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To : MEDIA
From : Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality
Date : 04 March 2018
Re : Article to be published

FIRE IN HARRISMITH TOWN DESTROYS SUPERMAKETS, FORCES EVACUATIONS

Maluti a Phofung Public Safety, Transport, Fire Emergency and Protection Services in partnership with the N3TC fire and emergency crew were first to arrive at the scene when shops caught fire in Harrismith town near the taxi rank in the early hours of Sunday, 04th March.

It appears that the fire began about 3 a.m. and took several hours to be extinguished, fortunately no one was reported injured and fire officials could not immediately say what caused the blaze but alleged electrical fault. The cause and extent of damage has not been determined; Mabidikwana Matjele, MAP Acting Director of Public Safety explained how they responded to the call of duty that was made in the morning, “re entse sohle se matleng a rona ho etsa bonnete ba hore mollo ona hao tshelele dibakeng tse ding, mme re thabetse ha ele mona ho sena motho ya tswileng kotsi”. He further described how the smoke influenced the evacuation of nearby shops to avoid more damages or casualties.

Number of witnesses stopped to watch as fire crews battled the blaze shooting out from supermarket, salon and pass through Bottle store; one of the eye witnesses said in the interview “I was completely shattered seeing everything destroyed by fire within half an hour but likely no one was injured”. Fire trucks and fire-fighters were at the scene trying to put out the blaze and managed to stop from spreading to other buildings, as it took about six hours to completely extinguish the fire. The owner of the business supermarket Mr Zhang Qing stated that he was asleep when he heard the dogs backing “by the time I went to check, the building was up in flames. I tried to save some of my items but I was unsuccessful, I will have to start all over again and my employees are now jobless” said the devastated Qing. The affected stores are currently closed at the moment and will be re-opened soon; the incident did not cause any major traffic diversion from Main Street as Police were at the scene trying to control the measures.



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Phuthaditjhaba SAPS Spokesperson Sergeant Christopher Mmako Mophiring said the case of arson has been opened and investigation to the cause of fire is underway.

By: Masilo Malakwane