

Heat, Smoke, and Seconds: Expert Advice on Protecting Your Home from Fire

When a home fire strikes, panic is often the first reaction. Yet fire safety experts emphasize that the single most effective tool against a blaze isn't a hose—it is preparation.

With household fires posing a constant risk to life and property, adhering to straightforward, expert-backed safety standards can mean the difference between a minor incident and a tragedy. Below are 17 essential fire safety principles every household should implement today.

Part 1: Fire Prevention in the Home
1. Install and Test Smoke Alarms
Smoke detectors provide the earliest warning of a fire, significantly increasing the chances of a safe evacuation. Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, specifically inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Test them monthly and replace batteries at least once a year.

2. Never Leave Cooking Unattended
Unattended cooking remains one of the primary causes of residential fires. Always remain in the kitchen while frying, grilling, or boiling food. Keep flammable items—such as dish towels, pot holders, and paper packaging—well clear of hot stovetops.

3. Handle Cooking Oil and Grease Fires Correctly
Never throw water on an oil or grease fire. Water causes hot oil to explode and spread flames rapidly. Instead, turn off the heat source immediately and smother the flames using a metal lid, a fire blanket, or sand.

4. Avoid Overloading Electrical Outlets
Plugging too many high-power appliances into a single wall socket or daisy-chaining extension cords creates a severe fire hazard. Unplug chargers and small electronics when not in use, and regularly inspect electrical cords for fraying or damage.

5. Maintain Space Around Portable Heaters
Keep space heaters, radiators, and open hearths at least one metre (three feet) away from anything combustible, including curtains, bedding, and

furniture. Always switch off electric heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep.

6. Burn Candles Safely
Place candles in sturdy, non-combustible holders away from drapes, books, and loose materials. Never leave an open flame unattended, and fully extinguish candles before retiring for the night. Consider battery-operated flameless candles as a safer alternative.

7. Store Flammable Materials Responsibly
Petrol, solvents, cleaning chemicals, and outdoor gas cylinders must be stored in well-ventilated, approved containers kept far from heat sources or naked flames.

8. Dispose of Smoking Materials Properly
Never smoke in bed or when drowsy. Always use deep, heavy ashtrays and ensure cigarette butts are fully extinguished with water or sand before disposing of them in waste bins.

Part 2: Preparedness & Equipment
9. Create and Practice a Home Escape Plan
Design an emergency evacuation plan that identifies two ways out of every room. Establish a designated assembly point outside at a safe distance—such as a neighbour's driveway or a specific tree—and practice the escape drill with all household members twice a year.

10. Keep Fire Extinguishers Accessible
Maintain at least one multi-purpose (ABC) fire extinguisher on every floor, prioritizing high-risk areas like kitchens and garages. Ensure all capable family members know where extinguishers are located and how to operate them.

11. Master the PASS Method
To operate a fire extinguisher safely and effectively, remember the acronym PASS:

Pull the safety pin.
Aim low at the base of the fire.
Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.
Sweep the nozzle from side to side.



12. Keep Hallways and Exits Clear
Ensure corridors, stairwells, and doorways remain free of shoes, boxes, furniture, or clutter. In a dark or smoke-filled building, unobstructed pathways allow for swift evacuation.

13. Keep Emergency Numbers Visible
Save local fire department and emergency service contact numbers on mobile devices and post a printed list in a central area, such as on the refrigerator. Ensure children know how and when to dial for assistance.

Part 3: Action Plan During an Emergency
14. Get Out, Stay Out
If a fire breaks out, prioritize immediate evacuation. Do not delay your escape to gather personal belongings or valuables. Once safely outside, never re-enter a burning building for any reason—allow trained firefighters to handle interior rescues.

15. Stay Low Under Smoke
Toxic smoke and superheated gases rise toward the ceiling, leaving cleaner, cooler air near the floor. If forced to navigate through smoke, drop to your hands and knees and crawl underneath the smoke layer.

16. Test Closed Doors Before Opening
Before opening a door during an escape, touch the handle or upper surface with the back of your hand. If it feels hot, do not open it—the fire is directly on the other side. Seek an alternative exit route.

