



Professional registration of OH&S ... an *obsolete notion*?





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Editor's Comment

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

Professional registration, a theme we have covered before is once again highlighted in this issue.

The discussions around professionalisation of OHS practitioners and inspectors Tibor Szana writes has been going on for many years. By questioning whether it will make a difference he explains that a person whether registered or not is still human and subject to possible errors. This therefore does not guarantee a compliant workplace.

His article examines statutory (example SACPCMP) vs non-statutory registrations. He questions whether registration will solve some of the problems encountered in the workplace giving cons and disadvantages as examples.

His extensive debate continues to cover much more and is an important read for everyone in this industry.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLIANCE

The regulatory landscape of education and training has undergone significant changes, particularly impacting the occupational health and safety sector, explains Stephanie Nelson in her article. However, with every change comes the imperative to recalibrate one's understanding to ensure relevance and compliance.

Navigating this problem, coupled with the increased demand for skilled personnel has become a minefield to the industry.

Ensuring your training provider is legitimate has added to this evolving and complex landscape.

MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

Following a discrimination claim against an employer in the UK Employment Tribunal, a legal precedent was set stating that menopause symptoms can amount to a disability for the purposes of the UK Equality Act 2010.

Leighton Bennett tackles this subject in his article, explaining the importance of the claim and its outcome. He goes onto discuss why menopause should be considered a disability.

AI IN WORKPLACE SAFETY

AI a technology that is continually advancing, has become one of the new buzzwords of the decade. Delene Sheasby gives an interesting perspective of its impact in the workplace.

While it has the potential to enhance efficiency and safety in workplaces, it also poses risks. She explains that the key to its success lies in how AI tools are implemented and complemented by human expertise.

SAFETY IN THE MINING INDUSTRY

Fabian Buckley writes about collision avoidance in the mining industry. The implementation of advanced safety technologies is crucial in assisting South Africa to reduce fatalities within mining which is the cornerstone of the economy.

OTHER ARTICLES OF INTEREST

- Ostracism against OHS professionals by co-workers*, Han Wenqi.
- Final report into the deadly explosions and fires at the Didion Milling Inc. Wisconsin*, Dr Bill Pomfret
- Technological advancements in alcohol and drug testing*, Rhys Evans
- Importance of site-specificity in OHS*, Harry Fourie
- Impact of recreational activities on global warming*, Rob van Hemert
- Can the use of PPE contribute to the heat burden?* Naadiya Mundy

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Professional registration . . . surely it is a rather obsolete notion

Aaahhh, I see it's that season again, professional registration, rather seasonal and the need for some to push the narrative on the matter in order to push a particular agenda or, shall we say it is because there is a firm belief that professional registration does make a difference.

Have you ever wondered why we need registered health and safety professionals whose competence is unquestionable? Or do we? We do have occupational health and safety (OHS) representatives (OHS reps), and OHS officers to do the fundamental work relating to OHS.

Then there are other specialists of course which include amongst others, Approved Inspection Authorities (AIAs). If we do have OHS officers and/or OHS reps and OHS professionals, when factoring in the costs that these categories of professionals conduct their services, remembering that there could be several of them with varying levels of expertise and varying levels of specialisation, the cost for a small employer or SMMEs could be prohibitive along the lines of the Approved Inspection Authorities.

We are also aware of what happened when the SACPCMP introduced their professional categories.

But forgive me, I'm getting ahead of myself again. I started a discussion in the late 1990s when I was invited as a junior inspector to the ACOHS to talk about my experience with health and safety contractors. In and around 2010, I picked up on it again and I raised this in ACOHS and later on again in and around 2018/19 when I was the Chairperson of ACOHS as the Chief Inspector, after the publication of the outcome of the Singapore Conference and the Accord that emanated from that Conference held in 2017.

This matter was also raised in relation to the professionalisation of the OHS inspectors of the Department of Employment and Labour during the development of the 2nd Strategy for the Inspections and Enforcement Services Branch around 2008.

