

Fires sweep through parts of Western Cape

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Wildfires raging across Somerset West in the Western Cape have damaged one of the country's oldest wine farms. Vergelegen chief executive Don Tooth said 40% of the wine farm was burnt within 12 hours due to winds of more than 100km/h fanning the flames.



[Image Source: IOL](#) - Picture: Phando Jikelo/Cape Times

He said some vineyards had been badly burnt. But most damage was caused to a fynbos conservation area.

Cape Town fire and rescue services spokesman Theo Lane said 120 firefighters were being assisted by crews from Working on Fire and Cape Nature. He said 22 vehicles, three helicopters, and two fixed-wing aircraft had been dispatched.

They were largely concentrating on residential areas. Seven residential properties had been damaged and the main building of the Bezweni Lodge on Sir Lowry's Pass had been destroyed, Lane said.

Other areas near Cape Town were also affected.

Strand resident Lieze Nel said the area was engulfed by a thick cloud of smoke as she drove in from Stellenbosch at about 8.30pm on Tuesday. "It looked like the end of the world," Nel said. "It was pitch black as we drove through the smoke."

"You couldn't see anything, but once we made it closer to the beachfront, you could see there was in fact still light."

Providing further details of the Vergelegen fire, Tooth said that much of the fynbos which had been burnt was still very young. "It has taken us about 12 years to get where we are in weeding out alien vegetation. "When a fire runs through, it germinates alien seeds as well as fynbos seeds and we have to go back in there and weed by hand to get rid of any alien vegetation that comes up again. That is hugely labour intensive."

Tooth said the fire had not damaged any of the tourism infrastructure or houses on the estate and there had been no need to evacuate Vergelegen, which was founded on 1 February 1700.

The farm is owned by Anglo American.

Source: Herald

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