

Tributes for hero pilot

Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa has sent condolences to the family of Working on Fire helicopter pilot, Hendrik Willem Marais, who died in a helicopter crash while providing aerial support against the fire at Olifantsbos in the Cape Point Nature Reserve.



Marais was killed on Sunday when his helicopter crashed while he was assisting with efforts to contain the raging fire across the Cape Peninsula. His chopper was reported to have crashed in mountainous terrain during a forced landing.



Two views - before and after - showing the extent of the fire on the Peninsula. Without the efforts of pilots such as Hendrik Marais and firefighters on the ground, the damage would be been much worse. (Image: Landsat)

He was one of the pilots lauded for the exceptional work over the past week, when over 2,000 "drops" were made (each of about 1,100 litres) on the fire that started near Muizenberg, and spread to Noordhoek, Hout Bay, Tokai and

Constantia.

"As a nation, we salute the bravery and service of these dedicated fire-fighters, and mourn the loss of Mr Marais in the course of duty," Minister Molewa said.

City of Cape town Mayor Patricia De Lille also sent condolences, saying the public safety and aviation fraternity has lost a great pilot.

"We salute him and pay tribute to him for the contribution that he made in saving lives and protecting property."

Investigators of the South African Civil Aviation Authority are currently examining the events leading to the aircraft crash.