

Drought, wind make putting out Knysna fire difficult

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THE worst drought in more than a century is making life difficult for firefighters battling a blaze raging through the Redendal part of Knysna.

The blaze, which started on Saturday, burnt unabated for nearly five hours before fire services were able to reach it. The blaze also threatened a luxury property development.

Knysna Municipality community services director Charl Botha said fire services struggled to reach the fire, which started in the Redendal rural settlement after 10pm on Saturday, because of "inaccessibility". Firefighters had only managed to reach it at 3am yesterday morning.

Botha said a Working on Fire (WoF) helicopter had been deployed alongside two SA Air Force Oryx helicopters.

Seventy firefighters from WoF, the Knysna fire department and SanParks were fighting the flames yesterday in conditions made difficult by an ever-changing wind and the drought, the worst in 130 years.

The cause of the fire was unclear, but would be investigated. Otto said they had been making use of borehole and lagoon water to fight the blaze.

Along with the fire in Knysna, Otto said 29 firefighters were battling another blaze in Stilbaai, which had been burning for the past week.

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