

# Firefighters gear-up for winter season

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ABOUT 600 firefighters attached to the Working on Fire (WoF) in the province have already resumed their duties following the long December holidays.

WoF is the Department of Environmental Affairs' expanded public works programme. The group of both men and women was embarking on a variety of programmes as they geared up for the upcoming winter fire season.

WoF provincial spokesperson Leboang Maseko said among other related activities, the team was on the ground with community outreach awareness campaigns in different areas to educate people about the dangers of fire and how to prevent them from being involved as victims.

Maseko said all the firefighters were being tested for fitness and other requirements ahead of being deployed during this upcoming season.

"Our firefighters are actively conducting fire awareness workshops across the province. These include school fire awareness, community workshops providing fire safety education and fuel load reduction activities," Maseko said.

"Our firefighters undergo extensive fitness training to be safely deployed to wildfires.

"Conditions such as extreme heat, mountainous areas and strong winds make it critical that our firefighters are physically fit to work in these circumstances."

Maseko said the WoF team's dedication and hard work saw the province recording a decline in the number of fire cases last year compared with previous years. "Our firefighters are already preparing for the 2017 winter fire season. We recorded a significant drop in the number of fires last year in the province. Building team strength is a high priority because we plan to see a drop again this year."

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