

Media Release- 6 September 2001

Kruger National Park Fire Disaster Update

The fire that devastated the Pretoriuskop area of the Kruger National Park in the past two days has been brought under control. Herewith an update on the situation as it is today.

The number of deaths has risen from 19 yesterday to 23 this morning. Most of the affected families have already been contacted and two buses have been arranged to take family members to the morgues to identify their relatives.

The SANParks Human Resources department is liaising with families of the deceased with regard to funeral arrangements. Two external psychologists and the SANParks industrial psychologist have been assigned to help the families of the victims and they are already in the area to begin their work.

A 45 000 hectare area, not 70 000 ha as stated in previous releases, was burned by the fire which is now under control. The South African Air Force has allocated four ORYX helicopters to help extinguish any fires that might still be burning. One Spotter aircraft from the Forest Fire Association is also in the air assisting in the operation.

The Department of Labour has dispatched a team to the disaster area to carry out mandatory investigations. The South African Police Services are also investigating the matter to establish facts around the cause of the fire. These investigations will be conducted independently of the investigation ordered by the Chairman of the Board of SANParks yesterday.

The extent of the financial cost is currently being determined. Properties lost at the Napi Trails camp as result of the fire will be covered by insurance.

The Director of the Kruger National Park, Mr. David Mabunda, is spending the day visiting with families of the victims. Condolences and offers of financial and other forms of assistance have been received from a diverse range of organizations and individuals. We sincerely thank the public for this. Needs are enormous and more support will be appreciated.

For those who would like to contribute to the Disaster Fund set up to help the families of the victims, here are the details of the bank account:

KNP Fire Disaster Fund
ABSA Current
Acct no: 40 54 043 666

Donations in kind can be made to:

Bulelwa Ngqakamba in the Office of the Director of the Kruger Park, phone: 013 735 4384.

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