

NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE (NDMC) SOUTH AFRICA

NEWSLETTER - QUATER 1: 2025/26



cooperative
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Department:
Cooperative Governance
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



FOREWORD BY THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE

As the 2025/2026 financial year progresses, we are reminded of the importance of reflecting on lessons learned and renewing our dedication to strengthening disaster risk reduction efforts. This chapter calls on us to confront the shortfalls and gaps identified in the previous year; lessons that must now inform our actions and guide our priorities going forward. By acknowledging where we have come from and what we have learned, we can transform those experiences into practical steps that reinforce our collective resilience and enhance our preparedness.

With the recent commemoration of Youth Day on 16 June, I urge all disaster management role players to actively support and invest in programmes that empower young people to become ambassadors of Disaster Management within their communities. Let us not forget - Disaster Management is everyone's business.

This publication comes at a critical time when disaster management stakeholders are expected to develop and refine their Winter Contingency Plans. Contingency planning is essential to ensure that we are prepared to act swiftly and effectively when disasters strike. It involves anticipating potential hazards, establishing clear response mechanisms, and equipping ourselves with the tools and systems needed to manage emergencies. It also requires regular simulations and drills to identify and address any gaps in our response strategies.

Moreover, the release of this publication coincides with the national and global observance of World Environment Day, which calls for collective action to combat climate change and prevent further environmental degradation for the benefit of current and future generations. These efforts are crucial in reducing the risk and impact of disasters, and in ensuring that our interventions not only respond to emergencies but also contribute to long-term resilience and sustainability.

Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Centre commemorated International Firefighters' Day on 4 May in the Mopani District Municipality. This day is dedicated to honouring the courage, dedication, and sacrifices of firefighters across the globe. It is an opportunity to recognise the critical role they play in protecting communities

from the devastating effects of fires and other emergencies. Importantly, it also serves as a time to remember those firefighters who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty.

Firefighters face dangerous situations daily; bravely confronting flames, rescuing individuals, and providing essential emergency services. International Firefighters' Day allows us to acknowledge their bravery and the immense risks they take to safeguard lives and property. It also fosters a spirit of global unity among firefighters, underscoring their shared commitment to serve, regardless of location.

I take this opportunity to encourage all community members to remain vigilant and to respond promptly to Early Warning messages issued by the South African Weather Service, so they can take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their property.

The NDMC is committed to publishing this newsletter quarterly, as a platform to share disaster risk management-related information with stakeholders. I look forward to your contributions and invite stakeholders to submit their articles to Mr Bakang Mebalo at BakangM@ndmc.gov.za before the end of each quarter.



Dr Bongani Elias Sithole

Head: National Disaster Management Centre
Department of Cooperative Governance

Capricorn District Empowers Learners Through Disaster Risk Reduction Schools Competition Limpopo, South Africa – July 2025

By: Bakang Mebalo

In a proactive move to foster a culture of safety and preparedness among the youth, the Capricorn District Municipality hosted its annual Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Schools Competition this month. The event brought together learners from across the district's municipalities to showcase their knowledge, creativity, and commitment to building resilient communities.

Organised by the District's Disaster Management Centre in partnership with the Department of Basic Education and local stakeholders, the competition aimed to strengthen awareness of disaster risk among school-going youth, in line with national and international frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the National Disaster Management Framework.

This year's competition theme, "Empowering Youth for a Safer Future", focused on the role of learners in promoting disaster risk awareness at school and in their communities. Participating schools engaged in various activities including:

- Poster and art design
- Poetry and drama performances
- Essay writing
- Oral presentations on disaster preparedness, climate change, and local hazards

The competition served not only as an educational platform but also as an opportunity to identify young champions who can advocate for risk reduction and environmental protection in their schools and homes.

Capricorn District Executive Mayor, Cllr. [Insert Name], commended the learners for their active participation and creativity. "Disaster risk reduction is not the responsibility of government alone," the Mayor said. "We need the energy, ideas, and leadership of young people to build safer, more resilient communities."



Mr Harold Kgwetiane

Representing the NDMC during DRM School Competition.

