

**MINISTRY FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: 3776**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 23 OCTOBER 2015**

**Mr M G P Lekota (Cope) to ask the Minister of Human Settlements:**

Whether her department keeps a register of the fires that regularly ravage townships and informal settlement areas in order to implement a new policy to remove all of the factors that regularly contribute to the specified fires (details furnished); if not, why not; if so, (a) how many such fires were recorded annually from 1 January 2010 to 31 July 2015, (b) how many families suffered losses through runaway fires in the same period, (c) what new and effective measures has her department put in place to prevent runaway fires from occurring in the first place, (d) in which provinces have the new preventive measures been fully implemented and (e) what evaluation has her department made to determine the efficacy and success of the specified new measures? **NW4518E**

**REPLY:**

Not being the fire Department, we do not have a register of the fires but we have a register of all support given. The Department keep track of these incidents through its interaction with municipalities and provinces as well as through reports in the media. An important source of information, which the Department relies upon, is the published reports of the Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa (FPASA). Currently, published information by the FPASA is available for four years being 2010 until 2013 as indicated in table 1 below. The 2014 statistics will be available in March 2016 and the 2015 statistics will be available in March 2017.

1. & (b) Table 1: 2010 - 2013 Fire Incidents Report from the Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | No of fire incidents | | Financial damage/losses | | Highest Causes | |
| Formal | Informal | Formal | Informal | Formal | Informal |
| 2010 | 2 578 | 2 590 | R 525 406 578 | R 64 719 575 | Undetermined | Undetermined |
| 2011 | 3 943 | 4 046 | R 576 242 642 | R 102 389 740 | Undetermined | Undetermined |
| 2012 | 4 593 | 4 516 | R 556 062 426 | R 114 556 248 | Undetermined | Undetermined |
| 2013 | 4 859 | 4 886 | R 770 392 753 | R 117 693 080 | Undetermined | Undetermined |

**2010- Narrative of Fire Incidents**

Most of the fire incidents occurred in the Metropolitan Municipalities with Ethekwini leading with 490 formal and 508 informal settlements fire incidents, followed by Tshwane with 562 formal and 287 informal dwellings, in third place is Ekurhuleni with 321 formal 385 informal dwellings affected by fire incidents, the City of Johannesburg is fourth place with 264 formal and 239 informal incidents recoded, the City of Cape Town recorded 190 formal and 172 informal dwelling fore incidents, Nelson Mandela recorded 122 formal and 212 informal dwelling fire incidents and Mangaung recorded 128 formal and 129 informal dwelling fire incidents.

The rest of the fire incidents are shared between other District and Local Municipalities. The total damage in rand value cutting across formal & informal dwellings, flats, furniture shops, restaurants, churches, hospitals, nursing homes, warehouses, cinemas and night clubs was worth approximately R 1, 3 billion in 2010.

The causes of the fire incidents vary between formal and informal dwellings. For both formal and informal dwellings, a significant portion of the causes of the incidents were undetermined, with a record of 739 and 965 respectively. In formal dwellings most of the determined causes in order of frequency were electrical, open flames and cooking. In the informal sector most (734) were as a result of open flames, cooking incidents were 249, electrical were 220, arson recoded incidents were 151 followed by heating at 112 incidents and 64 were due to smoking.

The rest of the incidents are minor in terms of frequency and range between welding, lightning, unrest and other.

The Honourable member will no doubt remember that in 2005 we had committed ourselves, through the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that we would have adhered to the desired goals to eradicate informal settlements by the year 2014. President Mbeki signed these on behalf of the country, a commitment which is in line with the founding policy document of the ANC – The Freedom Charter, which proclaims that there shall be no slum.

**2011- Narrative of Fire Incidents**

A large portion of the causes of these fire incidents were undetermined but others in order of highest incidents recorded ranges from open flames, electrical faults, cooking, heating and arson. The total damage in rand value cutting across formal & informal dwellings, flats, furniture shops, restaurants, churches, hospitals, nursing homes, warehouses, cinemas, night clubs etc. is worth just above R 2, billion in 2011.

In this financial year, the City of Cape Town leads with the number of incidents with 905 formal and 1007 informal dwelling fire incidents, followed by EThekwini Metro with 559 formal 526 informal dwelling fire incidents, in third place is Tshwane Metro with 689 formal and 346 informal dwelling fire incidents, Ekurhuleni is fourth place with 395 formal 418 informal dwelling fire incidents, the City of Johannesburg recorded 390 formal 345 informal dwelling fire incidents, Mangaung recorded 133 formal and 143 informal dwelling fire incidents, Buffalo City recorded 68 formal 172 informal dwelling fire incidents and last was Nelson Mandela with a record of 18 formal and 34 informal dwelling fire incidents. The rest of the incidents are minor in terms of frequency and range between welding, lightning, unrest and other.