17. Close Doors Behind You
As you exit rooms and evacuate the building, close doors behind you. Closing doors deprives the fire of oxygen, slows the spread of flames, and restricts smoke movement throughout the structure.



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RAADSVERGADERING: 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Inwoners word hiermee in terme van die Wet op Plaaslike Regering: Munisipale Strukture (Wet 117 van 1998) in kennis gestel dat 'n Gewone Raadsvergadering op **Woensdag, 30 September 2026**, om 09:30 in die Raadsaal, 1 ste Vloer, Burgersentrum, Bergrivier Boulevard, Paarl, gehou sal word.

Lede van die publiek wat toegang tot die vergadering verlang moet na Corne.vanEeden@drakenstein.gov.za RSVP teen nie later as 10:00 op **Maandag, 28 September 2026**, nie. Toegang mag weens praktiese redes beperk word.

DR J H LEIBBRANDT
STADSBESTUURDER

30 Day Countdown to Matric Exams Begins!

CAPE TOWN — With exactly 30 days to go before the final school chapter begins, the Western Cape is putting finishing touches on preparations for the 2026 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations.

Exams officially kick off on 13 October 2026 with Computer Applications Technology (CAT) and will conclude on 25 November 2026. A total of 71,300 full-time candidates are expected to sit for the exams across the province.

The Exams by the Numbers
Logistical preparations across the province involve massive coordination:

485 Exam Centres: This includes 477 high schools, 7 primary schools, and 1 correctional services facility designated specifically for part-time learners.

123 Exam Papers: The total number of question papers that will be administered.

3,857 Markers: Dedicated educators appointed to assess the scripts.

2,600 Community Invigilators: Personnel enlisted to oversee exam venues.

Robust Support and Intervention Programs
Ahead of the examinations, educators, tutors, and provincial officials have rolled out extensive support initiatives. More than 31,000 matriculants attended the BackOnTrack winter school classes during

the mid-year break across all eight education districts, with further revision classes planned for the upcoming third-term break.

Additionally, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has curated a comprehensive suite of online resources available via its official portal. Students can access past question papers, memoranda, video tutorials, study guides, and subject-specific academic support. Free internet access is also available to learners through WCG eCentres.

Mental Health and Community Appeal
Recognizing the immense pressure exam season places on teenagers, officials have emphasized the importance of mental health and wellness support.

Learners or concerned adults can connect with professional guidance through the toll-free Safe Schools Hotline at 0800 45 46 47, while school staff can lean on district support teams.

Authorities have also issued a call to action for parents, guardians, and local communities, urging them to safeguard students' study time and eliminate distractions during this crucial period.

As matriculants face their final hurdle, the message from the province remains clear: stay disciplined, stay focused, and utilize the network of support available.

The single most important rule in paper recycling

On SEPTEMBER 15, 2026 – If you’re one of the people helping South Africa keep 1.2 million tonnes of paper and paper packaging out of landfill, make sure you are doing this one thing keep it dry and separate from wet waste.

“Paper recycling – whether at home, work or school – can only be successful if it is actively separated from wet waste after use,” says Samantha Choles, communications manager for the Paper and Allied Manufacturers of South Africa (PAMSA).

“Paper is absorbent, and its fibres start to break down when exposed to moisture, oils or food waste. This makes it less suitable for the paper recycling process,” she explains.

As South Africa marks National Recycling Day on 18 September, PAMSA reports that the country’s recycling rate stands at 63% of the available volumes of recyclable paper. While this is slightly above the global average, this leaves room for improvement.

Although informal collectors also contribute significantly to South Africa’s paper recycling success story, they often have to retrieve recyclable items from domestic rubbish bins. “This means that the paper products are contaminated by food waste and liquids, resulting in less income for a collector at a buy-back centre,” explains Choles.

There are several reasons why recycling is important, not least the need to divert

recyclable paper and packaging from landfills for use as a raw material in the production of tissue and packaging such as cardboard boxes, paper bags, takeaway coffee cup holders and egg boxes.

