

# Media Release- 7 September 2001

## Kruger National Park Fire Disaster Update

A memorial service will be held in the Kruger National Park (Skukuza rugby field) at 13:00 on Tuesday, 11 September, for the victims of the fire which destroyed 45 000 hectares of the park earlier this week. 23 people died in the blaze.

Two of the injured are still in hospital. They are Kruger game rangers Moses Lekhuleni, who is still in intensive care, and Sandros Ngwenya who has been released from ICU and whose condition is improving.

During the identification process held yesterday, nine of the contractors were positively identified, as well as four of the SANParks staff members. Psychologists were on hand to assist the bereaved families. The Kruger National Park is also assisting the families with basic necessities such as food, water, wood and tents.

A group of counselors from the Department of Social Welfare in Mpumalanga today started working with the staff members who assisted with the rescue and with the families of the deceased.

The Mpumalanga Council of Churches, under the leadership of Dr Mthembu (General Secretary) this morning conducted a prayer meeting at the camp where the contract workers were housed.

Thirty elephant and four rhino bodies have been recovered. A final animal count is not available yet.

The fire is under control, with small patches still burning.

SANParks has received numerous queries from visitors who have bookings at the Kruger National Park. According to the rangers on the ground, the game viewing experience will not be affected by this natural disaster which has affected only a tiny area of the 2-million hectare park. In fact, once the burned grass starts sprouting green shoots in the next couple of weeks, the animals, especially browsers who prefer open spaces, will flock to the affected areas to taste the succulent new sprouts. This, in turn, will attract predators.

No tourist facilities, other than the Napi Hiking Trail camp, have been affected.

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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