



COGTA

Newsletter

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2025

SANTAM JOIN FORCES TO STRENGTHEN VELD FIRE RESPONSE IN THE PROVINCE

By Sabo Dlelengana



L-R: Director Community Services Ms N. Libazi, Executive Mayor of Joe Gqabi DM Nomvuyo Mposelwa, Division Commander P. Mohloko, Fire Fighter Owen Molopi, Platoon Commander Johan De Bruin and Deputy Director PDMC Mr. John Alexander



L - R: MMC for Chris Hani DM Health & Community Services Cllr. Malibongwe Fatyela and MEC Williams

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), through the Provincial Disaster Management Centre, in partnership with SANTAM, officially handed over veld firefighting equipment to the Joe Gqabi and Chris Hani District Municipalities in Bhisho.

This handover reflects a strong and strategic partnership aimed at enhancing the province's disaster management capacity. By planning and sharing critical resources, the initiative seeks to strengthen fire prevention and response efforts while reducing the devastating impact of veld fires on communities across the province.

During his address, CoGTA MEC Zolile Williams expressed his heartfelt gratitude to SANTAM for their meaningful contribution. He emphasized the importance of partnerships in protecting vulnerable communities and strengthening disaster response capacities across municipalities and communities, who are often the most affected during disasters, noting “We have made an

assessment with regards to fire services, and unfortunately, we are not well resourced. In 2023, a massive fire incident led to many people losing their properties and livestock. Government must ensure that we protect the vulnerable, as they are the most affected by disasters. Public participation should not only focus on municipalities but should extend to empowering communities as well,” MEC Williams said.

The Executive Mayors of Joe Gqabi and Chris Hani District Municipalities welcomed the contribution, highlighting that the equipment will significantly support fire risk reduction initiatives. They noted that this investment would strengthen the districts' capacity to safeguard communities and their livelihoods from the growing threat of veld fires.

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STAGE SET TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The Department hosted a two-day Strategic Planning Session in Port Alfred, to shape its direction for the 2026/27 financial year. The session was aligned with key national and provincial frameworks, including the National Development Plan (NDP), the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP), the District Development Model (DDM), and Eastern Cape provincial priorities. **Ms Sabo Dlelengana reports.**

The session assessed the department's performance for the current financial year, defined key priorities to enhance support for municipalities and traditional leadership institutions, and drafted outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators for the Annual Performance Plan (APP) and Operational Plan (OP). The theme: “Strengthening Governance and Traditional Leadership for Inclusive Development” guided the deliberations throughout the session. There were four Panels on priority issues such as traditional governance, intergovernmental relations, and service delivery innovation.

In his opening remarks, the Head of Department (HoD) Mr. Vuyo Mlokothe stressed the importance of accountability in public institutions to deliver on their mandates. He said future planning must be informed by past performance, while setting a clear path toward improved service delivery and governance in the medium term.

In his keynote address, MEC Zolile Williams underscored the need to develop strategies to build a capable and developmental state. He said the role of local government was critical to fulfill CoGTA's sustainable mandate.

“We need strategies to create a capable developmental state that includes local government and municipalities serving communities. Capacity building is a fundamental element to achieve this objective to realise competent institutions.”

Furthermore, MEC Williams stressed the importance of impactful departmental performance, reiterating his commitment to establish CoGTA as an employer of choice. He recognized the significance of a satisfied workforce, acknowledging that employees dedicate a substantial amount of time to their work.

“It is important to have a happy workforce, however, people must also be productive in what they do,” he said.

MEC Williams also noted that the recent Mthatha disaster incident exposed the province's emergency preparedness gaps in disaster risk reduction with Kouga and King Sabatha Dalindyebo municipalities possessing such plans. It was necessary for municipalities to have early warning systems to mitigate the impact of disasters as and when they occur, he said.

He further called for the adoption of smart city systems across municipalities, noting that the integration of smart technologies to improve municipal operations as well as enhance the quality of life of citizens.

“Smart systems are not about replacing human capacity, but empower municipalities to be more responsive, transparent, and

accountable to the communities they serve,” said MEC Williams. The panel discussions of the session focused on compliance and on leveraging oversight structures for strategic impact, particularly in relation to COGTA's role in supporting municipalities. One of the panel discussants, Ms. Judy Gunther, Chairperson of the Risk Management Committee, spoke about the value added by compliance structures and encouraged exploring alternative ways of working with municipalities to enhance policy adherence and better understand the requirements for achieving a clean audit.

