

New Fire Chief has climbed the career ladder from inside Knysna Municipality.

Knysna Municipality wishes to congratulate Ian Bezuidenhout, a born and bred local, on his appointment as Chief Fire Officer.

“Mr Bezuidenhout has worked very hard to attain this position,” said Municipal Manager Dr Vatala. “He started as a volunteer firefighter in 1998 and signed a year-long contract in 1999. He was appointed as a trainee fireman in 2000 and promoted to fireman in 2003 and to senior fireman in 2008. He was promoted to Station Commander by 2010 and now, after all due process had been followed, has been appointed as our new Chief Fire Officer.”

Mr Bezuidenhout does not only have the necessary experience, but the education to back it up. He holds a higher certificate, diploma and higher diploma in Fire Technology from the South African Emergency Services Institute, a higher certificate in Veldfire Management from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and a diploma in Public Accountability from the University of Stellenbosch.

“My first priority is the safety of the Greater Knysna area and her residents,” said new Fire Chief Ian Bezuidenhout. “Regular inspections will be carried out to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations. I plan to promote prescribed burning and to assist landowners in reducing risk factors – which also allows firefighters to practise their skills in a controlled environment. We are working on creating partnerships with our communities through various outreach programmes. I realise that there are many lessons to be learned from the 2017 fires, and look forward to addressing identified shortcomings.”

He also has plans in store for his teammates. “I will ensure that all firefighters are adequately qualified,” he said. “This will require the continuous training of staff and regular practise drills. “I have already changed the structure of this department to make provision for active career pathing, and hope to implement a management style that invites input and does not rely on taking purely authoritarian decisions. I am conscious that I need to lead by example, and practise what I preach.”

Mr Bezuidenhout comes from a large local family. “My father was a furniture maker and my mother a housewife. I am the youngest of five brothers and have another five sisters. Now I am married and have two children of my own. I am very proud and honoured to take on the role of Chief Fire Officer in my own hometown. I have applied for this position twice before, but not giving up is what motivates me – and I am more motivated than ever before.”

“I am very pleased that the municipality is growing its own timber, as it were,” he concluded. “I can guarantee that my team and I shall do everything we can to create a safe environment for our communities, and those who visit our beautiful area.”

ENDS
