

HOW FIREWISE ARE YOU ?

VITAL INFORMATION

**for every property owner in the FIREWISE
COMMUNITIES**

of BETTY'S BAY, PRINGLE BAY & ROOI ELS



**Contact details for your local FIREWISE
committee:**

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**Betty's Bay: Liz Cartwright - 074 1417600
Amaizulu.yahoo.co.uk**

**Rooiels: Harold Miller – 082 898202
lifeisgood@iafrica.com**

PLEASE READ

AND TAKE ACTION!

KEEP THIS BOOKLET HANDY

FOR FIRE EMERGENCIES



OFFICE of THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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Overstrand municipality is situated in a beautiful region and therefore attracts local and international visitors who come to experience the natural beauty of the region. However, over the past several years this natural beauty has come under threat due to many devastating fires. The rapidly increasing population and continuing urban and suburban development, poses a heightened risk of fires occurring. Combined with the presence of highly combustible vegetation, alien and endemic, along with naturally occurring high winds causing fires to burn out of control, the frequency of devastation has increased and the impact has become far greater. Fires have a negative effect, impacting the safety, social and economic well being of communities.

In order to mitigate the potentially devastating impact of these fires, Overstrand Fire and Rescue Services put strategies into place to ensure a safe and healthy environment and to promote sustainable economic growth within our Communities.

Where the Overstrand Municipality has a mandate to provide a safe and healthy environment by reducing the risks and impact of fires in and around urban and suburban areas, this is a shared responsibility in which land owners and the community must participate.

If the devastation that results from urban fires is to be mitigated, it is important to acknowledge that the condition of resident's and of vacant erven in urban and suburban areas must be maintained in accordance with fire-wise principles.

After all "FIRE IS EVERYONE'S FIGHT"

Kind regards

L. Smith

Chief Fire Officer

WHAT IS A 'FIREWISE COMMUNITY'... AND WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?



We live in an EXTREME fire risk region!.. and due to global warming that risk is rising!

You've already noticed the increase in wind strength, heavy rain storms and lightening in this area! But even more alarming is the fact that experts say that with every 1 degree increase in global temperature there's a 29% increase in fire risk

When America lost 1400 homes to fires in 1998, they formulated a system that South Africa's 'Working on Fire' has studied and brought back to this country.

It involves the realization that reducing the risk of fire is **EVERYONE'S** responsibility... town planners, architects, developers, builders, official and voluntary fire-fighters... and, of course, each and every property owner!

Pringle Bay, Betty's Bay and Rooi Els have been selected to become the **FIRST FIREWISE COMMUNITIES** in South Africa

WHAT DOES BEING A FIREWISE COMMUNITY INVOLVE?

1. Communities form their own **FIREWISE COMMITTEE**, representing community stakeholders plus representatives from Cape Nature and the Fire Brigade.
2. The Committee does a village **FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT** (An ideal rating is 40 – 64 points – not the 135 – 156 **EXTREME RISK** rating scored by our villages!)
3. Once the risk level is established, a **STRATEGY** is drawn up to reduce fire risk and increase the community's ability to prevent and limit fire damage. This includes property owners assessing their own fire risk.
4. Every property owner works to reduce their **PERSONAL FIRE RISK** as well as the **COMMUNITY FIRE RISKS**.
5. **PROGRESS** is monitored annually.

STEP 1

UNDERSTANDING OUR FIRE RISK



Niki Joone from Betty's Bay lost the house he lived in and everything he owned in the fire of May 2008

"It started behind my house in a howling gale... the smoke and noise woke me up ... but the wind pushed the flames onto the house so fast the only thing I got out was my parrot!"

We live in an extreme fire risk region! Due to global warming, that risk is rising rapidly!

We're MINUTES from disaster due to a combination of factors:

- **Fynbos** burns readily due to its fine and fibrous nature....
- **Aliens** (such as Rooikrans, gum trees and wattle, etc.) increase the fire fuel load, pushing the fire risk even higher...
- We have a high-traffic road skirting our villages with the ever-present risk of a cigarette butt being discarded by some thoughtless idiot....
- **ESKOM** power lines have collapsed in our gale-force winds...
- There are always those people who are unfortunately determined to braai despite the wind... **and the next thing, a spark could be fanned into a fire!**



"As things are now, in a strong wind, if we can't get to a fire within 5 minutes it will be OUT OF CONTROL!"

Overstrand Fire Chief, Riaan Jacob

What chance is there to get to a fire here within 5 minutes?