The Department of Employment and Labour has as its mandate to "regulate the labour market through policies and programmes developed in consultation with social partners aimed at "enhancing occupational health and safety awareness and compliance in the workplace."

The Department is therefore committed to finding lasting solutions to problems that would otherwise further exacerbate the challenges faced by workers unless there is a fundamental change to be guided by the relevant legislation.

Such matters can be addressed through the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety (ACOHS) who are responsible for amongst other things, advising the Minister on policies and legislation.



Tibor Szana
Chief Inspector:
Occupational Health and
Safety (Retired.)

Professional registration is one of those key issues for consideration.

Such an area of concern has been raised over the last several years and the ACOHS is aware of it. However, further active engagements are needed across a broad spectrum to ensure all parties are on board so that there is active support for any proposals introduced.

A common framework must be agreed to before it is published. Let's explore this matter further and provide you with some aspects that you need to consider.

Professionals, professionalisation, professionalism ... in some cases I would posit that this is attached directly to remuneration and hence the magnetic draw card to push for it.

Of course there is another side in that it offers an amazing opportunity in so many ways ...! It does however require input from a diverse but balanced group who are knowledgeable on the subject and understand the dynamics as well as what is driving the future insofar as 4IR is concerned.

The future is here due to the speed with which things are happening and the fact that we are lagging - the future is different from where we are currently. The professional of today will be radically different in 10 years from now.

Let's take a step back though. While other countries have already been moving quite far in this regard, we have not yet taken the first step in relation to 'professional registration' (or whatever terminology may be used to express the same desired result).

The OHS Act (85 of 1993) is now in Bill form and there is a possibility for inclusion of professional registration. Some want to 'push' legislation in that direction. However, some people will push their own agenda/s for reasons they will motivate as "right" or "correct". All claiming that they or their organisations have the best interests of the employer or the employee or the employer and employee at heart. Which camp are you in?

I remember some years ago - could be a decade - when some believed the existing registration body served a particular interest group known at the time as the 'old boys club' and did not serve the purpose for which it was established. Of course this is a relevant question that must be asked of all members of all bodies from time to time to establish relevance and purpose. Incidentally, two registration bodies were registered with SAQA as professional bodies at the time. One of them is now defunct.

This is another opportunity to engage on a very important and arguably a very critical aspect in health and safety. Arguably because it deals with the issue of the health and safety registered professional.

This article is an opinion piece and is meant to provoke discussion. That said, I am not apologetic relating to any point I have raised. Having been involved in the regulatory environment for more than 30 years, I observed the various players ply their various trades supposedly to the benefit of the worker and the citizens at large. Yes, the health and safety field is more than just the workplace and the worker. Take note that while National Key Points (NKP) are critical in relation to health and safety in that they fall outside the ambit of the OHSA, it does not mean that there is compliance in that realm and neither does it mean that registered persons are operating in that environment.

I would like to state from the outset that by employing a registered professional to conduct any work for you as an employer is no guarantee that the outcome will be what you require. Should the registered person not perform as required, or should the person fail in that any person is either injured, becomes sick or dies as a result, it allows you and the professional body to take the required action. The employer still remains liable in terms of criminal law for whatever transpired. Civil law will follow its own path in relation to what transpired.

I've been involved with various working environments for the past approximately 40 years. On several occasions I went with my father to his workplace at the airport in Cape Town where he worked as a weatherman (meteorologist). Later on I worked during school holidays at a retailer packing shelves and groceries at a supermarket in Cape Town. There I was exposed to various environments including moving machinery ... and no training was provided. In 1990, I commenced as a Pupil Inspector at the Department of Labour in Cape Town. Training was provided early after commencement, this was to "set the bar" for the future. I was subjected to further in-depth training in 1995 at the department. It was intense and the foundation was set for me to commence inspections.