Recyclable paper includes office paper, cardboard boxes in countless forms as well as other packaging products such as grocery bags, newspaper, magazines and even the quintessential tube from an empty toilet paper roll.

PAMSA offers some advice to up your recycling game:

Know which paper products can and cannot be recycled. Recyclable: paper packaging; liquid board packaging (milk and juice cartons, paper cups); newspaper, brochures and magazines; office paper, telephone directories, paper giftwrap, damaged books that are not suitable for donation. Not recyclable: wet or dirty cardboard (e.g. paper plates), tissues and paper towels, nappies, sticky notes, wax- or foil-lined boxes, cement bags, dog food bags, laminated paper.

Make sure these items are not put into general waste by educating family, friends and colleagues. Use a large waterproof bag or container when you empty these bins. Keep plastic, glass and can recycling separate from your paper, as these items may still contain liquids.

Put your recycling collection out on your pavement, or where it is easy for a collector to

access. Place multiple bins around the house, your workplace or a school where you are most likely to throw paper away: in kitchens, bathrooms (for toothpaste boxes and toilet roll

cores), at your desk and in the classroom. By adopting a few simple habits, we can all help make a big difference to South Africa’s recycling culture.



How a Powerful Partnership is Transforming Play for Children with Disabilities

The freedom of play is something many take for granted. For the children at the Lonwabo Special Care Centre for children with disabilities, having a safe and accessible place to play is an important opportunity for inclusion and belonging.

The centre has officially opened its inclusive, specialised playpark, made possible by a donation from Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and with the support of Western Cape Department of Social Development.

The project was further supported by the Cape Care Fund, an initiative by WCDS and The Health Foundation of South Africa, PPC, and ShonaQuip.

The playpark will serve the 33 children with disabilities at the centre in Mfuleni.

The sandy, uneven walkways have been resurfaced, making it possible for children using wheelchairs and walking aids to move around the park. For the first time, the children with mobility impairments do not have to stand and watch from the sidelines. Instead, they will get to experience the joy of swinging, and spinning on a merry-go-round.

A sensory-regulation space for children with autism and sensory needs has also been installed. The space will create opportunities for children with hearing, visual and intellectual disabilities to engage through tactile, sensory and social activities.

Importantly, the caregivers and therapists now have a safe environment to facilitate structured outdoor activities and therapy.

“All children deserve to feel the absolute joy of

play. This is an important tool for their learning and development. This is a wonderful example of leveraging partnerships to help break down barriers to inclusion for children with disabilities,” said Western Cape Minister of Social Development, Wendy Kaizer-Philander.

TİKA said that they were proud to support this project through partnership. “At TİKA, we believe development should foster inclusion. This inclusive playground gives children a safe space to play, learn and connect. It is a gift from the hearts of the Turkish people to the people of South Africa,” said Ms Şule Bayar, TİKA Pretoria Programme Coordinator.

For the children at Lonwabo, this playpark could be life-changing. “This playpark is more than just a place to play — it represents inclusion, dignity, belonging and the opportunity for every child to experience the joy of being a child. We hope this playpark will be a catalyst for change and inspire the creation of more inclusive spaces across the Western Cape, because every child, regardless of ability, deserves a place where they can play, dream and thrive,” said Lonwabo’s centre manager, Phumza Shayi.

The Cape Care Fund is an initiative created by WCDS and The Health Foundation of South Africa, to help strengthen communities across the province by connecting donors to vetted, high impact social sector projects.



Vredendal Bridge repair update
15 September 2026, 12:00

Good progress with repair works to the Vredendal Bridge

- The works on the Vredendal Bridge (B2491A) is ongoing and is open to one-way traffic under stop/go conditions
- The half-width pavement construction has reached base level and final surfacing is imminent.
- Traffic will be switched over once the surfacing is complete and re-instatement works will continue on the remaining section.
- It is anticipated to have the road **opened full-width over the December 2026 break**
- The road will be **closed again under stop/go conditions in January 2027** to complete the replacement of bridge bearings
- The works is **scheduled for completion by early-April 2027.**

Issued on 15 September 2026 at 12:00 by:

- Mr Teruis Simmers, Acting Premier and Minister of Infrastructure
- Adv Chantal Smith, Head of Department, Department of Infrastructure

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South Africa strikes gold with nine gold medals at Tug-of-War World Championships in Mossel Bay



Western Cape Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Ricardo Mackenzie, has congratulated South Africa's athletes on securing fifteen medals, including nine gold, at the 30th Tug-of-War World Championships. The championships concluded this weekend in Hartenbos, Mossel Bay. The tournament featured national teams and clubs from sixteen countries.