The reaction time of the fire-fighting units at Kleinmond and Pringle Bay is 10 – 20 minutes...so steps need to be taken to **slow down the fire!**

STEP 2



Imagine a 2 kilometer wide wall of fire approaching the village....you can hardly breathe in the dense smoke.... burning cinders are being swept into your property by gale-force South-Easter.....imagine your bushes suddenly fanned into flames...and the fire-fighters are nowhere in sight! It is too late to work out what to do!

Everything needed to save your home and possessions should already be in place!

It is vital to be properly insured....but even the best insurer can't replace your computer data, files, birth certificates, personal documents, family photos and favorite ornaments and works of art! How much time will it take to rebuild your life?

Obviously, we need to do everything we can to reduce the risk of a fire starting...and gain those precious 'extra minutes' that will help give firefighters a better chance to get the fire under control! Reducing the fire hazards can make it safer for you to stay and defend your home.

BEGIN NOW BY REMOVING ...

- ALL DEAD VEGETATION from your property and verge
- ALL FAST BURNING ALIEN INVASIVES (Rooikrans, Pampas Grass, Port Jackson, Black Wattle, gum trees, etc.) from your property and verge
- ALL BUSHES close to windows, glass doors, wood decks or beams, etc.

A well-maintained garden will reduce the fire intensity and help slow down the fire's progress. New gardens can be laid out as FireWise gardens....and if yours is an established or natural fynbos garden, you should work towards achieving a FireWise garden, year on year....

STEP 3

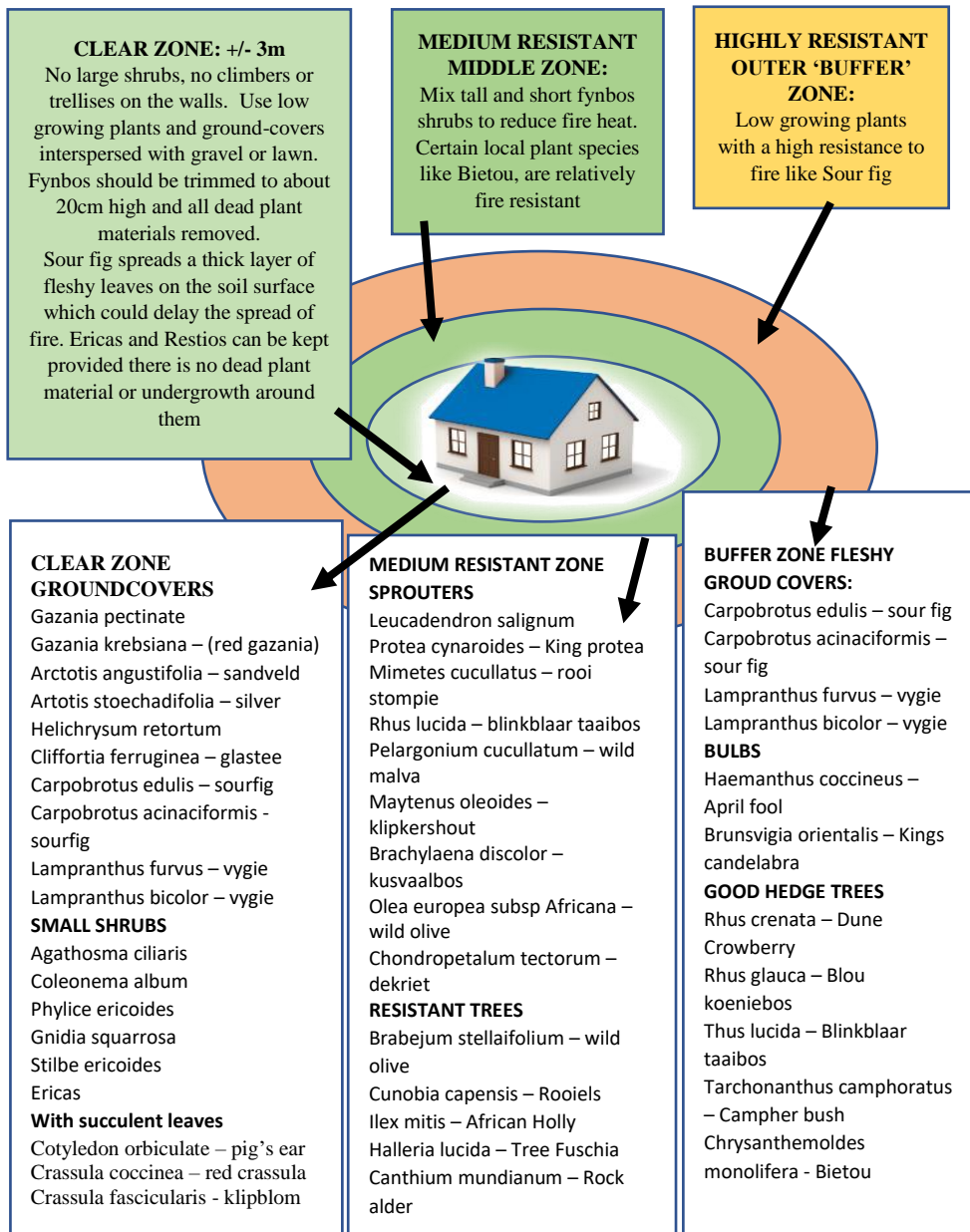
ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL FIRE RISK

