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Media Statement by Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia de Lille on DPWI properties affected by the fire on Table Mountain

Since Sunday morning, 18 April we have all watched with horror the very devastating impact of the fires on Table Mountain.

On behalf of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), I extend our gratitude to the emergency teams, especially our firefighters and SANPARKS teams who have been working tirelessly to get the fire under control and keep people safe.

Unfortunately we have seen significant damage to property such as the destruction of the University of Cape Town's library and other properties while many residents, especially students from the University of Cape Town had to evacuate as the fire raged on fanned by strong winds today.

While many of the key affected areas are not easily accessible to members of the public or non-essential workers due to the work of firefighters and heavy smoke, the DPWI is closely monitoring the situation with the help of the South African Police Service to determine any damage to DPWI owned properties such as Ministerial residences.

Unfortunately, we can report that one Minister's Cape Town residence in Newlands (owned by DPWI) was completely destroyed by the fire on Sunday afternoon. Thankfully, no-one was hurt and no one was in the property at the time.

Today, Monday 19 April, family members of three members of the executive have been evacuated from Walmer Estate properties as there was an immediate threat on Monday morning as the fire moved over the Philip Kgosana Drive.

The family members of one minister and two deputy ministers were evacuated from Walmer Estate properties.

The Department is in contact with the various ministries to establish the level of support the families need but they have all managed to secure alternative accommodation and we have informed them to notify DPWI if they require any additional assistance.

SAPS have advised these families not to return to the houses due to heavy smoke and strong winds in the area as it is not yet completely safe for them to return to the area.

In Groote Schuur Estate, on Sunday, the fire had come close to the Deputy President's residence but police worked with the firefighters and the fire was brought under control quickly in the area. There was no damage to this property.

DPWI continues to monitor the situation closely and are working with the local SAPS to ensure that we do all we can to support the efforts of the firefighters and SAPS to protect lives and property.

We also extend our thanks to the various organisations and Capetonians who have once again been quick to open their hearts to support the firefighters in this massive task as well as offer all kinds of help to students and families who have had to evacuate their homes for their safety.

We know that the very best effort is being made to bring the fire under control and extinguish it and wish all our firefighters and support teams strength as they continue to battle the elements.

ENDS

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