPA’s fire management plan maps will be used to assist in this process by providing a visual map of the area with the relevant fire history, fire management assets, access point, veld type and age, topographic features, etc.

At the start the objectives and activities will be focused on “preparedness” – establishment of communication and coordination between members of the FMU and the Fire Management Services. Furthermore a process will be started to identify high fire risk areas within the boundaries of the FMU. This information will then inform the Fire Management Plan.

As the FMU maturity level increases and as our Fire Management planning improves the roles and responsibilities of the FMU and FPA will change and grow.

The role of the FPA will be to:

- Coordinate the establishment of the FMUs,
- Take responsibility for the administration and the set-up of the coordination of activities involved.
- Align and engage with the Fire management experts
- Provide the required maps and mapping services.
- Assist with the costing and planning of the agreed fire management activities.
- Share important fire management information
- Assist with all queries

First step: Establishment of the FMU

At the first meeting all stakeholders to agree on:

- FMU area and Leadership
- Minimum coordination efforts and information requirements (refer step 2)
- Roles and responsibilities agreed
- If possible, start the process of how to identify the fire risk and management requirements of the area

Deliverables:

- Leaders
- Well defined map of the area
- List of data to be collected and collection methodologies
- Roles and responsibilities documented
- Agreed process of how to identified fire management actions required

Second step: Collect and collate Fire management data

The FPA team with the support of the FMU leadership to collect, assimilates and distribute the communication and key fire management information

Deliverables

- Communication framework with all the landowners' details
- The Fire Services contact details and procedures
- Fire management risk update

Third step: Distribute the contact details and the agreed operation procedures in event of a fire event.

The FPA will present the information to the FMU leadership for their approval after which the information will be distributed to all FMU members and stakeholders

Deliverables:

- Information document with supporting easy-to-use posters & FMU map

Fourth step and onwards

Continuous improvement, feedback and required pre- and post fire season meeting

Annexure D: Incident Command Systems (ICS)

Command procedures

- Regardless of the size of the fire, certain basic management actions are required to establish rapid and efficient control, and minimise risk, damage and costs
- Set up appropriate command structures in collaboration with all partners

Incident Command Systems (ICS) is an emergency management tool that is used in South Africa by all types and levels of emergency services at incidents to ensure standardisation and efficiency. ICS is designed to ensure the best cooperation and communication between different organisations at any incident. To achieve this ICS integrates facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operations within a common organisational structure. *In other words making sure everyone and everything is being kept track of, all persons know their place and speak the same language.*

All incidents are managed by objectives as set by the Incident Commander (IC). On a fire these are the goals set between the IC and the landowner.

The only requirement of ICS is that each incident has an Incident Commander, a single person who has final authority on all decision-making. This works on a "first-on-scene" structure, where the first responder to an incident is the IC until the incident has been declared resolved or the IC transfers command to someone else. This is done to a more qualified person when they arrive on scene (especially when the incident grows larger), to a person of the same experience (when entering a new operational period), or to the best lower qualified person (when the incident grows smaller).

The person who arrives first at the fire is the Incident Commander until the fire is put out, or a more experience person or the Fire Brigade arrives at the fire. Once the fire has been put out and the Fire Brigade and more experienced persons leave (to be available for other incidents), the landowner on whose land the fire was, will become the IC and monitor the area for a few days for flair ups.

Each time a full transfer of command briefing needs to take place either orally, written or both. The Incident Commander can delegate tasks to individuals or an Incident Command team. This team will grow in size with the increase in size and complexity of an incident

In conclusion, by supporting the training in Basic ICS for landowners and the FPA, we make sure that landowners understand their roles and responsibilities both as the first responders and as resources at fires, and that both groups work smoothly together - Fire Brigade and other firefighting teams and land owners. In the end this will result in better suppression of wildfires and reduce the economic, ecological and social impacts these cause.

Annexure E: Fire Risk check list

- Priority zones around buildings in fire prone environments
 - i. Put a fire break round workers' houses
- Structure assessment
 - i. Roofing
 - ii. Roof cleanliness
 - iii. Exterior structure material
 - iv. Eaves, vents and openings
 - v. Balconies, decks and veranda's
 - vi. Window and doors
- Proximity of combustibles
- Ignition potential
 - i. Lightning
 - ii. Human potential
 - iii. Chimneys
 - iv. Rubbish dumps/fire pits
 - v. Garden rubbish burning
 - vi. Overhead powerlines
 - vii. Vagrants
- Vegetation assessment
 - i. Type (fynbos, pine, blue gum, alien acacia)
 - ii. Density
 - iii. Over story (canopy) and understory
 - iv. Ladder fuels
- Check and test equipment