In commencing inspections full time and after a couple of years I became intrigued by the profile of all the players in the occupational health and safety space: inspectors, employees, employers, unions, contractors, Approved Inspection Authorities (AIAs), health care workers, NIOH, and so on.

My focus during my first couple of years became the contractors conducting occupational health and safety inspections in the various sectors and the manner in which their "audits" were conducted, seeming to produce mediocre results. I would still find serious non-compliances when I conducted my inspections after their audits. At the time there were not as many safety professionals in the OHS space as there are today.

Due to the tough economic conditions that prevail today, there is a proliferation of so called health and safety professionals operating in the space "looking after" the health and safety of workers.

The so called safety professionals unfortunately in some cases go in at a low rate as there are employers who are prepared to "pay" for what they deem to be 'quality' services. The economics principle of supply and demand applies, there are more than enough people willing to "play-the-role" of a health and safety contractor/specialist but do in effect lack the requisite requirements that make a specialist in the field of health and safety.

In the mid 1990s, I was invited by the Chairperson of the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety (ACOHS), the Chief Inspector at the time, Ms Faiza Salie to do a presentation to the ACOHS on my concerns relating to the occupational health and safety contractors or so called specialists. My concern was that they were not good enough and that they were by and large 'paying lip service' while having limited impact. A number of these contractors operated in the construction sector, a sector where I conducted many, many inspections.

Limitations

Under the current legislation there are limitations as there are no other parties other than the inspector and the employer who can stop operations deemed to be unsafe or unhealthy. The closest we came to anyone being able to do anything other than an inspector was during COVID. The legislation allowed any person to basically stop unsafe and unhealthy workplaces.

That said, it should be mentioned that there were very specific conditions set for that stoppage, a process had to be followed. Why? Very simply, to prevent to frivolous actions from taking place that could impact on jobs. Very simply put, no unnecessary work stoppages if health and safety prescripts are followed by the employer and employees. Comply, and continue working unhindered! Do you need a registered person for this? NO.

Statutory versus Non-Statutory body registrations

Currently you could register as an OHS professional in a particular field with a statutory body such as the SACPCMP and Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) or a non-statutory body such as the SAIOH, amongst others. Remember that some institutions are registered with SAQA as a professional body thereby allowing them to register certain professional groupings for which they have been recognised.

The meaning of this of course is very simply the difference between a voluntary registration or a compulsory registration to perform work in a particular field or sector. So to operate in the construction sector, you will need to register with the SACPCMP which is an arm of the CBE which is an SOE of the DPW. This registration is non-optimal. The SACPCMP has set its own criteria for registration of categories that are allowed to operate in the construction field. Can you register with multiple bodies simultaneously? Of course you can.

Will registration solve the problem?

Registered professionals can solve some of the more serious issues that may crop up at work and such a person could assist the employer where a normal employee may not have the grasp of the intricacies of OHS and also where there needs to be interaction with specialists such as AIAs.

Pros/advantages of being a registered professional may include:

- Members are registered;
- Members are deemed professional and subscribe to a particular set of rules and code of ethics;
- Levels of competence exist – with each subsequent level indicating a greater degree of competence (absolute competence of course does not exist);
- Career growth;
- Recognition by employers and others of registration;

- Recognition by peers;
- Can be head hunted if in possession of recognised professional status;
- Growth is an imperative not a luxury or a wish;
- Growth not attached to a wish list but is guided by the body in order to maintain status or growth to the next level;
- A further advantage for the industry at large is that they have access to professionals who can;
 - Train new entrants at the lower professional levels
 - Are able to coach and mentor the less competent to levels of higher competence and;
- In relation to the competent and highly skilled professionals
 - these resources can fulfil an important role in raising the levels of competence and skills that may be scarce.

What registration is not

Registration is not a magic wand that suddenly allows you to do things according to the law nor does it mean you will now suddenly do things ethically. You are merely a cog in a much bigger machine doing things at the behest of those who employ your services. At some stage you may be asked to either overlook or to "carry on" regardless of the employer not acceding to your request to comply. The question in such an instance – as a professional is – "what do you do with that"?

