

# ARSON ATTACK?

## Family loses everything in fire

**Rustenburg** – A family home lies in ruins after an alleged arson attack in the early hours of Monday 2 December.

Francois Steward and his wife Franushca fell asleep watching a movie at around 01:30. Franushca woke Francois to check on the barking dogs. When he peeked through the window, he saw two suspects jumping over the fence.

Thinking the danger was over, he went back to sleep.

About 20 minutes later, he awoke anxiously, gasping for air.

In an interview with *Platinum Weekly* Francois told of his horrors: "I saw a flickering light under the door and when I opened it, there were flames everywhere. My first thought was that our children were safe, visiting their gran and how overwhelmingly grateful I was for that."

"I sprang into action and cried out to my wife. I struggled to wake her up. We couldn't exit that part of the house. The only exit was locked and the keys were in another part of the house, engulfed in flames."

Barely able to breath at that stage, Francois broke a window for some fresh air. He broke his hand in the process.

"Panic started to set in," Francois said. He raised alarm and managed to alert the domestic worker, who also stays on the same premises, to bring her keys and unlock the door so that they could escape.

As the couple waited for the Fire Department to arrive, neighbours used their garden hoses and water from a swimming pool to help extinguish the fire.

"When I look back at everything that happened, the only thing I can think of is how grateful I am that my kids weren't home. There is no way I would have been able to save them if they were there," said Francois. "We lost everything in the fire but in the end, we lost nothing because our family is safe," Franushca added.

Unfortunately, the Steward family do not have insurance on their house contents; they now only have the clothes on their backs.

"Thank you to everyone who helped us. We are so grateful for all the support, but most of all we are grateful that God kept our family safe," added Franushca.

If you want to assist this family, contact Francois's sister, Marilize Lloyd, on 082 609 6613.



One of the kids' bedrooms.

**IMPALA PLATINUM MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

**Stand up.  
Speak out.  
#StopGBV**

Impala invites people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible and united force for gender equality.

At Impala we are clear: violence against women is an abhorrent crime that demands a clear response.

**STOP THE SILENCE –**  
We can end the violence and hurt

- If you witness behaviour that you believe is violent or abusive, call the police anonymously or tell a community leader.
- Educate yourself and inform other people about women abuse.
- Listen to, and believe, women who confide in you – ask her how you can help and what she needs to feel safer.
- Don't pressure or ask blaming questions to an abused woman.
- Respect that any information an abused woman gives you is confidential.
- Support the survivor in all ways possible but listen to what they want. **Reporting anything needs their consent.**
- Support the right of all women to live in safety.



To report abuse, contact the 24-hour  
**Gender-Based Violence Command Centre**

**TOLL-FREE  
0800 428 428**

Report all cases of rape, sexual assault or any form of violence to a local police station  
or call **Crime Stop**

**TOLL-FREE  
086 00 10111**

Call the domestic violence helpline,

**Stop Women Abuse  
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**The Commission for Gender Equality**

has a reporting line for gender discrimination and abuse

**0800 007 709**

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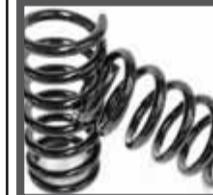
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