

Southern African Emergency Services Institute

(SAESI)



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Professional Body of SAQA for Fire and Emergency Services
Certifying Entity of IFSAC for the NFPA Programs
Quality Assurance Partner of the LG SETA

SAESI PERSPECTIVE ON

The State of the
Fire & Emergency Services
in the
Local Government Sector

Foreword

- Fire Kills, it causes damage and destroys but equally stimulates and provides warmth and energy that fuels economic growth which is a necessity for human survival.
- Fire-Fighting on the other hand involves a battle that requires sheer physical strength, a mind-set free of fear or self preservation that is equipped with a sound body of knowledge on how fire behaves and the factors essential to cause its control and suppression.
- The recent tragic events in the City of Joburg reminds us of the importance of a well equipped and functional fire service, needed to protect the strong network of infrastructure being established as a trigger to stimulate our economy.

- It is at this point I must thank the IMATU leadership for paying attention to a category of employees that have been misaligned and neglected for so long that their competitive edge within the municipal sphere has been diluted within community or security services structures.
- This presentation identifies the key role-players and their specific mandates in respect of the fire and emergency services and further reflect on their activities to provide the requested insight to the leadership of organised labour.
- What is most welcoming is the labour interest, being the common factor and power-house of engagement among all the key role-players who I believe can make the most difference in the short term whilst long term remedies undergo its due processes.

This Presentation Covers

1. Overview of Emergency Services in the Country.
 - Constitutional Provisions relating to Fire Services.
 - Key Provisions of the Fire Brigade Services Act, Act 99 of 1987.
2. The Matrix of Role-players and their activities
3. Challenges Facing the Fire Services and members.
4. Training
5. Discussions

The Constitution

OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA 1996.

Chapter 14 –General Provisions	Functional Areas of Concurrent National and Provincial Legislative Competence.
Schedule 4-Part B	Establishes fire-fighting services as a Local Government matter to the extent set out in section 155(6)(a) and (7);
section 155(6)(a)	Each provincial government must establish municipalities in its province in a manner consistent with the legislation enacted in terms of subsections (2) and (3) and, by legislative or other measures, must— (a) provide for the monitoring and support of local government in the province;
Section 155(7)	The national government, subject to section 44, and the provincial governments have the legislative and executive authority to see to the effective performance by municipalities of their functions in respect of matters listed in Schedules 4 and 5, by regulating the exercise by municipalities of their executive authority referred to in section 156(1);
Section 156(1)	A municipality has executive authority in respect of, and has the right to administer— (a) the local government matters listed in Part B of Schedule 4 and Part B of

Fire Brigade Services Act,

Act 99 of 1987

ACT

To provide for the establishment, maintenance, employment, coordination and standardization of fire brigade services;
and for
matters connected therewith.

DEFINITIONS

s(1) FBSA

- **"service" means a fire brigade service intended to be employed for-**
 - (a) preventing the outbreak or spread of a fire;
 - (b) fighting or extinguishing a fire;
 - (c) the protection of life or property against a fire or other threatening danger;
 - (d) the rescue of life or property from a fire or other danger;
 - (e) subject to the provisions of the Health Act, 1977 (Act No. 63 of 1977), the rendering of an ambulance service as an integral part of the fire brigade service; or
 - (f) the performance of any other function connected with any of the matters referred to in paragraphs (a) to (e); (v)

POWERS OF THE MEMBERS OF SERVICE

s(8) FBSA

• **A member of a service of a controlling authority, including a chief fire officer, may, whenever he regards it necessary or expedient in order to perform his functions, perform any act, and may also-**

(a) close any street;

(b) enter or break and enter any premises;

(c) damage, destroy or pull down any property;

(d) forcibly remove or cause to be removed from the scene any person who is in danger or who obstructs that member in the performance of his duties; and

(e) take material or any object from any person provided that the owner of the material or object so taken shall be compensated therefor by the controlling authority concerned to an amount agreed upon by the controlling authority and the owner, or in the absence of such agreement, an amount determined by arbitration in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1965 (Act No. 42 of 1965).

TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

s(7) FBSA

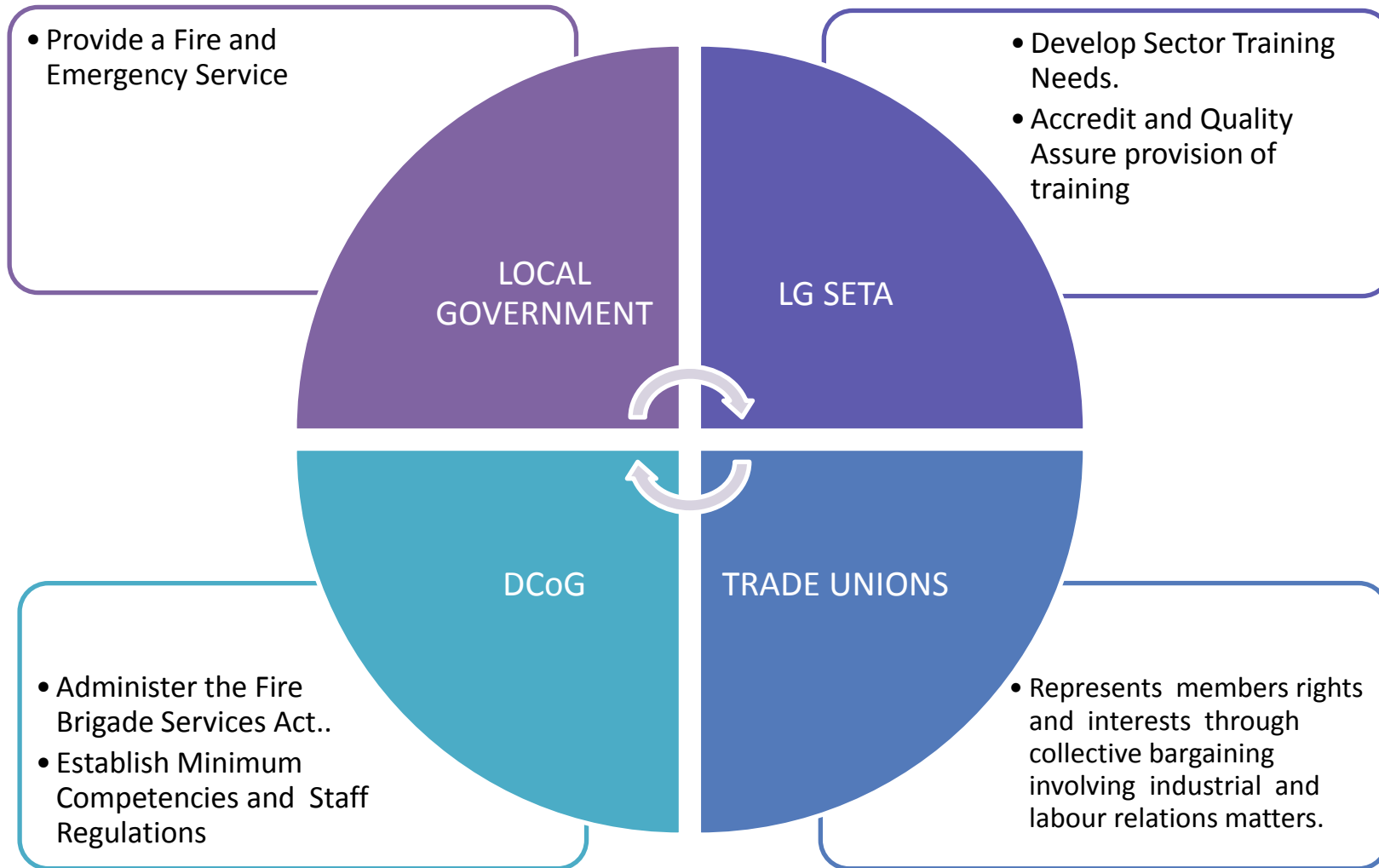
(1) The Minister may after consultation with the Training Board established by section 2 of the Local Government Training Act, 1985 (Act No. 41 of 1985), and the Board which has consulted with the service or other institution concerned-

(a) by notice in the *Gazette* declare such a service or other institution as a training institution at which the prescribed qualifications of a chief fire officer or a member of a service may be obtained; and

(b) take such steps or cause such steps to be taken as he may deem necessary or expedient for the proper control, management and development of, or for the extension of the training facilities at, such training institution.