Cons/disadvantages

- Old boys clubs;
- Exclusive to few (as witnessed);
- Cultural barriers may exist to entry;
- Entry is restrictive;
- Closed environment for new entries i.e. bodies that feel they can add more value – members of different bodies become embroiled in politics;
- The list is not exhaustive.

What registration does mean

You have access to a resource that is required to follow set criteria. A distinction needs to be made between the law and the requirements placed upon such a person who has to strictly follow prescribed rules set up by the institution that they are registered with.

Does a registered person guarantee you a workplace that complies?

No. A registered person is human and subject to possible errors such as during audits, or differences in interpretation or lack of knowledge in a particular area.

Status of health and safety person

Is the health and safety person in a company or registered person a H&S representative and what role do they play in the OHS Committee of the company?

The OHSA is clear on this matter regarding the process to be followed and who can become a health and safety representative and how they are appointed. This is absolutely clear in the legislation, however there are still those who cannot grasp the simple requirements in the Act and General Administrative Regulations. So the registered person is not necessarily a health and safety representative and neither is the health and safety representative a registered person. It is not a requirement. If however a person in a company happens to be a registered person, and is appointed as a health and

safety representative after having followed all the prerequisite steps, then they may be appointed, if they agree.

A registered person can and may serve on the health and safety committee if so requested to do so on behalf of the health and safety committee – either as a technical adviser or as an observer – they will however not have any voting powers. They may also serve on the committee as an employer representative in which case they will have voting powers. Employer representatives may never exceed the number of health and safety representatives on the health and safety committee.

What is competence (extract)

Competence in South Africa has been a floating concept that has grown over time to what was published by the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) a couple of years ago.

How does occupational health and safety legislation define a competent person?

The Regulations currently refer to a competent person as a person who assists an employer to perform certain work or tasks required by the regulations. The requirements for specific competent persons are defined within each regulation and must be used to identify and appoint the competent person to perform the work or task required.

NOTE: Some regulations are very old and the definition must be deemed to be out of date and subject to revision where the requirements to qualify a person as competent is deemed to be less than what is required currently.

The definitions within the regulations have two aspects for competent person:

- 1) has, in respect of the work or task to be performed, the required knowledge, training and experience in a "specific field" and, where applicable, the relevant qualifications specific to a "specific field": provided that where appropriate qualifications and training are registered in terms of the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008), those qualifications and that training must be regarded as the required qualifications and training; and
- 2) is familiar with the Act and the applicable regulations made under the Act.

What makes a person competent

It is the responsibility of both the employer and person being appointed as competent, to ensure that the level of competence is appropriate, according to the criteria listed above. The employer must require the person to demonstrate the appropriate level of competence that is appropriate for the complexity of the work or task. While one person may be deemed competent, it may be beneficial and encouraged by the Department to draw on the knowledge and competencies of associated fields of competence, to effectively manage health and safety using a multidisciplinary approach.

For a person to be regarded as competent in the health and safety aspects of their work, they will have at least the following requirements:

- a) be qualified through knowledge, training, and experience, and where applicable a formal qualification to do the assigned work or tasks;

- b) have knowledge about the hazards and risks associated with the work or the tasks to be performed;
- c) know how to recognise, evaluate and control these hazards and risks; and
- d) have knowledge of the laws and regulations that apply to the work or tasks.

The employer is responsible for evaluating and deciding if a person is competent, according to the hazards and risks associated with their specific workplace and the level of complexity of the required work or tasks. This evaluation of competency does not replace the process of registration with a professional organisation for professional certification.

Therefore, the person deemed competent will need to demonstrate the appropriate level of competence, keeping in mind that the level of competency required will depend on the complexity of the work or tasks. The person appointed as the competent person does not have to be a full-time employee.