The winning schools and individuals received certificates, trophies, and educational resources, while all participants walked away with increased knowledge of how to prevent and respond to hazards such as floods, fires, droughts, and disease outbreaks.

Representatives from the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), South African Weather Service (SAWS), and Environmental Affairs were also present to offer guidance and reinforce the importance of early warning systems and community-based disaster preparedness.

The Capricorn DRR Schools Competition forms part of broader efforts to integrate disaster risk education into the school curriculum and to promote inclusive risk awareness—ensuring that children from rural areas, learners with disabilities, and non-traditional learners are not left behind.

As the summer season approaches, the District will continue to roll out education and awareness campaigns, building on the momentum of the competition to encourage behavioural change and preparedness at all levels of society.



Image 1: Certificate of Appreciation to NDMC in the 2025 District Disaster Management School Competition.



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CENTRE (NDMC) COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTER'S DAY

THEME : *“A day to honour the bravery, commitment, and sacrifices of firefighters worldwide.”*

By: Bakang Mebalo

International Firefighters' Day, observed annually on the 4th of May, serves as a tribute to firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty while performing acts of bravery and selflessness. Established in 1999 following the tragic loss of five firefighters during a wildfire in Australia, the day also coincides with Saint Florian's Day, the patron saint of firefighters. It is marked globally through memorial services, parades, and fire safety awareness campaigns, both to honour the sacrifices of firefighters and to educate communities on fire prevention and safety.

In this spirit, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), in collaboration with various disaster management stakeholders, commemorated International Firefighters' Day within the Mopani District Municipality in Limpopo Province.

The event not only honoured the dedication and courage of firefighters but also formed part of the Centre's broader initiative to raise awareness and enhance preparedness for winter season hazards, particularly veldfires and shack fires.

Winter in South Africa sees a rise in shack fires, especially in informal settlements, due to increased use of unsafe heating and cooking methods like braziers, paraffin stoves, and candles. These fires spread rapidly, causing severe damage, injuries, and fatalities.

Contributing factors include overcrowded and poorly ventilated structures, use of open flames, illegal and faulty electrical connections, lack of fire safety equipment, and limited public awareness. These conditions highlight the urgent need for fire safety education and preventative measures during the winter season.

Western Cape Commemorates International Firefighters' Day

On 4 May 2025, the Western Cape Department of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning commemorated International Firefighters' Day. Minister Anton Bredell expressed gratitude to firefighters for their vital role in protecting communities, describing the day as an opportunity to honour these essential frontline men and women.

With winter approaching, the Minister warned of a shift in fire risks—from wildfires to domestic fires caused by open flames, paraffin heaters, and increased loadshedding. He urged the public to exercise caution when using gas heaters or candles during power outages and emphasised the importance of early warning systems: "Installing a smoke alarm is a good investment—it can save your life," said Bredell.

This year's commemoration carried a particularly sombre tone following the tragic loss of three firefighters in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. On 15 July 2024, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr. Velenkosini Hlabisa, expressed deep sadness over the incident, paying tribute to the courage and dedication of the fallen firefighters who succumbed to injuries sustained in the line of duty.

The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), as a key institution in the administration of fire services, used the occasion of International Firefighters' Day not only to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, but also to highlight the critical importance of municipal readiness and preparedness ahead of the winter season. With increased risks of shack and veldfires during this period, the commemoration served as a timely reminder of the need to strengthen fire prevention measures and community awareness across the country.

Fires can quickly engulf structures, result in significant property damage, injuries, and even fatalities, highlighting the need for preventative measures and fire safety education, the following tips on how to prevent shack fires can be applied:

- » Turn off all electrical appliances if power failure occurs in your area.
- » Never overload wall sockets, as this might start fire.

- » Do not leave pots unattended on a stove when cooking.
- » Ensure that your stove and candles are well placed in a balanced surface and cannot fall any time.
- » Make sure you do not leave or fall asleep while your candles, heaters, braziers of paraffin stove are still switched on.
- » Educate children about the dangers of a fire and what they should do if they find themselves in a dangerous situation.
- » Store matches and lighters up high, out of reach of children.
- » Do not leave your children alone in the house when these items (candles, heaters, braziers, & Paraffin stove) are on and these might endanger them.
- » If you have security bars on your windows or doors, make sure there is a release mechanism that works and that everyone in the household knows how to use them.