(2) Whenever a member of a service with the approval of his employer attends a course at such training institution, that employer shall pay to the training institution the costs of such attendance according to a tariff determined by the training institution concerned.

MATRIX OF JURISTIC PERSONS



Local Government Municipalities

- Responsible to provide a Fire & Emergency Service and to appoint the Chief Fire officer and members of services to give effect to the Fire Brigade Services Act, Act 99 of 1987.
- Municipalities remains focused to establish a strong network of infrastructure as identified in the National Development Plan to stimulate the economic growth and improve the quality of life of its citizens.
- Fire services remain uncompetitive to lobby capital required for enhancing manpower and resources against the national priorities for the provision of basic services and must therefore satisfy itself with minimum provisions to sustain and replace aged and outdated infrastructure.
- The organisational design and political forces within municipalities relegates the fire chief to that of a senior manager, who's voice remain a whisper against the radical economic transformation agenda.
- The centralized procurement and supply chain policies targeting supplier development, remain fraught with challenges that results in unacceptable delays and turnaround times for the acquisition of essential emergency services resources.

Department of Co-Operative Governance Fire Services Directorate

- It has recognised the sector challenge of a non-functional Fire Brigade Board (FBB) established by the Act and also recognised the need to harmonise the act with new order legislation .
- It has published a Socio Economic Impact Assessment and a White Paper on Fire Services that contain key policy proposals to:

Department of Co-Operative Governance Fire Services Directorate

- a. Reform legislation to reposition the fire services into the 21st century;
- b. Clear definition of roles and responsibilities of all spheres of government;
- c. Establishment of Fire Services Directorate at both provincial and national government;
- d. Locating fire services within the broader development trajectory of the country;
- e. Development of a National Fire Services Framework;
- f. Professionalization of the fire services;
- g. Alignment of applicable regulatory/legislative frameworks to provide a comprehensive and unified legislation for fire services;
- h. Establishment of a national fire research & data centre;
- i. Development of a uniform risk assessment model;
- j. Development of various categories of designated services;
- k. Development of a national education and training strategy;

Department of Co-Operative Governance Fire Services Directorate

- l. Introduction of a risk-based approach in the provision of fire services;
- m. Entrenching fire safety and prevention as core deliverables of the fire services;
- n. Introduction of a funding strategy for fire services;
- o. Make provision to adopt applicable South African National Standards (SANS) to provide benchmarks for the delivery of fire services;
- p. The introduction and implementation of a new Fire Services Act.

LG SETA

- Responsible for Training and Development of the Fire Sector in accordance with the National Skills Strategy 3, that promotes strengthening vocational training .
- The Seta has commissioned and published its research study on the dominant occupational qualifications in the sector that is rooted internationally but not aligned to the South African Qualification Framework (NQF).
- The Seta has partnered with SAESI the qualification pioneer and the SAQA recognised Professional Body to further develop, quality assure and align the sector prescribed qualifications .
- Currently the new Occupational Certificate Fire-Fighter (NQF 4) has been registered and training providers from private and municipal services have been accredited to provide to municipalities and industry.

ORGANISED LABOUR

- Represents members rights and interests through collective bargaining involving industrial and labour relations matters.
- Although firefighters work long shifts that exceed daily and weekly hours of work for the convenience of society they are treated as day workers, receive equal benefits as clerks and general workers.
- Recruitment Policies following the principals of non-discrimination and equity puts into service a 45 kg firefighter that is required to wear 25kg protective equipment to carry and pitch a 107 kg ladder to rescue and remove from harm an 80kg person trapped on the first floor of a residential building on fire.
- Appointments and Promotions ignore the prescribed qualification skill sets in lieu of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level equivalents resulting in mid to senior level appointments within the operational space that are ill equipped to transfer knowledge to those they manage and lead.