It is not possible for the Department of Employment and Labour to provide a general list of professions and the exact knowledge, training, and experience required. Every employer must determine their own requirements for each level of competency required for work or tasks to be performed. However the Department may require an employer, industry or sector to improve their competency requirements where health and safety standards may be compromised.

In general, the employer should be able to defend their reasons for selecting a competent person and the person claiming to be competent should also be able to appropriately defend their level of competency. OHS COMPETENCE GUIDELINE.indd (<https://www.labour.gov.za>)

Who should register the H&S professional?

Registration of various professionals should come through the relevant body: an occupational health professional should register through the HPCSA; the occupational hygienist should register through the SAIOH; the engineer through the ECSA. The general health and safety practitioner could then register through a body recognised to do so for a particular purpose. The SACPCMP could be recognised for registering those professionals operating in construction.

Because of the lack of co-ordination and management of this process, there is a fair amount of chaos relating to certain aspects of professional registration and how it is done in health and safety.

Add to this, occupational health and safety remains fragmented in South Africa, further contributing to the malaise that exists in this important field. This has existed for decades.

Challenges with registration and re-registration

Registration depends on the criteria to be fulfilled to be registered. For some organisations the process is simple and for others the process is complex. This begs the question depending on the sector you wish to join and the industry where you wish to operate. Is the process unnecessarily complex? Why would there be a need to have an arduous process with very strict criteria to join?

A key challenge for reregistration is the need to pay annual registration fees. By keeping it up to date means you remain registered and can claim to be a registered professional. Ensuring that CPD points are up to date and recorded with

your professional body. Attending events in person could be costly for the registered person. Fortunately some institutions now run sessions on-line.

Limitations of a registered professional

The costs of using a registered professional could restrict their use by the formal and SMME sector – especially the SMME sector. By specifying that certain grades of safety professionals can only do certain grades of work further exacerbates the cost. Employing the services of several registered persons could also be a challenge and naturally prohibitive.

Having a few people in the more critical aspects of a particular registered group could escalate the costs. This begs the question: why are health and safety professionals necessary if they have limited value? In the formal sector the risks are far greater and the costs could be justified. Although this is not necessarily true in the SMME sector which could also be made up of a component of the informal sector.

Link between the bodies registering professionals currently and the regulator

There is some form of interaction which varies, is not consistent and is different dependent on the individuals managing the various programmes. There is no cohesive policy that governs this area of the work. At best, generally speaking the relationships and interactions are ad-hoc. MoUs and MoAs are not necessarily a guarantee of performance. This provides a skewed approach.

There is also no formal approach or studies on the impact of these professional bodies, and neither is there any correlation provided between inspections, compliance levels and the number of registered persons that exist currently, or their impact over the last decade or possibly any other period.

Statistics

What do statistics tell us about employer compliance with registered persons being employed. There is no information (in any form) that provides an overall picture of the status in relation to performance of this group operating in occupational health and safety. If there is any information at all, it is at the very best fragmented.

For the past three decades or so that I have been involved in occupational health and safety there has never been a significant shift from the average performance of almost all sectors across the board. There may have been the odd outliers in relation to good and excellent performance, but those are the outliers, the rest are average to poor performers.

Performance for health and safety averaged between 45% to 65% for both the private and public sector, the formal and SMME sectors. Along came COVID and 'boom', there was a significant and astoundingly good change in the construction finance sectors – way above the average. The rest however, there was not much change. Why the change, it was not necessarily as a result of the registered persons in the various industries (prove me wrong).

Fragmentation

There is a major challenge in South Africa in that occupational health and safety is not represented by a separate entity that oversees the regulatory component.

For mining related health and safety you go to the Department of Energy and Mineral Resources. For maritime, rail and aviation related health and safety you go to the South African Maritime Safety Authority, Railway Safety Authority and Civil Aviation Authority, respectively, in the Department of Transport. For nuclear related issues you go to the National Nuclear Regulator. For medical related occupational health matters you go to the Department of Health.

