



Media Statement

12 September 2024

Fire incident at Bethlehem air show

The Free State MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Ketso Makume expresses his regret for an unfortunate incident that occurred on Saturday afternoon, September 7 2024 at the Bethlehem air show, where 19 vehicles caught fire from the land opposite Airfield known as Grobbles-Foley; parking area for the spectators.

Dihlabeng Local Municipality, together with the respective stakeholders, hosted a successful event intended to advance the tourism visibility around the area, promote social cohesion, introduce aviation careers to students and broaden economic opportunities.

Despite firefighters and emergency team's efforts to respond swiftly to the scene, fire had already destroyed several vehicles. The cause of the fire and extent of the damage forms part of the investigations that will guide the relevant affected stakeholders on the next steps. It is also critical to note that no fatalities were reported except for the SAPS reports confirming that only one person sustained minor injuries when trying to move his vehicle and was taken to the hospital.

"As the Department mandated to drive economic and Tourism initiatives in the Province, we take this incident serious and we are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being our people. We would like to convey our gratitude to Dihlabeng Local Municipality, firefighters and emergency teams for responding to the call and we urge all events organisers in our beloved Province to adhere to strict protocols and reinforce safety measures to prevent such incidents from occurring," said MEC Makume.

MEC highlighted that this regrettable incident should not generate an unprecedented level of public/travel fear, as it will impede tourism industry that is still recovering from the COVID 19 effects.



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For this reason, MEC Makume urges potential domestic and international visitors to continue visiting and exploring the Free State Province as their preferred destination of choice, province to go to and not go through.

MEC guarantees the visitors that they will continue to experience the warmth and hospitality of the province and its people as well as the open skies that the Free State is known for.

He further explained that the department would remain committed to creating a sense of belonging amongst tourists/travellers because tourism is a significant pillar of the economy with many households depending on it for their livelihoods.

MEC concluded by calling for various tourism attraction facilities/activities to inspire traveling and adventure enthusiasts to visit the Free State to enjoy tourism and peace during this period.

Issued by the Free State Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

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