



MEDIA RELEASE

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Knysna Municipality is in a rebuild phase

The greater Knysna Municipal area is still reeling under the shock of the recent fires that cut a swath of destruction throughout the province. “This catastrophe will help to develop the strength and resolve we need to face its aftermath,” said Executive Mayor Eleanore Bouw-Spies.

“This has been a reminder that we cannot escape the tragedies that arise in our lives,” she continued. “We search for reasons, but it is difficult to answer that question we’ve all asked ourselves: why did this happen to us? Nobody knows. But this disaster has once again shown us how strong we are as a people and as a community.”

Municipal Manager Kam Chetty added that losing everything one owns amounts to gross personal trauma and a deep sense of helplessness. “Despite the profound losses, the resilience shown by the Knysna community is extraordinary, and is a reflection of the Human Spirit. More importantly the unrepresented spirit of Ubuntu must be applauded, and embraced in the rebuilding of Knysna. The challenges facing the municipality is colossal and the urgency to get back to normality is insistent. Now more than ever, we need the community of Knysna to work in harmony and to demonstrate the spirit of Ubuntu in rebuilding Knysna.” The need for reconstruction aid to support the rebuilding efforts are considerable, and includes skills, technical expertise, financial resources, and mutual support. The municipality, continues to develop processes and programmes to facilitate the rebuilding efforts within its constraints and is grateful to the Knysna community and other South Africans who have and continue to volunteer their services.

Aid received

“During the first two weeks immediately after the fire we experienced an unrepresented willingness to assist the Knysna community with emergency aid, driven by humanitarian spirit. Our citizens, neighbours throughout the province and many other South Africans have poured their love and support into Knysna by sending water, food, clothes and other donations,” said Bouw-Spies

Numerous organisations, assisted in both raising and distributing aid – that was divided into food parcels, water, clothing, toiletries, necessities for infants, mattresses and blankets. The municipality assisted with providing collection centres at Spring Street and Woodmill Walk Knysna. From here, this aid was distributed to municipal distribution points at:

- the Hornlee Civic Centre;
- Concordia High School;

- the Brenton Community Hall;
- the Sedgefield Town Hall;
- Chris Nissen High School Hall;
- the Khayaletu Hall;
- the Brenton on Sea Community Hall;
- the Knysna Vineyard Church; and
- the Methodist Church.

“We are sincerely grateful to the myriad organisations - non-governmental organisations (NGO) and private entities - for their assistance. Given the scale of the response and the efforts of the numerous people and organisations – it was impossible in the aftermath of the disaster to coordinate the numerous efforts of receiving and distributing relief. As such, the municipality relies on the governance and accountability of each organisation to ensure that the aid that they provided is effectively managed,” said Chetty.

“A more systematic approach to distributing aid will be employed going forward,” explained Bouw-Spies. “The mandate of managing this aspect of a crisis like this falls to the Department of Social Development (DSD). The results of our surveys are being vetted to determine exactly what aid is required by whom. This information, along with the aid this municipality has received, will be handed to the DSD or their appointed agent. The DSD will then set up the necessary infrastructure and coordinate the relief aid.”

The Knysna Fire Disaster Relief Fund

“Of course, we also received monetary donations,” Bouw-Spies confirmed. “The Knysna Fire Disaster Relief Fund is held in an account with Nedbank, and none of these funds have been spent yet.”

In its resolution dated 15 June 2017, the Knysna Council unanimously resolved that the Municipal Manager be appointed as the Accounting Officer of this fund and the associated bank account. Chetty, along with Chief Financial Officer Mbulelo Memani, are the signatories on this account and both signatories are required to authorise any withdrawals. The Fund currently has R1.3 million in its account, and is earmarked for the post disaster reconstruction. Our initial estimates suggest that the cost of rehabilitation infrastructure is R113 million (this excludes a further R30 million for environmental damage.)

A business fund will be established, to receive and manage private financial donations on behalf of Knysna. The governance of this fund will include highly experienced people Knysna, and other financial experts. Bouw-Spies assures residents that, while this is a private initiative, every aspect of the management of this fund and its associated spend will be made public on an ongoing basis. “Regular reports of funds received and the status of its implementation on projects will be available on an ongoing, updated basis.”

This fund does not include:

- the money made available to the province by the Western Cape Cabinet,” she said. “The Western Cape Provincial Government R75 million has been earmarked to address the damage caused throughout the entire province. This includes the entire Garden Route and extended areas affected by the fire, as well as the areas ravaged by the storm that raged throughout the Cape while we burned. This fund will target the rehabilitation of provincial infrastructure across the Province damaged through the disasters.”

- We are also aware that numerous private and NGOs have raised finance for projects and programmes that these organisations are implementing. Again we welcome these independent initiatives and urge these organisations to share the information on these programmes with the municipality in an effort to coordinate the rebuild efforts.