There is no central authority - 'umbrella body' - that manages occupational health and safety in South Africa. This has given rise to various challenges which include fragmented reporting, contradicting policies such as Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs).

CONCLUSION

There is a global direction pushed by INSHPO which represents the opinion of a number of countries. This is a framework that can be used within our own context given that nothing currently exists of the same ilk.

In South Africa we have already noticed how employers only react when pushed by legislation that is vigorously enforced. If there is no will, there is no movement if there is no movement, there will be no momentum. So, while registration is good it should be for specific disciplines.

There should be an organisation for general health and safety practitioners. All these bodies should follow the same requirements, to deliver an individual qualified to operate in the field of health and safety, and not just someone who has a very, very basic understanding or only an "interest" in occupational health and safety. Unfortunately this is what prevails to a great degree.

INSHPO provides a good basis for establishing the type of skills and knowledge required by a person operating in the health and safety environment. Of course, acquiring the skills and knowledge indicated by INSHPO takes place over time unless you are already a health and safety practitioner.

The process can be lead by the Department of Employment and Labour, but must be supported by other relevant government departments, failing which the registration process will not succeed. These Departments include but are not limited to Departments of: Mineral and Energy Resources, Public Works and Infrastructure (includes SOEs: Council for Built Environment which is inclusive of ECSA and SACPCMP as sub-Councils), Department of Higher Education and Training, etc.

After the formal sector and maybe the medium enterprises, but for the small, micro and informal sector, a different approach must be used.

While there has been an addition of 500 new occupational health and safety inspectors, this will never be enough for what needs to be done. Even if you place an inspector at every single workplace to monitor health and safety, incidents will still take place for so long as the culture of the organisation supports it.

In closing then, realistically, and here 'let me pour water on your batteries', no amount of registered health and safety practitioners will ensure health and safety unless all the other critical elements for a health and safety system as per Section 8 of OHSA are in place.

Am I against registration? Let me emphasise very clearly and emphatically, NO. I support a proper system and process. Otherwise we'll encounter the same experience we had with the construction sector which has taken almost a decade to resolve and is still not without challenges. To our advantage, we have an abundance of experience on how not to do things.

The registered practitioner in health and safety or a person such as an engineer or contractor who operates in that domain and is responsible for OHS is only worth their salt IF they are prepared to risk their careers to ensure something is done when a matter of life and death, injury or amputation is brought to their attention.

If you cannot get the required change or movement from an employer, would you report such matter to the Department of Employment and Labour? This of course if the worst case scenario.

If you have risen to this level and can answer yes, you are worth your weight in gold because most would not.

And then, it should be remembered that:

- Professional bodies that service registered persons have a place, provided;
 - They play a constructive role in reversing the current high levels of incidents and levels of non compliance within companies in which their members work and or operate
- That these organisations fulfil the role in relation to:
 - Raising the professionalism of the professional in industry in general and in sectors
 - * A solid platform with which to engage meaningfully
 - * Assisting in effectively dealing with wayward employers
- Assist in developing relevant programs through its professional resources
- Assisting in gaining meaningful insight into what is happening in industries through participation in surveys and the like (albeit anonymous)
- Contribute in an agreed manner (possibly through and MoU/MoA) to the development and review of new and old legislation respectively through agreed to processes (outside of ACOHS possibly through the Technical Committees or through public comments).

Stay healthy, stay safe!

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Technology transforms workplace testing of substance abuse: creating a safer, sober workforce

Technology has radically transformed every aspect of the way we live and work. Due to some of these technological advancements, alcohol and drug testing have made significant strides in the past two decades.

Testing apparatus are now more efficient and precise. Techniques are simpler and capable of identifying a broader range of substances.

While testing can now be conducted swiftly and at a more affordable cost, it is not the only benefit of technological advancements. Breathalyser and drug testing equipment leverage technologies such as cloud connectivity, biometric authentication, and data analytics to great advantage, giving employers the edge in promoting a healthy, safe, and sober workforce.