UNDER 30 = LOW 30 - 60 = HIGH OVER 60 = EXTREME RISK		
MY PERSONAL FIRE RISK	YES	NO
Is your property up a slope and/or subject to strong South-Easters?	10	5
Is your property near a large, open, natural area or at risk from fires on neighbouring properties?	10	2
Do you regularly remove all aliens, dead wood and combustible material from your property	1	5
Are your LP gas cylinders fire safe and housed legally?	0	5
Is your house wood-framed or thatched?	10	0
Is your firewood and compost heap well away from buildings and plants?	2	5
Have you removed all substantial alien vegetation? (e.g. gums, wattle, myrtle, rooikrans and port jackson)	2	10
Is your hosepipe accessible - and can it reach right around your house?	2	5
Do you have any external electrical wiring hanging from trees and bushes?	5	0
Are fire hydrants in your vicinity clear of obstruction and easily accessible to fire fighters?	0	5
Can a fire engine easily access your property and around your house?	0	10
Do you or your neighbours ever burn garden waste	5	0
Are all your wooden decks, fences, etc. treated with fire-retardant and clear of any combustible materials? Are your roof trusses exposed under your eaves?	2	10
Do you or your neighbours ever braai without a hosepipe at hand on the ready?	5	0
If someone is running a fire-risk do you advise them how to be FireWise?	2	5
MY TOTAL FIRE RISK RATING		REDO THIS ASSESSMENT EVERY YEAR

STEP 4

MAINTAIN A FIREWISE GARDEN

A well-maintained garden will reduce a fire's intensity and help slow down its progress. SANBI recommends that new gardens are laid out in 3 FireWise 'zones'.. those with established gardens or natural fynbos erven should work towards achieving these FireWise ZONES, year by year



STAY INFORMED

The **Fire Danger** Index or Rating predicts the fire behavior should a fire start and also how dangerous attempting to extinguish the fire would be.

The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

On **Orange** and **Red** days
NO FIRES should be lit.



INSIGNIFICANT

- Expect cool conditions, high humidity
- The fire danger is low. Fires are not likely to ignite
- No precautions are needed

LOW

- Expect cool and low to moderate wind conditions
- Fires likely to ignite but spread slowly
- Prescribed burns may be allowed on the condition that reasonable precautions against fire spreading are taken and burn permits have been obtained

MODERATE

- Expect warm, dry and possibly windy conditions
- Fires ignite readily, spread easily but most likely to be controlled in these conditions
- No fires are allowed in the open are, except those that are authorized by the Chief Fire Officer, and those in designated fireplaces

HIGH

- Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions
- Fires ignite readily and spread very rapidly
- Fire spotting may occur
- No fires are allowed under any circumstances in the open air
- Be alert if a wildfire occurs, review your wildfire plan including preparation and evacuation procedures

EXTREME

- Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions
- If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving
- Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions
- No fires are allowed under any circumstances in the open air
- Be on High Alert if a wildfire occurs
- Review your special emergency fire preparedness measures
- Early evacuation in the case of a wildfire impacting your home is advised

STAY OR EVACUATE?

What to do....

Once you have assessed the fire risk and taken the physical steps to reduce the hazard, you must plan for a fire emergency. Decide whether to stay and defend your property... or evacuate. If you decide to evacuate, do so well before the fire approaches the area. A home is more likely to be saved if there are able-bodied people to quickly extinguish small fires on or near the house during a wild fire. But you need the proper equipment and you must be mentally and physically prepared to fight fire.

If you decide to stay....

1. Evacuate children and pets as well as the old and infirm, well in advance.

Only willing, able-bodied family members should be left to defend the home.



2. Have a kit of protective clothing ready. (Goggles and a tea-towel for over the nose and mouth to help reduce smoke inhalation.)

