



Republic of Namibia

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

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Press Release

(For Immediate Release)

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Update on veld fires for last two weeks

The fire that was burning in Stenhausen District in Hardap region has been contained after raging for at least four days causing massive destruction to properties.

Fire continues to be a big challenge in the country with reports been received on a daily basis. In the period of two weeks, Namibia has recorded a total of 27 veld fires country wide, burning 59 farms covering 143 000 hectors. The fires were recorded in areas of Outjo- Otjiwarongo Districts; Steinhausen District; Windhoek District; Otjiwarongo Okahandja Districts; Tsumeb – Tsintsabis District and Zambezi Region.

A massive total of 135 livestock and 75 wild animals were killed in the fire. The fire has also led to destruction of infrastructure like fences and waterpipes. Most of the fires are believed to have been caused by Arsonists and Charcoal burners. Fortunately, there has been no fatalities reported in the last two weeks.

The Ministry is busy with a comprehensive assessment of damages caused by the fire. We wish to thank the Ministry's officials, private farmers, NAMPOL, NDF, Town Councils, Otjiwarongo Fire fighters Group, Neighborhood watches, Fire Brigades and in some instance members of the public for their collaborative efforts and prompt responses to extinguish fires whenever required.

The Ministry continues to monitor the outbreaks of forest and veld fires nationwide based on remote sensing and aerial surveillance techniques. The main causes of the forest and veld fires have been charcoal production operations, mechanical appliances such as graders, recreational activities such as picnics, smokers, and local natural resource management-related activities such as hunting, honey production and thatch-grass harvesting.

Considering the fact that fires are occurring at an unacceptable frequency and intensity, and to adequately address these challenges, the Ministry reiterates our call to the public, to report any fires to the Ministry as soon as possible for swift response as well as to observe the following measures and good practices:

- Members of the public are required to use fire responsibly and advised to clear areas around their homesteads and places of residence,
- Parents must ensure that children do not light fires without supervision,
- Before starting a fire, check the surrounding to assess the risk (flammable materials, wind speed etc.) of burning beyond the intended area,
- Where required, put in place preventative measures to stop the fire from spreading to unintended places,
- Charcoal makers must take fire preventative measures when involved in charcoal making activities,
- Smokers should put out their cigarette butts completely and dispose them of in rubbish bins.
- People using fires for domestic purposes such as cooking, heating, welding, camping et cetera, must ensure that fires are totally extinguished afterwards,
- When using fire to clear a specific area, be sure to inform relevant officials to advise including Nature conservation, forestry officials and the Namibian Police,
- Members of the public should continuously educate themselves on the dangers caused by forest/veld fires,
- Land owners should arrange proper cut lines and firebreak, on their land,
- Report wildfires to forestry offices near you.

Issued By:

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