Waiver of fees

“With hundreds of houses having been devoured by the flames, many of our residents are already looking at rebuilding their homes,” Bouw-Spies continued. “We must help you in your brave efforts to restore what you have lost. As such, we have waived certain building related fees. We do realise that many residents have many questions regarding the processes of demolition and rebuilding. A full-service help desk will be opened on the ground floor of the municipal building at 3 Church Street, next to the magistrates’ courts. This help desk will be operational as of Monday 26 July and residents with any related questions are urged to make use of this facility.”

Council has resolved to waive fees under the following items of the tariffs list:

- 4.5 (connection fees);
- 5.3 – 5.6 of the tariffs list;
- 5.11 (new connections);
- 7.10 (swimming pool backwash);
- 15.3.2 (hoarding rental); and
- 15.1 – 15.3 (excluding additions and alterations).

Any landowner of a property who suffered damages as a result of the fire qualify for the waiving of these fees, for approved building standards. For more information on these items of the tariff list, please visit the help desk in Church Street between 9:00 and 15:00.

Clearing of sites, removal of asbestos

Rubble Without Asbestos

Rebuilding requires cleaning existing sites. Garden waste may be deposited at the Old Place garden refuse site, free of charge. Building rubble may currently be disposed of at the private sites at Harkerville or Blaricum Heights, Simola. Disposal fees are R25.00 (plus VAT) per cubic meter and R40.00 (plus VAT) per LDV load. Mixed loads will be sorted at R325.00 per cubic meter. These facilities are open during the following hours:

Monday – Thursday, 7:30 – 16:30

Friday 7:30 – 14:00

Saturday 8:00 – 13:00

Rubble with Asbestos

“I know that there has been a lot of questions regarding the removal of asbestos from damaged properties,” Chetty said. “Registered asbestos contractors (RAC) are required to meet the occupational health and safety standards before registering with the Department of Labour. Their operating procedures reduce and can even prevent the generation of asbestos dust. These contractors have processes in place to protect their workers and to limit asbestos contamination of the environment. Please only make use of an RAC when demolishing buildings that contain asbestos, or when removing and disposing of material containing asbestos.”

The following companies are licenced to remove and dispose of this kind of waste, and operate within our region:

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Asbesaway	Kobus	021 945 2423	info@gutterinnovations.co.za
Drizit Environmental	David Stone	083 448 8366 021 510 7010	stone@drizit.co.za
Envirologic	Chris Bouwer	082 737 7378	ellogic@afrihost.co.za
Enviro Tech SA	Duane de Lange	083 264 5289	duane@envirotechsa.co.za
Ikar: Asbestos Removal	Ivan Coetzer	071 360 5857	iva@ikar.co.za
Industec	Hugo Kotze	083 654 4274 011 826 3991	hk.industec@mweb.co.za belind.iws@mweb.co.za
Interwaste		011 323 7300	sales@interwaste.co.za george@interwaste.co.za

Water

“Knysna Municipality is under severe water stress, our Akkerkloof dam is currently at 30% which equates to only 19 days of water. As per our latest water report consumption is still high, Knysna is 11,79ML/day (preferred 10ML/day) and Sedgefield is 2.15 ML/day (preferred 1.9ML/day). Potable water remains under severe pressure and we are still operating under level three water restrictions. We urge residents to use water sparingly and to be our eyes and ears on the ground and report water abuse.”

Please report all water abuse to the Municipal report WhatsApp number 083 665 3824/ call 044 302 6331.

Water-saving tips are available on the Knysna Municipality website www.knysna.gov.za

“To assist residents further, we are currently securing water tankers to provide builders with a few litres of water for building,” announced Bouw-Spies. “We ask builders to ensure that they have storage for a minimum of 500l on site. This will help our tankers to deliver and operate efficiently. If landowners can capture rainwater for building purposes, we ask that you do so, and that you look at other alternative sources to augment your water supply for building purposes.”

Insurance

Chetty indicated that he is aware that some residents are having problems resolving their insurance claims. “My office will invite the relevant Ombudsman to visit Knysna, to assist with these challenges. We will create a platform where affected parties may raise their issues and concerns with him, so that these may be resolved. Please watch the press and our social networking platforms for more information.”

Meetings

Chetty agreed that we need more focused communication with the affected people. “I am planning on hosting face-to-face focus groups where I will meet with groups of affected persons,” he said. “It is important that I meet with those who have been affected, and that I hear their stories first hand. That I listen to their needs and their ideas in reconstructing Knysna.”

“The municipality sent out several communiques during the fires. These were sent via numerous communication channels that include, but are not limited to, SMS, social media, the municipal app, loud hailing, radio and television. Information was disseminated each half hour via social media and our app, daily press releases were issued to local and national media, daily press conferences were hosted and various radio and television interviews were conducted to ensure that the public were kept abreast with the latest developments.”

We will continue to improve our communications with the Greater Knysna community, starting with the series of meetings with the affected households. “I am looking forward to meeting with those affected. Dates, times and venues of these focus groups will be confirmed and communicated via the media.”

ENDS

Knysna Municipality Communications Department

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