



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1844 {NW2069E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 17 of 2021

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Mrs S J Graham (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) (a) What is the duration of training for recruits on the Working on Fire (WOF) programme prior to them being stationed in a base and (b) how does this compare with the training provided to a firefighter;
- (2) what is the (a) stipend paid to a WOF participant and (b) average salary paid to a firefighter;
- (3) what are the working hours of a (a) WOF participant and (b) firefighter on a monthly basis?

1844. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- 1(a) The Working on Fire (WoF) Programme is one of the initiatives of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). It contributes to maintaining ecologically acceptable fire regimes within fire-prone biomes of the country and protection for the country's economy from the damages caused by veld & forest (wildland) fires. The DFFE implements the WoF Programme based on the Government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) model. The WoF Programme recruits EPWP participants who undergo a vigorous 24 day training programme, consisting of:

- Basic Fire Fighting skills.
 - Advance Fire Fighting skills (yellow card).
 - Skills training such as Brushcutter Operator, Chainsaw Operator, Herbicide application, SHE Representative, First Aid.
- (b) The Structural Firefighter training is for a 3-month fire-fighting period. The training differs in that it is aimed at fighting structural fires for example fires in buildings, shacks and houses. WoF Programme Fire Fighters are trained only in the suppression of wildfires according to the National Veld and Fire Act, 1998 (Act No. 101 of 1998)
- 2(a) WoF Programme Fire Fighters are employed under the conditions of the EPWP, and stipends are accordingly determined.

The Minister of Labour in consultation with NEDLAC issued an amended Code of Good Practice for EPWP in terms of the Ministerial Determination. In this Determination, it is agreed upon to reduce unemployment, which is one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa. The government has undertaken several initiatives to address unemployment and poverty, including the labour-intensive EPWP, funded by the government. The programme includes the acquisition of skills either through accredited or experiential training, which forms an integral part of the EPWP. The Code provides guidelines for the protection of workers engaged in EPWP, taking into account the need for workers to have basic rights, the objectives of the programmes and the resources implications for the government.

Employers must pay workers at least the minimum rate as stipulated in the Ministerial Determination on EPWP. Workers are paid for the number of tasks completed. Fire-fighters are paid at a daily rate. The fire fighters are also paid a training allowance in the event they are required to attend agreed training programmes. The training allowance should be equal to 100% of the daily rate. The EPWP wage is approved by the Department of Public Works, annually.

The current approved rate for 2021/2022 financial year is R122.05 per day per 8 hours worked. This can change depending on the skills and range of job types that form part of the WoF Programme EPWP participants., e.g. a Fire Fighter that is required to have a chainsaw operating qualification is paid R136.85 per day for 8 hours of work.

2(b) Structural Fire Fighters are remunerated according to the Municipal grading and can start from +/-R10 000.00 per month excluding benefits such as:

- Medical aid
- Pension
- Group Life insurance, etc.

3(a) Normal working hours Out of Fire Season is 40 hours per week (8 hours per day for 5 days a week). During Fire Season, the working hours remain at 40 hours per week, although the working days are extended to 7 days a week. Fire Fighters get days off to ensure that they do not exceed working more than 40 hours a week.

(b) Structural Fire Fighters (Municipal) operate on a dayshift/nightshift system with alternative days off in between shifts. The shift system is subject to change from Municipality to Municipality.

Shifts are as follows:

- 8 hours x 5 days a week
- 12-hour shifts (2 x dayshifts and 2 x nightshifts per week)
- 24-hour shifts (ranging from 2 on duty and 1 day off duty)

Regards



MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE:1/9/2021.....