

## Fires Rage In Somerset West

Written by Rudi Prinsloo  
Wednesday, 25 February 2009 10:40 -

---



Fires were still raging around Somerset West on Tuesday evening, City of Cape Town Fire Management said.

"The situation is still the same as early this morning. Fires are currently burning on three farms and threatening the Vergelegen, Lourensford, and Knorhoek wine estates," said Senior Communications Officer, Monica Pypers.

Pypers said there firefighters on the scene battling the flames.

Lala Panzi Lodge, in the Wedderwill Estate just outside Somerset West, was also under threat and some residents in that area had to be evacuated.

Early on Tuesday, Senior Communications Officer Winston Davids said helicopters used to drop water bombs could not be launched then, as the smoke was too dense, therefore hindering the pilots' visibility.

"A sure way of extinguishing the fires would be to use water bombs, but it's not possible right now.

"For the moment we have our fire-fighters on the ground trying to battle the blaze, and over 200 emergency personnel."

He explained that the fires started about a month ago in the Gebou area. Hot weather and heavy winds resulted in the fires flaring up, and spreading to Somerset West.

"They start off small, and are fuelled by hot and windy weather conditions. As we extinguish the fires, hot spots remain high up on the mountains, and then flare up once again by the wind... sometimes it is very windy, causing the fires to spread very fast."

Davids said the cause of the fires was still undetermined.

Animals were evacuated off the farms, and no one was injured in the blaze.

"I am not sure if the farmers are still on their property."

The fires were expected to rage for at least three more days.

Source : Sapa /tk/yj/ks  
Date : 24 Feb 2009 19:43