Mr. Phumzile Zitumane, Chairperson of the Audit Committee, emphasized that government structures must work collaboratively to ensure compliance, noting that organisations should integrate policies that align with these oversight structures.

Other panel discussions highlighted key themes such as improving municipal audit outcomes to strengthen governance and accountability for service delivery; recognizing the Traditional Council as a plenary tier of local governance; and integrating spatial analysis into municipal strategic planning frameworks, including the opportunities and challenges in unlocking local development.

Ms Dumza Vuba, Chief Director for Traditional Institutional Support at the department of Cogta underscored the strategic importance of traditional leadership in governance. She outlined the collaborative actions required to advance five critical national priorities aimed at strengthening and accelerating development, empowering communities, promoting inclusion in planning processes, and establishing joint monitoring task teams.

Key discussions highlighted the importance of compliance, the strategic use of oversight structures to increase CoGTA's impact, and the role of Traditional Councils (TC) as the primary tier of local governance. Emphasis was placed on strengthening inclusive governance, improve service delivery in rural areas, and ensure that traditional leadership structures are aligned with the constitutional and democratic principles.

The session was honored by the presence of stakeholders from various sector departments including the House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders, Auditor General's Business Executive, District and Metro municipalities, South African Local Government Association etc. The session through working groups unpacked programme-specific strategies, identified implementation risks, and aligned operational plans with departmental outcomes as well as revised targets and activities in the operational plan.



STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION



L-R: AGSA- Mr Sali, Chairperson of the Risk Management Committee, Ms Judy Gunther, Chairperson of the Audit Committee- Mr Phumzile Zitumane



Dr Siviwe Mditshwa



HOD Mr Vuyo Mlokothe



Mr Mawetu Pinyana and Mr Zipho Xokozela



L-R Mr Malibongwe Ngcai, Ms Dumza Vuba and Nkosi Xhanti Sigcawu

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT TRAINING STRENGTHENS EC MUNICIPAL PREPAREDNESS

By Vuyani Sibene



Officials from municipalities at the fire training workshop

On 2 October 2025, the Eastern Cape Provincial Disaster Management Centre (EC-PDMC), in partnership with Santam, conducted a comprehensive five day training session for twenty fire services officials from across the province. The training focused on fire risk assessment and prevention strategies, equipping participants with essential skills to enhance community safety and resilience. In addition the training focused on Risk Identification and Hazard Recognition, Understanding Fire Behaviour, Legal and Regulatory Compliance, Emergency Planning and Mitigation, Communication and Leadership and Use of Technology and Equipment.

Fire safety is a cornerstone of effective risk management in both communities and municipalities. Fire safety officers play a vital role in identifying, assessing, and mitigating fire hazards to protect lives, property, and the environment. Training in fire risk assessment and prevention strategies provides these officers with the technical expertise, practical skills, and decision-making capabilities needed to manage fire risks proactively and efficiently. Conducting the session, Mr Herman Lombard emphasized the importance of integrating hazard identification, risk evaluation, and control implementation into training programs. “The focus should be on conducting thorough assessments and developing effective training that enhances fire prevention, rescue, and evacuation skills especially for firefighters and residential occupants,” he said.

Mr Lombard further said Investing in fire risk assessment training is essential for ensuring safety, regulatory compliance, and operational continuity. “By equipping fire safety officers with specialized knowledge and analytical tools, municipalities are better prepared to prevent fires, respond effectively when they occur, and reduce associated risks.

Speaking during the session, Ms Chuleza Jama, Chief Director for Disaster Management and Emergency Services at Cogta emphasized that fire safety is an essential element of an organization's risk management strategy. “Following this training, the districts of Alfred Nzo, Amathole, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi, Buffalo City Metro, and the local municipalities of Amahlathi, Raymond Mhlaba, and King Sabatha Dalindyebo, who participated in this training, are expected to be proficient in assessing, mitigating, and training communities and their councils, as they will possess enhanced fire safety and technical expertise”.

Ms. Jama further highlighted the significance of workplace fire safety. “Municipal and departmental facilities are capital assets that face high fire risks. Communities are also vulnerable to these hazards, which are often exacerbated by occupant behavior, lack of awareness, and poor safety management,” she explained. “Fire risk assessments are crucial for promoting a culture of fire safety in the workplace and training employees on effective response methods. Today's training is instrumental in helping municipalities identify fire causes and propagation hazards. It is vital that districts and municipalities engage with communities and councils to raise awareness and educate them on fire prevention,” said Ms Jama.