International Firefighters' Day is a poignant occasion to honour both past and present firefighters, remember those who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty, and express deep gratitude for the vital role they play in safeguarding our communities.

This day reminds us of the inherent risks firefighters face—battling fierce blazes, navigating hazardous environments, and responding to life-threatening emergencies. These courageous individuals often operate in unpredictable and dangerous situations, guided by a steadfast commitment to saving lives and protecting property.

But their contribution extends beyond emergency response. Firefighters are also educators and advocates, actively working within communities to prevent fires and promote safety through outreach and awareness campaigns.

Commemorating this day is more than a symbolic gesture. It is a call to strengthen our support for these brave men and women, to recognise their sacrifices and unwavering service, and to reaffirm our commitment to their safety and well-being. In doing so, we build stronger community bonds and ensure that those who protect us feel valued, appreciated, and empowered to continue their lifesaving work.



Image: Ms Jenniffer Kokoloto and Mr Dechlan Pillay (Launching of Climate Change Adaptation Response Plan (CARP) for South Africa's Coastal Sector

World Environment Day and Celebration of the Inaugural Climate Change Adaptation Response Plan (CARP) for the Coastal Sector.

By: Ms Jenniffer Kolokoto

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, Dr Dion George had on 05 June 2025, launched South Africa's inaugural Climate Change Coastal Adaption Response Plan (CARP). This launch coincided with the World Environment Day that is marked and commemorated annually on 06 June since 1973. In attendance from the National Disaster Management Centre, were Ms Jennifer Kolokoto, the Director for Disaster Risk Reduction, Planning and Strategies, Ms Shelter Muntswu, the Deputy Director for Disaster Risk Reduction, Planning and Strategies, and Mr Dechlan Pillay, the Director for Disaster Risk Assessment and Early Warning.

The two (2) events were a partnership of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), the GIZ, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality and Extrupet (Recycling company). In his opening remarks, the Minister of DFFE, Dr Dion George, indicated that the 2 events showcased South Africa's deep commitment to playing a pivotal role in shaping the global discourse on environmental sustainability and climate action.

As a signatory to key international agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the country is further demonstrating its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

Accordingly, the commemoration was also, an endeavor for DFFE and its partners, to support the country's commitment to the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group, that DFFE is leading, the Minister said. He further said; "South Africa contributes to global discussions on biodiversity conservation, sustainable land and ocean management, circular economy, and pollution reduction. It also underscores the importance of implementation support for developing economy countries, ensuring that climate and environmental targets are not only ambitious but also achievable. As the G20 increasingly focuses on aligning economic recovery with green development, South Africa continues to advocate for a balanced approach – one that upholds the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities".

The theme for the 2025 World Environment Day is "Beat Plastic Pollution". The commemoration was a global call to action – urging governments, cities, organizations, and industries to invest in and implement sustainable solutions to end plastic pollution and foster a circular economy. It was reiterated that these issues are deeply interconnected, driven by the three global environmental crises (climate change; biodiversity loss and pollution), that the entire world is facing, also exacerbated by human activity and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, demand urgent, coordinated action across all levels of society.

In his remarks, Minister George highlighted the undeniable benefits that plastics bring from energy savings to material conservation. He However acknowledged the growing crisis of plastic pollution which is threatening both the planet and human well-being. These sentiments were also echoed by the Head of the UNEP, Southern Africa Region, Dr Zemedkun when he said that, while plastics have benefits when used responsibly, their pollution is also a global crisis that affects nature and human health. He also urged for collaborative efforts to secure a future with resilient ecosystems, thriving economies, and a healthier planet. The emphasis from both speakers was that "the rewards for combating plastic pollution are very profound:

cleaner oceans and lands, healthier people and ecosystems, greater climate resilience and stronger economies".