**2012- Narrative of Fire Incidents**

The total damage of the fire incidents was R 3, 1 billion in the 2012/13 financial year. The causes of the fire incidents vary between formal and informal dwellings. For both formal and informal dwellings, a significant portion of the causes of the incidents were undetermined, with a record of 1248 and 1685 respectively. In formal dwellings most of the determined causes in order of frequency were electrical (934), open flames (744), cooking (486) and heating (298). In the informal sector most (1154) were as a result of open flames, electrical were 506, cooking incidents were 385, arson recoded incidents were 289 followed by heating at 200 incidents and 88 were due to smoking. The rest of the incidents are minor in terms of frequency and range between welding, lightning, unrest and other.

The fire incidents are largely prevalent in Metropolitan areas and again the City of Cape Town leads for the 2nd consecutive year with 1310 formal and 1169 informal dwelling fire incidents, followed by Ethekwini with 588 formal and 508 informal dwelling fire incidents, in third place is the Tshwane Metro with 652 formal and 374 informal dwelling fire incidents, In fourth place is the City of Johannesburg Metro with 372 formal and 353 informal dwelling fire incidents, followed by Ekurhuleni Metro in fifth place with 305 formal and 345 informal dwelling fire incidents, at sixth place is Buffalo City with 82 formal and 177 informal dwelling fire incidents, the Mangaung Metro recorded 134 formal and 122 informal dwelling fire incidents followed in last place by the Nelson Mandela Bay with 19 formal and 25 informal dwelling fire incidents.

**2013 – Narrative of Fire Incidents**

The direct fire losses in 2013 were in excess of R 2 billion. The fire incidents in 2013 within the formal and informal dwellings resulted in 106 deaths. In this period still, a significant portion of the incident causes were undetermined. As in the previous financial years, the highest determined cause of fire incidents in the formal sector is electrical (925) and in the informal sector it is open flames with a record of 1177 in 2013.

The undetermined causes in the formal dwellings were 1540 and 1926 in informal dwellings.

In terms of highest numbers recorded in the formal dwellings were electrical followed by open flames incidents were 805, cooking incidents were 388, arson incidents were 340, heating incidents were 287 and smoking incidents were 128.

In the informal sector, most determined fire incidents were caused by open flames followed by 511 electrical incidents, 444 arson incidents, 349 cooking incidents, 181 heating incidents and 94 smoking incidents. The rest of the incidents are minor in terms of frequency and range between welding, lightning, unrest and other.

The City of Cape Town recorded the highest number of fire incidents with 1097 formal and 1118 informal dwelling incidents, followed by Tshwane Metro with 713 formal and 393 informal dwelling incidents, in third place is Ethekwini Metro with 577 formal and 532 informal dwelling incidents, in fourth place is Nelson Mandela Bay with 435 formal and 537 informal dwelling incident, followed by Ekurhuleni in fifth place with 404 formal and 461 informal dwelling incidents, the City of Johannesburg recorded 412 formal and 373 informal dwelling fire incidents and lastly is Mangaung with a record of 135 formal and 173 informal dwelling fire incidents.

(c) The Department has the Informal Settlements Upgrading Programme (ISUP) whose primary objective is to cater for improving the basic infrastructure and dwelling standards and quality of life of households living in informal settlements. The ISUP for the current MTSF aims to ensure that 750 000 households living in 2200 informal settlements benefit from improved living conditions, and this include preventative measures from the threats and causes of fires.

There is grant funding allocated for this purpose to assist the municipalities in fast tracking the provision of security of tenure, basic municipal services, social and economic amenities and the empowerment of residents in informal settlements to take control of housing development directly applicable to them. The grants include the Human Settlements Development Grant (HSDG) as well as the Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG).

In the Metropolitan areas the Department in conjunction with the Metropolitan Municipalities are funding the roll-out of solar lighting as well as improved cooking facilities for households, in order to limit the use of fossil fuels and liquid fuels, which are a major cause of fires in informal settlements

The ISUP includes, as a measure of last resort, and exceptional circumstances, the possible relocation and resettlement of households on a voluntary and co-operative basis as a result of the implementation of upgrading projects. The ISUP is instituted in terms of Section 3(4) (g) of the Housing Act, 1997 (Act No.107 of 1997)

(d) All Provinces and Metropolitan Municipalities are implementing the ISUP. Provinces implement the ISUP in the District and Local Municipalities as well.

(e) The Department has a Monitoring and Evaluation unit that is responsible for programme and project oversight. In addition, to project level verification, the Department convenes quarterly financial and non-financial performance assessment on Provinces and its Metropolitan Municipalities on all programmes in the Housing Code, including the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme.

As a result of reports and recommendations of the monitoring and evaluation process, the Department has initiated a National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) to provide support to Provinces and Municipalities to fast track the planning to implement the ISUP programmes. In addition the work of the Department also forms part of the Monitoring and Evaluation programmes and process of the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, and a focus area is the ISUP.