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IMBIZO FOR MEN TO PROMOTE SAFE AND DIGNIFIED MALE INITIATION PRACTISE

By Vuyani Sibene



Ingcibi namakhankatha in Imbizo Yamadoda Lusikisiki

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), in partnership with the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (HOTKL), hosted an Imbizo to strengthen dialogue among men, parents, and community members on their roles in promoting safe and dignified customary male initiation practices.

The event took place at the Lusikisiki College of Education at Ingquza Hill local municipality on the 24th October 2025. The Imbizo followed a week long series of advocacy and training of amakhankatha (surgeons) and iingcibi (male nurses) held at Alfred Nzo and Or Tambo district municipalities where essential topics such as cleanliness, sterilization of equipment, and observation for emergency referral to hospitals were discussed. The training sessions were led by Drs Mthandeni Tebelele and Prince Mangcotywa. These sessions also focused on empowering iingcibi and Amakhankatha with knowledge of safe, lawful, and culturally respectful initiation practices.

Dr Loyiso Ngevu featured speaker, underscored the collective responsibility of parents and the broader community, stating “We are involved in traditional initiation, no one should be immune. Let men be in the driver's seat to curb initiation deaths, and we can do it.” Other key issues addressed included managing chronic ailments, and the role of parents, society, and traditional leaders. The Imbizo served as a platform for open engagement on integrating medical interventions in the initiation process and the critical role of traditional leaders in safeguarding both the cultural integrity and the safety of initiates.

In his keynote address, MEC Zolile Williams provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing initiation practices, drawing attention to issues such as premature initiation, denial of essential medication, and the unsafe construction of amabhoma (initiation huts) in remote and inaccessible areas as well as the age factor in initiation. “These factors are identified as

significant contributors to fatalities in initiation schools,” said MEC Williams. “It is our collective responsibility as parents, leaders, and community members to ensure that this sacred rite of passage is conducted safely, with dignity and respect for life.”

Through these ongoing efforts, CoGTA, together with traditional leadership structures, continues to work towards reducing fatalities, raising community awareness, and promoting responsible leadership to ensure that initiation remains both a culturally sacred and safely managed practice.

In closing, the Programme Director General, Mr Gwebindlala, said all five days have been a success as the acting King of AmaMpondo and the Initiation Working Committee must be established and be in working order to kick-start upcoming summer initiation 2025. The training will now be spread to other areas, including the Amathole District Municipality and Buffalo City, kick-starting in November 2025.



Dr. Tebelele

IDDR HELD TO STRENGTHEN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE

By Vuyani Sibene



Front Row L-R: Cllr Luyanda Lawu (MMC Safety & Security), MEC Williams, HOD Mlokothe
Back Row: Cogta Official, Chris Hani Management and Old Mutual Delegates

The International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDRR) event held at Nelson Mandela stadium in Gqeberha early this month brought together government leaders, community representatives, and disaster management experts to share knowledge and strategies aimed at protecting lives, infrastructure, and livelihoods. The event was a collaborative effort between the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta), Nelson Mandela Municipality, Old Mutual and Nelson Mandela University and was aimed to celebrate IDDRR and to engage in important discussions on strengthening disaster preparedness, response, and resilience.

Delivering the welcoming address Deputy Executive Mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Cllr Gary Van Niekerk said since its inception in 1990, the day has evolved into a major global platform for raising awareness and encouraging collective action towards building disaster-resilient communities. “The world continues to implement the framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which guides efforts to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience. Though our communities differ in landscape, economy, and character, we share one reality, disasters know no boundaries.

Mr Van Niekerk said the rising frequency and intensity of disasters demand coordinated action across all areas of the province. He said the shift we need is toward proactive, strategic investment. “Recovery should not simply restore what was lost; it must build back better. Today, we are here to discuss investing in resilience how we, as a Metro, province, institution, and business community, can strategically and proactively fund disaster risk reduction,” stated Deputy Executive Mayor Van Niekerk.

Delivering the keynote address to delegates, MEC for the department of COGTA, Zolile Williams, highlighted the critical role of the seminar in supporting municipalities to develop effective Disaster Risk Reduction Plans. The Republic of South Africa recently hosted the G20 Ministers' Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group under the Presidency of South Africa from the 08th to the 13th of October 2025. The theme was “Resilience for All: Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction Through Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability”. The G20 Ministers on the DRR working Group re-affirmed the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and its inherent connections to sustainable development and climate change adaptation. There was acknowledgement of the global strategic synergies between

the SFDRR, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.”