3. Keep a fire-fighting kit in readiness, (e.g. heavy, rubber fire beaters, a ladder, maps, buckets and garden hose with spray nozzle.)

4. Identify a safe escape route and rendezvous point should the situation become dangerous. No property is worth losing a life over! (NB. Burglar bars and safety gates could trap your family in the home, so be sure to consider this.)

5. Ensure that all household members know the fire plan. Rehearse it now until you are sure everyone knows exactly what to do.



6. Ensure easy access and turning space for emergency vehicles

7. Check the periphery of your home for potential hazards – remove combustible vegetation and garden furniture

8. Use your hose sprinkler system to help soak the area. NB. Wait until the fire is close by, as radiant heat accelerates evaporation.

9. Keep a fire extinguisher/s in the house. Bring the garden hose into the house as you will need it later and it could be destroyed by the fire. **DO NOT spray water onto windows**, as they may crack or shatter.

10. Once the fire is nearby, **close** all exterior openings and check the interior for stray embers. **Remove curtains** from window openings as these will easily **catch** **alight** if the window glass shatters in the heat!



11. Fill a bath and buckets as water pressure will drop dramatically due to other firefighting efforts.

12. If you need to **escape from the side of the house furthest from the fire**. Use heavy, wet blankets for shielding. Move to a safe, open area with limited fire risk.

13. Wait for the fire to pass before you leave your home and deal with spot fires in the yard. Check for trees, electrical or telephone poles that may still be burning. Douse with water, **but avoid any water coming into contact with electrical wiring**. Remember any firefighting equipment left outside, (hoses, plastic hose connectors, etc.) may have been damaged.

If you decide to evacuate.....

Ensure you do not hamper fire-fighters or fire-engines while making your exit. Assemble at your designated evacuation area:
PRINGLE BAY: Community Hall, Buffels Road, Pringle Bay, Main Parking area and/or Pringle Bay United Church.

BETTY'S BAY: Harold Porter Gardens, Stoney Point Colony and Crassula Hall will be the refreshment and information center and is where traumatized people and animals will receive attention.

ROOI ELS: The CBD parking, unless notified of a new location such as Parking area, Lovers Walk or Bathersway.

PREPARE YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE RISKS

A house that can survive a wildfire is one that has been prepared well before the wildfire season started. In this section we focus on your home, however, the proximity of vegetation to your home is critical and we go into more detail about this in the Prepare Your Property from

With regards to your home, you need to consider:

- The **materials** from which your house is made and its design
- What **modifications** you do can improve the likelihood that your house will survive
- The number of improvements will depend on the type of house you have
- Anywhere embers can lodge or enter your house can start a fire. **Decks, windows doors and roof areas pose the greatest risk.**

Burning embers are a primary cause of homes and structures catching fire during wildfires

- An ember can be burning twigs, leaves or pieces of debris
- Embers threaten your home when they are carried by the wind and land on or around a building
- Embers can land on flammable surfaces, i.e. organic litter in your gutters, and then set fire to your house
- With an active wildfire in your area, embers are a constant threat. They can fall before, during and after a wildfire passes your

Roof:

- Clear roof and gutters of leaves and organic litter
- Make non-combustible fire screens to cover external skylights
- Good sprinkler systems can help fight embers. Important: Seek professional advice for selecting and installing the appropriate sprinkler system
- Using reflective non-combustible sheeting is an effective treatment to prevent embers from entering through your roof.



FIRE RULES

In our **FIREWISE COMMUNITY**

**AS FIRE IS A CONSTANT DANGER IN THIS VILLAGE
PLEASE STICK TO THESE FIREWISE RULES**

WE NEVER ...

- Light a braai fire if there's that danger of sparks flying
- Leave a fire unattended
- Discard cigarette butts or fire-coals randomly
- Burn garden rubbish (unless with a permit)
- Set off fireworks (unless in a designated area)

WE ALWAYS ...

- Braai with a hosepipe on hand
- Extinguish our braai fires completely
- Keep our gardens free of alien vegetation and dead wood
- Keep tall vegetation away from windows and decks
- Assist our local hack whenever possible

**Remember, if proven liable, you can be held responsible for all the costs of
damage caused by a fire you start!**

Fire-fighting costs alone could run into millions of Rands

Overstrand Emergency Call Center	028 3138980	028 3138000
Kleinmond Fire Station	028 2718489	08 2774 4581
Pringle Bay (Clayton Francis)	028 273 8196	082 416 6685
		072 129 9788
If in the Kogelberg Nature Reserve	028 271 5138	082 783 8585