The championships returned to the Western Cape eight years after Cape Town hosted the Outdoor World Championships in 2018. The Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) invested R1.5 million in the championships, following two years of planning and partnership.

This investment forms part of the Western Cape Government's commitment to strengthening sporting pathways from school to club, to provincial and national colours, and onto the world stage, alongside its R130 million school sport strategy over three years.

The championship week opened on Wednesday, 16 September with the TWIF Open Club Championships, followed by the World Championships on 18 and 19 September, when athletes competed in their national colours. The competition spanned junior, under-23 and senior weight categories.

South Africa's medal tally for the

championship week was as follows:

World Open Club Championships: five gold and two silver medals. World Championships – National Teams: four gold, two silver, and two bronze medals.

This brings South Africa's combined total to nine gold, four silver and two bronze medals.

South African club gold medallists included Hartenbos in the Under-23 Men's 600kg, Goudini in the Under-23 Women's 500kg, Drostdy A in Junior Men's 560kg, Robertson High School in Junior Mixed 520kg, and Valsbaai A in Under-23 Mixed 560kg. Swellendam and Valsbaai B secured silver medals in their weight categories.

South Africa's national teams claimed gold in the Junior Men 560kg, Under-23 Men 600kg, Under-23 Mixed 560kg, and Senior Men 600kg. This also includes silver in Junior Women 480kg and senior mixed 580kg, and bronze in the Senior Men 680kg and Under-23 Women 500kg.

Adding to these achievements, Kattie Terblanche from South Africa was named the TWIF Female Outdoor Athlete of the Year, following a public voting process.

Reflecting on the championships, Minister Mackenzie said, "What I saw this week was

not just competition. I saw the professionalism of the athletes and officials, the commitment of the organisers, the pride of teams representing their countries, and the warmth of the entire tug-of-war community. To our South African clubs and national teams: baie geluk! To win fifteen medals, including nine gold, against some of the world's best on home soil is an outstanding achievement."

The championships also generated significant public interest online with Minister Mackenzie's TikTok videos attracting more than half a million views. Audiences asked where they could watch more competitions and how they could get involved.

"When you give a sport the platform it deserves, people respond. I certainly see an opportunity to promote tug-of-war more, share more of these incredible moments, and introduce the sport to people who have never experienced it before", said Mackenzie.

At the farewell ceremony held on 19 September, President of the Tug-of-War International Federation (TWIF), Mr Dan McCarthy (Ireland), acknowledged the Western Cape Government's support for the championships.

"Minister, thank you for your financial contribution, and I hope you will continue to support tug-of-war," said McCarthy.

Minister Mackenzie also thanked the South African Tug-of-War Federation and its President, Mr Luther Anton Botha, Convenor of the Selection Panel, Mr Carel Moller, the Local Organising Committee, the officials, volunteers, and everyone who contributed to the successful hosting of the championships.

"What an incredible World Tug-of-War Championships! With eight medals secured in the World Championships, including four golds, our athletes and officials have demonstrated remarkable dedication, determination and teamwork. Behind the success of this event stands an exceptional team of volunteers who have given their time, passion and energy so generously. Their commitment reminds us that, together, we truly pull stronger," stated Mr Botha.

The championships placed Mossel Bay and the Western Cape firmly on the international sporting map, demonstrating the province's capacity to host world-class sporting events, inspiring young athletes across the province that the journey to the world stage can begin right here.

The opportunity now is to grow participation, build on the enthusiasm generated in Hartenbos, and to ensure that the legacy of these championships extends beyond the final pull.

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