CARP serves as a unifying roadmap offering clear direction for protecting coastal assets, enabling equitable adaptation, and unlocking new opportunities in the blue and coastal economy. Minister George in his remarks, indicated that CARP is a groundbreaking national adaptation strategy that will build resilience across the country's coastal areas, ecosystems, and communities in the face of climate change. This strategy, accordingly, aims to respond to increasing risks posed by sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ongoing development pressure. It also serves to protect coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural systems through proactive planning, risk-informed development, and collaborative governance. The plan is first-of-its-kind, providing the sector specific adaptation framework that is grounded in science, inclusivity, and local relevance.

The launch of CARP comes handy as it is anchored in Goal C5 of the White Paper for Sustainable Coastal Development in South Africa, calling for "responsible coastal planning to minimize exposure to natural hazards and support resilient development". Furthermore, Minister George expressed his sentiments about the extended value of the CARP in other development efforts such as Operation Phakisa, that "having a robust Climate Change Coastal Adaptation Response Plans is essential to supporting South Africa's Operation Phakisa efforts to achieve sustainable oceans economy". Operation Phakisa aims to unlock the full potential of South Africa's ocean economy, spanning sectors such as marine transport, aquaculture, tourism, and offshore resources. To realise more gains that come with the CARP, the Minister emphasized the need for integration of climate resilience into planning and development.

CARP and the theme for the 2025 World Environment Day is "Beat Plastic Pollution have a relationship with the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002, as amended as they all provide measures towards healthier ecosystems, greater climate resilience and stronger economies by preventing, reducing and mitigating the effects of disasters. The Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002, as amended aims for the integration and coordination of disaster management policy

focusing on preventing and reducing the risks of disasters through amongst others, adaptation to Climate Change and developing effective early warning mechanisms. To address the underlying risks of disasters, calls for an urgent paradigm shift- towards Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation mainstreaming. This implies that there is a need to develop and strengthen climate change strategies or adaptation plans and incorporate climate related disaster risk reduction strategies into the disaster management plans and other development related plans and programmes, for all organs of state, including municipalities and sector departments. CARP is but one of the key strategies to play a role in this regard.

The integration of DRR and other development strategies such as CARP will strengthen disaster risk governance, investment in risk mitigation, emergency preparedness for effective response and “building back better” in recovery (rehabilitation and reconstruction). This will also assist users to achieve the 7 global targets and 38 indicators of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (2015- 2030). These indicators align the implementation of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002, as amended, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (2015- 2030), the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement on climate change, requiring that we move away from managing disasters to managing risks.

Climate change continues to exacerbate the frequency and severity of natural disaster, therefore to effectively manage our coastal assets amid climate change, officials and decision makers in coastal municipalities not leaving the local communities behind, must be equipped with knowledge, resources, and institutional support necessary to respond to growing risks.

This can be achieved through:

- Training and skill development for example, providing targeted training for municipal officials in climate change adaptation, coastal zone management, and risk assessment.
- Access climate and coastal data including equipping municipalities with real-time data, early warning systems, planning tools to inform evidence-based decision-making.
- Strengthening collaboration and community engagement, this entails fostering partnerships between local governments, communities, scientist, NGOs, and private sectors for inclusive and adaptive coastal management.
- Say no to single-use plastics: Decline plastic straws, utensils, and bags when offered
- Choose reusable options: invest in reusable shopping bags, water bottles, coffee cups, and food containers
- Be mindful of packaging: Choose products with less packaging and support brands committed to reduce plastic waster.

To strengthen our country’s response plan to climate change-related coastal risks, DFFE in Collaboration with the GIZ, CSIR, UNEP, UNDP, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality and Extrupet (Recycling Company) developed the Climate Change Coastal Adaptation Response Plan for South Africa’s coastal sectors. This Plan provides a strategic framework to guide national, provincial and local government efforts in building resilience. It identifies key vulnerabilities, outlines priority adaptation actions, and promote an integrated, ecosystem-based approach to managing climate risks.

All sectors, government, business, civil society, and individuals were called to join hands in implementing this vital plan, the CARP, with an emphasis that by aligning climate adaptation with economic development, South Africa can build a thriving, inclusive, and climate-resilient blue economy that benefits both the people and the planet.

