



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Knysna - Smoke emissions caused by biomass burning at saw mill

It has come under the attention of Garden Route District Municipality (GRDM) that the public is concerned about smoke emissions in the Knysna municipal area. These emissions are caused by biomass burning at Geelhoutvlei Timbers. This area contains pine wood chips from untreated wood only. No arsenic or treated wood products are stored at the facility and the smoldering is caused by the burning of wood chips. It was already burning before the wildfire destroyed the wood mill.

The pollutants emitted by this smoldering area is mainly Oxides of Nitrogen, particulate matter, Carbon monoxide, CO² and small concentrations of volatile organic compounds - these compounds normally form part of the pollutants emitted when biomass burns. The fire poses no severe health threat to the surrounding communities but will result in a nuisance effect, depending on the distance from the source, the wind speed and or direction thereof.

During a joint operations meeting held this morning, 13 November 2018, at GRDM, a decision was taken that the owners of Geelhoutvlei Timbers should be informed that this situation is triggering a National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998 (as amended), Section 30 incident. Section 30 incidents involves, amongst others, the unexpected, sudden and uncontrolled release from a major emission such as a fire. The responsible person in terms of Section 30 is the owner of the property - in this case, Geelhoutvlei Timbers. Subsequently, the owner of the property must take all

reasonable measures to contain and minimize the effects of the incident, undertake clean-up procedures and remedy the effect of the incident.

If the property owners do not respond to this instruction, the relevant authority may follow steps and implement measures it considers necessary to contain and minimize the effects of the incident. This involves the undertaking of clean-up operations and remedy the effects of the incident. Government may claim for the reimbursement of all reasonable costs incurred at the scene, in terms of subsection (8) of the National Environmental Management Act from the responsible person.

For more information about this press statement, contact Dr Johann Schoeman via e-mail: jschoeman@gardenroute.gov.za