

MEDIA RELEASE - 5 September 2001

Update on fire in the Pretoriuskop area of the Kruger National Park

A fire broke out in the Pretoriuskop area of the Kruger National Park late on Tuesday afternoon. The cause of the fire is not yet known. As a result of the prevailing windy conditions, the fire got out of control despite the valiant efforts by the park's Fire Fighting department to keep it under control.

Nineteen people lost their lives in the runaway fire, 15 of whom came from the surrounding villages and had been contracted by the park to cut grass as part of normal park management practice. The temporary camp set up to house them was surrounded by the blaze and they died of suffocation. The other four victims are Kruger Park field rangers combating the blaze.

The Napi Trails camp east of the Pretoriuskop restcamp was also engulfed by the fire, but fortunately there were no human casualties. The eight trailists who were planning to stay overnight at the camp were safely evacuated to the main restcamp at Pretoriuskop.

There has been no damage to any other camps in the park.

Four elephants have been reported killed by the fire.

The fire is still burning, but it has now been brought under control. A Disaster Management Committee has been set up to manage the situation.

The Chairman of the Board of SANParks is instituting an official enquiry into the circumstances of the fire.

In the meantime, a Disaster Relief Fund to help the families who have lost their loved ones to this disaster has been set up. SANParks and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism have each donated R100 000 to the fund.

The bank details for the KNP Fire Disaster Fund are as follows:

KNP Fire Disaster Fund
ABSA Current
Acct no: 40 54 043 666

The management and staff of South African National Parks would like to express their sincere condolences with the families and friends of the victims.

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