

FIRE SEASON TIPS



DO YOUR PART TO PREPARE FOR THE SUMMER FIRE SEASON AMID INCREASING GLOBAL DESTRUCTIVE WILDFIRES

As world leaders, experts and activists look for ways to slow down climate change, an American research study found that global warming was essentially two-thirds to 88% responsible for the atmospheric conditions fuelling increasingly destructive wildfires.

Historically, the looming Western Cape summer fire season between December and April, is known for higher-than normal fire risk when prevailing hot, dry, windy weather exacerbates the conditions under which firefighters and rescue teams battle blazes. According to Santam's Insurance Barometer Report 2020/2021, there were several large-scale fires and explosion-related losses across South Africa in the past 18 months of lockdown, including the devastating Table Mountain National Park fire in April 2021 which damaged parts of the University of Cape Town.

Santam says that 99% of all fires are the result of human negligence and that homeowners, especially those in wildland-urban interface areas due to their proximity of flammable vegetation, can do their part when it comes to disaster preparedness, by taking smart steps to mitigate risks.

Fire season is a real and present risk over this time of year and residents need to be alert to the dangers fire poses to properties and possessions. Cigarettes, matches and lighters, candles, heating appliances and open braai fires can all cause fires if not carefully monitored. In summer 2020/2021, Santam recorded 652 fire-related claims.



TO PREVENT THE LOSS OF LIVES AND PROPERTY, EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE AWARE OF THE DANGER OF FIRE DURING THIS SEASON AND SANTAM RECOMMENDS SOME OF THE FOLLOWING SAFETY TIPS:

- Avoid the build-up of materials that can act as fuel for a fire. For example, recycling stations with cardboard boxes, papers and plastic containers should be kept away from dwellings and emptied on a regular basis
- Smoke detector alarms installed within sections are good additions and can serve as early warning systems
- Know where the fire hydrants are located within and outside the property to assist the local fire team with speedy connection of the water hoses
- Have an evacuation plan, including exit points and emergency fire-box of documents if you live in a fire-prone area
- Always extinguish fires and safely dispose of hot ash, coal and cigarettes
- Always work in an open, cleared area when working with power tools

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- Ensure that your electrical appliances are correctly wired
- Keep the area around your home clear of flammable materials
- Only burn rubbish on cooler, wind-still days, provided you have a burning permit
- Never leave an open fire unattended
- Avoid the use of fireworks and Chinese lanterns, especially since these also have a negative effect wild-life and pets
- Register with the Fire Protection Association for enhanced security - failure to do so will have a court automatically assume you are guilty of negligence in the event of a liability lawsuit



Santam adds that homeowners should check their insurance policies annually and ensure that their household contents and homeowner's sum insured are in line with the current replacement value of their household goods. Policyholders should also ensure that the value of their buildings is adequately insured.

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