



Improving disaster preparedness = safer communities

In March 2025, we asked 5,308 residents across 202 informal settlements in 8 municipalities about disasters they'd experienced over the past year.

FINDINGS:

• **Widespread disasters:** Most residents across 6 municipalities (except Knysna and Mangaung) experienced at least one disaster in the past year.



• **Floods:** Nearly 60% of residents reported floods, with extreme cases in Nelson Mandela Bay (100%), eThekweni (83%), and Cape Town (70%).

• **Fires:** About one-third of residents nationally were affected by shack or veld fires. Rates were highest in Nelson Mandela Bay (46%), Cape Town (44%), and eThekweni (41%).

• **Compounding factors:** Residents said poor services, overcrowding, and low water pressure contributed to disasters, particularly fires.

• **Impacts on lives:** Disasters led to loss of homes, belongings, and important documents, as well as illness.

Data collection results: Share of residents experiencing disasters over 12 months

	BUFFALO CITY	CAPE TOWN	ETHEKWINI	JOHANNESBURG	KNYSNA	MANGAUNG	NELSON MANDELA BAY	TSHWANE	NATIONAL
Flood/heavy rains	49%	70%	83%	53%	21%	5%	100%	46%	59%
Fire (veld and shack)	16%	44%	23%	41%	10%	4%	46%	25%	29%
Windstorm/tornado	3%	12%	11%	7%	1%	0%	0%	6%	7%
Drought (taps ran dry)	8%	8%	13%	24%	9%	0%	1%	10%	11%
Flooding of sewer spillage	25%	17%	7%	11%	3%	0%	6%	3%	9%
Flooding because of blocked drainage system	21%	29%	7%	13%	6%	0%	20%	4%	13%
Overflow of solid waste	4%	17%	7%	14%	4%	0%	6%	10%	9%
No disaster	10%	4%	8%	21%	56%	93%	0%	32%	22%

Note: Shares do not add up to 100% as residents could select more than 1 disaster

RESIDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS: Interventions to reduce the impact of disasters

- There should be education about climate change, and the dangers of gas and paraffin.
- Alert people early to move into safer places.
- Early weather warnings from the councillor...open trenches to drive water away from getting to our shacks.
- We should not dump waste anywhere but on the designated [site].
- Develop and regularly update disaster preparedness plans, conducting regular drills and training exercises.
- Maintain functional communication networks to facilitate emergency response and coordination.
- Proper taps with enough pressure would be very handy when we need water during fire outbreaks.