ADVANCEMENTS IN SPEED AND ACCURACY

In alcohol testing, significant developments have been made in terms of instrument accuracy, speed, and simplicity. New instruments are faster and more accurate enabling a larger volume of testing to be conducted with ease.

In the past, conducting two or three tests per minute was considered efficient, but now, with improved instruments, up to 14 tests can be conducted per minute, and with greater accuracy.

Cost saving: The process of managing large volumes of testing has been drastically streamlined. Whereas thousands of mouthpieces were previously purchased to accommodate the testing needs of a single facility, now all employees can be efficiently tested with only a few instruments, minimising the amount of consumables purchased.

Speed: Previously, companies were constrained by time, only able to test a small percentage of workers at a time. But now with improved instruments, every person can be tested ensuring comprehensive workforce coverage.

Unmanned entry: Additionally, unmanned instruments have been developed for placement at workplace turnstiles and checkpoints. Combined with biometrics and access control, individuals undergo testing before gaining entry.

Efficient reporting: Reporting capabilities have also improved, enabling site managers to effectively monitor on-site activities remotely.

SALIVA TESTING: A GAME-CHANGER

In respect of testing for intoxicating substances such as drugs, significant advancements have been made with saliva tests now replacing urine testing.



Rhys Evans, Managing Director of ALCO-Safe

This allows for testing at workplace entrance points without privacy concerns, as both males and females can be tested without discomfort.

Saliva tests provide accurate insights into recent consumption or use due to their shorter detection windows compared to urine tests. This is particularly relevant for cannabis, as its use has become more prevalent and socially acceptable outside working hours. Unlike urine tests, which will detect cannabis use for up to a week or two, saliva tests only yield positive results if the individual has used cannabis on the same day.

ENHANCED SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

The integration of cloud technology, biometrics, and analytics provides employers with valuable tools and analysis for the prevention and identification of substance abuse in the workforce, contributing to safer environments and improved workforce wellness.

Along with streamlining processes, the cloud enables efficient data management, real-time reporting, and remote access, facilitating faster communication and decision-making.

Using cloud technology, breathalyser and drug testing instruments and procedures can facilitate immediate and secure data sharing among all relevant parties.

ACCURACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Due to the fact that test information is securely uploaded and stored, the potential for human error in record keeping is minimised.

This also prevents bribery and tampering, ensuring the integrity of results. The courts accept cloud-based data as reliable evidence, confirming test outcomes and supporting prosecution efforts.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Technology can and should play a pivotal role in assisting employers to fulfil their occupational duty of providing a safe workplace while ensuring a healthy and sober workforce.

Advancements in alcohol and drug testing technologies enable more accurate and efficient testing processes, at a lower cost.

Embracing these technological innovations is strongly recommended to proactively address alcohol and drug-related risks, creating a safer environment, and promoting the overall health and productivity of their workforce.



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SAIOH President's Message

Naadiya Mundy: SAIOH President, e-mail: president@saioh.co.za



As part of our service to our members, in the following paragraphs we provide feedback on the latest developments within SAIOH. SAIOH exists due to and for its members and is reliant on its members to continue to ethically serve this noble profession. Therefore, we invite your inputs and feedback on any matters communicated herein.

Keeping Cool: Can use of PPE contribute to the heat burden?

Heat stress is a significant concern in occupational hygiene, especially when workers are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) that can contribute to heat build-up. For example, foundries, construction sites, mining environments etc.

PPE, including protective clothing, gloves, and respirators, can impede the body's ability to regulate temperature, leading to increased heat retention. This is particularly problematic in hot and humid environments, where sweat evaporation, a key mechanism for cooling the body, is compromised. As a result, workers wearing PPE are more susceptible to heat stress, which can manifest as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or other heat-related illnesses.

Thermal comfort has emerged as a significant concern in advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 7, and 11, which target "good health and well-being," "affordable and clean energy," and "sustainable cities and communities." It is defined as an individual's perception of satisfaction with the thermal environment¹.

