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Knysna Remembers

7 June 2017 will always bring back the memories of a day waking up to the smell of smoke and hot winds.

The day unfolded into the biggest wildfire occurrence in South African history. While many of the environmental scars have quickly grown over, the scars of the loss of life and personal belongings will still take much longer to heal.

In the midst of this all, Knysna has shown resilience and the will to survive. The true human spirit has risen above the tragedy and people have stood together over time to support and encourage each other.

“I applaud that spirit as the depiction of what the iconic “Knysna Rises” symbol embodies. We as a community have now to ensure that such a tragedy never again occurs by ensuring that the fuel that fed the fire is eradicated”, says Knysna Executive Mayor, Mark Willemse.

“All efforts must be put towards ensuring alien vegetation is eradicated from private land as well the municipality taking care of its own land in this regard.

“While there are many scars to remind us of the tragedy of two years ago, I encourage our community to continue to work together and build on that spirit of healing to ensure our beautiful town continues to be the Knysna we all love and care for”, Willemse concluded.

According to the municipality’s environmental department the environment, two years post the fire, is doing marvellously.

Before the Knysna fires raged through the Garden Route, invasive alien plants were rife throughout the landscape. Two years later the municipality has mobilised a very successful programme around skilling, equipping and creating awareness regarding alien vegetation in the area. The municipality received a three-year external grant that will aid in eradicating alien vegetation. Private landowners are also encouraged to do their part in eradicating alien vegetation on their properties.

The Building Inspectorate reported that 385 Demolition Permits have been processed to date. Provisional Authorization Permits and building plans were granted for 197 applicants in those instances where fire victims re-instated their previously approved plans. It must be noted that fire victims had the option to re-instate their previously approved building plans or apply to build a brand new top structure. Council also approved a waiver for the application fees for fire victims.

The municipality advised that property owners need to demolish dilapidated structures as soon as possible in order to promote public safety and avoid the risk of liabilities in case of injuries or loss of life.

ENDS
