

**Speech by Gauteng MEC for Human Settlements, Urban Planning, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Lebogang Maile, on the occasion of the International Fire Fighters Day commemoration, Olifantsfontein Fire Station, 04 May 2021.**

**Programme Director**

**Members of the Mayoral Committee Present**

**HOD of the Gauteng Department of CoGTA**

**Fire Station Chiefs**

**Members of the Families of the heroic fire fighters who passed away during the Bank of Lisbon building fire**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Members of Media**

Today is not a day for long speeches as we are commemorating International Fire Fighters Day (IFFD) and honouring our gallants fire fighters and emergency services workers who work long hours and sacrifice so much in family time to ensure that we remain safe in the case of any fire out break or emergency.

The IFFD is commemorated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May each year. The focus of the day is to remember and honour those that lost their lives dousing fires as well as to encourage and thank all dedicated fire fighters who risk their lives every day to save lives and property.

If there is anything that Covid-19 has taught us, it is that we must appreciate and value those who are on the frontlines of emergency responses within our communities, who often put their lives on the line in order to protect lives and even properties, as our fire fighters do on daily basis. In promoting and inculcating batho pele values and principles in all that we do as government, we want to ensure that we affirm the dignity and humanity, not just of those who are the recipients of service delivery, but also those who are on the frontlines of

delivering services, improving their working conditions and doing as much as we possibly can to ensure that they operate and work within a conducive and healthy environment.

During IFFD, all workers in emergency services are also given recognition. These workers include Hazardous Materials Specialists, Fire Prevention/Safety etc. Fire and emergency services in Gauteng can at times respond to an estimated 7000 calls for fires and related events in a quarter.

Today, we also want to remember and honour the 16 firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty since 2000. More specifically, we want to honour the 3 firefighters that lost their lives in September 2018 during the Bank of Lisbon fire incident in Johannesburg CBD. We want to honour Simphiwe Moropane (28), Mduduzi Ndlovu (40) and Khathutshelo Muedi (37), who lost their lives while extinguishing a fire that erupted on the 23rd floor of the Bank of Lisbon building in 2018. The deceased firefighters are represented by their families here today.

We will be building and handing over houses to the families of the three deceased fire fighters as a part of honouring them for the sacrifice they made and we want to thank the Collen Mashawana Foundation for partnering with us as a provincial government in order to make this possible.

As part of our responsibilities through the Provincial Disaster Management Centre, we are coordinating programs across the province, working with municipalities, to reduce disaster risks; enhance preparedness and mitigation; build resilience of communities and to ensure quick response and recovery times.

We want to thank all emergency services workers who carry out their tasks every day with diligence, commitment, and devotion and as we commemorate IFFD today, we want to salute you all for your sterling service and work. We did say that today was not a day for long speeches, on that note we thank you all.