



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Minister sympathises with disaster victims

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Minister of Tourism Tokozile Xasa offers her condolences to the families and friends of the eight people who have died in the fires and storms that have hit Cape Town and Knysna in the Western Cape.

The popular tourism destination of Knysna has been declared a disaster area after 20 suburbs and informal settlements were devastated by the most destructive fires in recent history. An estimated 8,000 people were evacuated, and hundreds of homes have been completely destroyed by the runaway fires and exceptionally high winds.

“We send our condolences to people who have been bereaved by this terrible disaster,” said Minister Xasa.

“We also sympathise with all those who have lost their homes and belongings, especially those who have lost their homes in informal settlements.”

“Our government has sent SANDF troops into the area and is coordinating humanitarian support for the residents who have been left homeless. We appeal to people throughout South Africa to support our compatriots in need, and to contribute to the various relief initiatives that are underway in whatever way they can.”

Minister Xasa thanked the tourism industry for responding swiftly to the needs of tourists who were affected by the disaster. The Southern Africa Tourism Services Association has established an operations centre for medical emergencies, reporting missing people, lost passports and repatriation requests. The centre also offers trauma counselling services. The emergency number is +27 1000 70230.

Minister Xasa said the immediate priority was to provide for the homeless and destitute, to restore essential services to the area, and to ensure that tourists are safe and accommodated.

Tourists who need emergency accommodation can contact the Sedgefield Tourism Offices on +2744 343 2007.

“Once the situation has been stabilised and these urgent priorities have been addressed, we will need to assess the full impact on tourism facilities and attractions in the region, as tourism is a key contributor to our economy.

“We will work together with our sister government departments to consider what relief measures can be implemented in the medium term, so that the tourism economy can be revived as soon as possible, and incomes will be restored for the people who depend on tourism for a living,” said Minister Xasa.

In the long-term, it has become essential to support all efforts to combat climate change, and the disastrous weather patterns that have become associated with it.

“But our immediate priority must be to help our vulnerable people who have lost everything they had,” said Minister Xasa. “I will be working closely with my colleagues in government to bring some relief for them as quickly as possible.”

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