



# MERITORIUS SERVICE AWARD

presented to

## Station 35 – Witbank Dam

for the prompt and effective action taken by Station 35 Witbank Dam along with its 3 flanking Stations when responding to calls for assistance during an extended period of flash floods in Gauteng in early December 2022.

On Saturday 3rd December 2022, all of the 4 NSRI inland stations were alerted to assist the City of Johannesburg's rescue efforts after a flash flood swept away a group of 30 worshippers on the Jukskei River.

Tragically, a group of about 30 worshippers were beset by a torrent of water on Saturday 3 December, while performing a ritual along the banks of the Jukskei River near Sandton – a river notorious for flooding.

NSRI Gauteng (Station 27) was initially alerted by Netcare 911 ambulance services at around 16h30, Saturday, 3 December, and joined the City of Johannesburg EMS, Gauteng Government Health EMS, Johannesburg Fire and Rescue Services from Sandton Fire Station, CPF Security, SA Police Services, Police divers and Police K9 Search and Rescue at Arkwright Avenue, where a search commenced for what was believed to be 18 missing persons washed away by the fast flowing Jukskei River.

After NSRI Crew began to walk the river, searching for survivors, sadly, that evening they recovered the first body of a female casualty.

During the night church groups attempted to determine who from their parishes remained missing. On Sunday morning NSRI Station 22 (Vaal Dam) and Station 25 (Hartbeespoort Dam) joined the rescue effort, and Station 35 (Witbank) joined in the afternoon.

Station 27 established a shore controller for this operation, deciding where each of the NSRI crew members were going and liaising with all the other organisations involved as to what exactly was needed. By Sunday Stations 22, 25 and 35 were also allocated areas to search.

Due to poor communications, a mobile NSRI JOC was established by Station 27 at the river to liaise with the crews, and relay information back to the operations JOC at Sandton Fire Station.

This emotionally and physically tiring work continued for several days as the results of the flash floods extended as far as Roodepoort and Alberton, with Crew dispatched to assist many people trapped and isolated by the floods in vehicles and buildings, until the Stations were stood down on Saturday 10th December. A total of 14 bodies were recovered from the Jukskei River banks, with one person transported to hospital, making a full recovery.

The NSRI commends the tireless efforts of all rescue and support services involved in the operation. This was echoed by the head of Johannesburg EMS who stated "NSRI was such a welcome addition to our growing challenges with the flash flooding in Gauteng. Your NSRI Team presented well and displayed an incredible work ethic".

NSRI recognises that the training, professionalism and ethos of the crew at Station 35, Witbank Dam resulted in the successful execution of this remarkable rescue operation, undoubtedly saving many lives and must be congratulated for their meritorious service in the best traditions of NSRI.

We salute you.

Dave Macready  
Chairman of the Board of Directors



21 July 2023

Date