“This collective needs to adopt and implement provincial and local disaster risk reduction strategies and plans across various timescales, with clear targets, indicators, and time frames, focused on preventing risk creation, reducing existing risks, and strengthening resilience.

MEC Williams said Public and Private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through both structural and non-structural measures is crucial for enhancing the economic, social, health, and cultural resilience of individuals, communities, and their assets, as well as the environment. “These efforts can also serve as drivers of innovation, growth, and job creation. Planning is key, and this seminar is aimed at helping municipalities better prepare. We have placed special emphasis on partnering with the private sector because when disasters strike, the business sector is also significantly affected. We need an integrated approach that holistically addresses all risk areas,” said MEC Williams.

He further appreciated the role of Nelson Mandela University, Old Mutual in supporting the province's disaster risk management efforts. “We are pleased to work closely with NMU and Old Mutual, that is the true sense of public-private partnership which assists us with vital research to inform our decisions and guide our actions,” he added.

Cllr Van Niekerk, noted that the seminar came at a crucial time for the city. He said the key objective of the seminar was to raise awareness of the economic and operational impacts of disasters on businesses, share best practices in disaster risk reduction, response, and recovery. The seminar was also meant to enhance disaster preparedness and response capabilities within the business sector, promote public-private partnerships for disaster resilience, encourage sustainable, business-oriented disaster risk management efforts. “We can and must do better as a metro, particularly regarding our infrastructure. The recent disasters have taught us serious lessons. We are pleased that work is already underway to address stormwater drainage – a key contributor to the flooding in Nelson Mandela Bay. As leadership, we’ve been empowered through this seminar to better understand what needs to be done,” said Cllr Van Niekerk.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION



Delegates attending the IDDR



Acting Executive Director for Infrastructure and Engineering
Mr. Barry Martin



Cllr. Gary Van Niekerk Deputy Mayor Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and
MEC Williams

Mr. Siyabonga Mguzulwa
ECPDMC

Mr. Gavin Boucher
NMBM Disaster Officer



EASTERN CAPE MOVES TO CURB INITIATION-RELATED DEATHS WITH TRAINING FOR INGCIBI AND AMAKHANKATHA

By Ms Sabo Dlelengana



Delegates at the Advocacy Training Session

In a proactive effort to enhance the safety and integrity of customary male initiation practices, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), led by MEC Zolile Williams, in collaboration with the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, held an Advocacy Training Session for Traditional Surgeons (Iingcibi) and Traditional Nurses (Amakhankatha). The sessions took place from 20-23 October 2025 in the Alfred Nzo and Or Tambo District Municipalities.

The initiative forms part of government's broader programme to capacitate customary male initiation practitioners ahead of the 2025 summer initiation season. The main objective is to ensure that all practitioners are properly trained and equipped to handle challenges associated with the initiation process, particularly those that have in the past led to injuries or deaths of initiates.

During the sessions, emphasis was placed on promoting hygiene standards, proper management of initiates, and enhancing knowledge of legislation governing customary male initiation practices. Participants were also encouraged to work closely with traditional leaders, health professionals, and government structures to ensure that initiation schools operate safely and in compliance with legal and cultural requirements.

Head of Department Mr Vuyo Mlokothe said the training was part of a broader effort to reduce initiation related fatalities and strengthen traditional practices through education and accountability. “We must preserve our culture, but we must also protect life. Our traditional surgeons and nurses play a critical role in ensuring safe and dignified initiations,” he said.

Addressing the participants, Dr. Mthembeni Tebelele emphasised the importance of following proper procedures and taking all necessary precautionary measures. He urged practitioners to work closely with health authorities and traditional leaders to prevent avoidable incidents. The Eastern Cape has over the years recorded cases of injuries and deaths during initiation seasons, often linked to poor hygiene, unqualified practitioners, or illegal schools. Through initiatives like this, the province hopes to professionalise the practice and ensure that the rite of passage remains a proud and safe tradition for young men.

“The success of our initiation seasons depends on the commitment and competence of every practitioner,” Dr. Tebelele added. “This training is about saving lives and honouring our culture the right way.” The training was well received by participants, who expressed appreciation for the government's continued support in improving customary initiation practices.



Nkosi Zwelizolile Lutuka



Ms Asanda Ngxafana
National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)