Factors impacting Members

Political

- The recruitment, succession and retention policies has triggered significant changes to the emergency services landscape that translates to a high and increasing numbers of people who are low skilled at the entry levels, and similarly a high and increasing number of people who are highly skilled at the higher levels, whilst the numbers at the intermediate skills levels are shrinking.
- The pursuit for gender equity has positioned females to perform shift work and lead teams of first responders to environments of high risks as decision makers and team leaders.
- Increased trend of civil society protests through unauthorised burning, road closures and destruction of public infrastructure places first responders in vulnerable situations where attacks on fire fighting and ambulance resources are on the increase.

Factors impacting Members

Political

- The political ideologies and labour demands have permeated the sector giving rise to an increase in challenges against the decision making and leadership of authority structures.
- Protracted dispute resolution appears more noticeable through the reluctance or constraints of management who are bound by parallel structures and find themselves unable to engage at a local level.
- This leads to low worker morale and limited productivity and delivery outputs.

Factors Affecting Members

Economic

- The economic factors affecting the country have impact heavily on the urban environments that has seen significant increase in informal traders and goods entering the urban spaces.
- These informal traders entering the urban spaces remain vulnerable to shelter within abandoned, modified and unsafe buildings that has no life safety and basic services which are identified as “Bad Buildings” that are stripped of all recyclable building materials posing a significant safety risk both for the occupants and the first responders.

Factors Affecting Members Economic

- The fire and life safety risk in such buildings remain a priority not only to the occupants but also the firefighters mandated to enter these buildings.
- The growth in the numbers and size of informal settlements creates specific challenges to the emergency services response capabilities and the limited access to deal with emergencies, compound the problem.
- The illegal and unregulated electrification of the informal spaces during emergencies pose significant risk of electrocution to first responders.

Factors Affecting Members Economic

- The increase of unemployed youth enslaved by the social ills transfer their discontent against the first responders who amidst threats and fear cannot perform at their best.
- The race for irrelevant NQF qualification for career enhancement abandons and challenges the credible occupational qualifications.

Factors Affecting Members

Socio-Cultural

- The population dynamics of demographics, culture, religion and other variables creates clusters in the workspace that feeds into itself to create divisive separation which limits the transfer of knowledge and skills in an environment dependant on teamwork.
- The resistance to para-military discipline for command and control creates workplace disharmony.

Factors Affecting Members

Technological Factors

- The advancement in Information Technology and Communication (ICT) attracts both positive and negative realisations within the sector.
- Emergency calls summoning assistance are received more readily on the one hand and trigger many false calls on the other hand which may be attributed to replicated street names across suburbs, metros, districts and provinces when routed via other services call centres.
- Public preoccupation with technology on the roadway restricts traffic flow and emergency responses.
- Sector technology advancements create opportunities that can support and transform the emergency sector operations , e.g. thermal imaging, gas detectors etc. The associated costs versus basic needs renders this technology restricted to the metro services.

Factors Affecting Members

Environmental / Geographical Factors

- The environmental factors and associated impacts of climate change establishes the need to re-look at our internal capacities to provide specialist resourced and skilled teams.
- The water scarcity projection of the future and the water restrictions within the current built environment requires to innovate and increase resource deployment and also incorporate technology and training of the community to act promptly and efficiently put out fires as soon as it occurs.

FIRE TRAINING

- SAESI has since 1960 pioneered the qualifications in Fire Technology which when assessed by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) established the “Prescribed Qualification” specified in section 5(1) Appointment of a Chief Officer and 6(1) Appointment of a member of services as specified in the Act.
- The dominant local government employer also specifies these occupational qualifications within its Municipal Staff Regulations (MSR) used for fire-fighter employment, progression and promotions within the local government sector.
- Entry Level qualifications are provided within 29 municipal and private training centres accredited by SAESI and upper levels are obtained through distance learning.

FIRE TRAINING

- The sector needs for distance learning whilst providing fire-fighting services established a partnership between SAESI and National Colleges Limited T/A SUCCESS COLLEGE which was terminated and SAESI currently carry this mandate to sustain the sector whilst development is underway.
- The LGSETA remains the authority on fire training and SAESI as its partner provides the required industry expertise.

DISCUSSION

- QUESTIONS

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY