

## Opening of the Jabulani Fire Station

22 November 2011

Speech by the Acting Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr Ruby Mathang, on the occasion of the opening of the Jabulani Fire Station, Soweto – Johannesburg

Programme Director

MMC for Public Safety: Clr Matshidiso Mfikoe

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

Managers and Officials of Council

The Media

Community of the Greater Soweto

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to be part of this very important event – the opening of the Jabulani Fire Station. This is part of our effort to bring service delivery, closer to where people are located. In this City, we believe that local action, such as this initiative, goes a long way towards the creation and the building of safe and sustainable communities.

Today's occasion is about both the coming into being of the new and the phasing out of the old. This Fire Station is the first black managed station in Soweto. Today I am happy to see that it has been given a face lift in in order to continue providing the most needed service to the people of Soweto. The first official opening of this facility was in 1973, with a single story building that accommodated approximately fifty (50) fire-fighters.

At that time, the station operated seven ambulances, one fire engine, a utility van and one rescue van to service the residents of Soweto.

The Jabulani Fire Station is situated in the heart of Soweto and the station treats approximately three hundred walk in patients. According to statistics Jabulani Fire Station has a high volume of medical calls. The most critical caseloads for the area are as follows: High maternity, Medical (burns), Assault and Motor Vehicle Accidents.

Emergency is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as "sudden state of danger requiring immediate action" ... "a disaster affecting a community".

Anyone who has been involved in a car accident will remember just how sudden it is. In most instances there is no time to do anything. What happens occurs within a split of a second.

We need to remind ourselves that fires cost lives, they destroy property, and drain public resources.

The Fire Association of Southern Africa makes the following observation:

A total loss due to fire for the year 1999 stood at about R2.4 billion.

Burns are the second leading cause of accidental deaths.

The most affected are residential properties, which account for 76% of all the cases.

Amongst the most vulnerable to fire hazards are the children from 1 to 4 years of age. They also constitute the second largest casualty of burns.

Our fire stations do not only provide fire suppression, they are also meant to:

Provide information and empower communities,

Ensure rescue and public education,

As well as to provide rapid response to medical calls.

Soweto boasts at least three state of the art fire stations, these are situated in Dobsonville and Diepkloof and this one that we are opening today.

The Jabulani Fire Station has a Basic Emergency Safety and Fire Education (BESAFE ) Centre which proactively educates the community on basic fire safety prevention, evacuation drills, how to perform, basic first aid and the "Learn to burn programme" which contains the following programmes: stop drop and roll, water safety, cool a burn. The unit responsible for day to day running of the BESAFE centre (PIER) is Public Information, Education and Relations unit.

The City of Johannesburg's Emergency Management Services has 28 Fire Stations.

In the past three financial years the city has managed to purchase 48 new ambulances with the first purchase of 28 ambulances in September 2009 and the recent ones in July 2011. According to the organisations Fleet plan the city still requires an addition of 50 more ambulances to have 110 ambulances in operation per day.

Programme Director, today we will also be distributing 20 new Ambulances to different fire station between Southern and Northern regions which will accelerate our service delivery requirements. The distribution will be done according to the needs analysis that clearly stipulates which Fire Stations have high volume medical calls.

The city does not only focus on fires, water and motor vehicle accidents. We also regularly undertake various Safety Awareness Campaigns that focus on hazards such as open manholes, roads and electricity cables and potential harmful substances under the name Qaphela!

These Campaigns are seasonal, around April just before winter we focus on danger such as fires. In the period leading to summer we focus on hazards such as rivers, swimming pools and thunderstorms.

We also teach people about potentially harmful substances such as paraffin and poisons.

In this city, we believe that because the overwhelming number of cases, whether these be fires or drowning, occur in residential areas, that local involvement is perhaps the most important aspect of public safety education.

We also know that there are many instances where the general public and individuals tend to ignore important warnings given by government institutions and professionals. This is also backed up by global evidence collected on areas in danger of experiencing erupting volcanoes and threatening floods. We need to take such advice seriously and do whatever is necessary to save lives. One life lost is one life too many.

To succeed, we need to work together in partnership. Our overall view is that safety is a collective responsibility.

We would also like to take this opportunity to urge members of this community to report the aforementioned dangers and hazards to the City of Johannesburg on the following telephone number (011) 375- 5555.

Thank you