Air temperature, radiant temperature, relative humidity, air velocity, metabolic rate, and clothing insulation are all intricately linked to thermal comfort. Consequently, alterations in these factors can affect human thermal comfort².

The human body's thermal physiology is intricate, operating as a thermodynamic system that manages heat to keep the internal body temperature close to 37°C³.

Thermal comfort is thus linked to the challenge of either dissipating or retaining heat to sustain the optimal body temperature.

While essential for numerous work tasks, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) can disrupt this thermal equilibrium by impeding the body's ability to dissipate excess heat through convection, radiation, and evaporation.

Heat retention occurs whenever the body cannot sufficiently shed heat due to the thermal insulation provided by PPE, leading to a subsequent rise in

body temperature⁴.

The human body regulates its temperature through perspiration, where heat is transferred from the body through convection of heat from the skin and the evaporation of sweat. A reduced rate of evaporation slows down the body's cooling process, leading to an increased sense of heat and discomfort.

High-temperature environments and the prevention of heat to easily dissipate whilst using PPE can present several thermal physiological risks, with a severe heat stress reaction being detrimental to human health and potentially fatal.

Psychological stress and anxiety, along with the thermal stress induced by high temperatures due to PPE, should be regarded as significant risk factors⁵.

Studies have shown that heat stress raises the likelihood of heat-related disorders, such as headaches, palpitations, breathing difficulties, and dermatitis.

Exposure to heat can also impact normal behaviour and cognitive processes. As mentioned above, within various occupations, increased heat can reduce productivity and raise the risk of errors, heightening the danger of the job⁶. Furthermore, higher humidity intensifies thermal stress in hot environments, rendering the work environment intolerable.

The combination of increased skin moisture and inhalation of hot, humid air can discomfort individuals wearing PPE. Furthermore, the combination of wearing PPE and exposure to environments with high heat can be harmful to workers, particularly if they are unacclimatised to hot work environments, or if they are immune-compromised and / or taking prescription medication.

Although we make use of various guidelines e.g. Wet Bulb Globe Temperature Index (WBGT), American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists Threshold Limit Values (ACGIH TLVs) and NIOSH recommended exposure limits (RELS) to protect workers, consideration should be placed on

correction factors that can be applied for various types of clothing within high-risk hot environments.

To address this, it is important for Occupational Hygienists to consider this within their risk assessments, as well as encourage employers to implement strategies to mitigate heat stress, such as providing adequate ventilation, rest breaks in cool areas, hydration, and using PPE that is designed to minimise heat build-up.

Using technology, such as wearable sensors, to monitor workers' physiological responses to heat stress and adjust workloads accordingly could potentially help reduce risks to thermal discomfort and heat stress.

Additionally, training workers to recognise the signs of heat stress and encouraging them to monitor their own condition can help prevent serious health issues.

Furthermore, training on how to treat workers exposed to heat stress should be considered essential as immediate treatment could save lives.

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National council feedback

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Strategic Plan and Objectives

The current SAIOH strategy (5-year) plan is steered by Jaco Pieterse.

The strategy is discussed, and progress thereof is evaluated at each monthly SAIOH Management

Board and the quarterly Council meetings.

The next follow-up strategy meeting is scheduled for 28 May 2024.

Ethics

The ethics plan forms an important part of the SAIOH strategy (#3) and is currently being reviewed and prepared by our legal team.

Towards the middle of 2024, another ethics PDC will be offered on-line (webinar format).

SAIOH and the North West University (NWU) are in talks to develop SAIOH's own Ethics course, focussing on Ethics in Occupational Hygiene.

The second meeting took place in March. We hope to have the NWU team present in person at the 2024 conference.

NB: SAIOH members are reminded that as from 1 January 2023, all SAIOH certified members are required to provide proof that they have completed an acceptable occupational hygiene ethics training course.

SAIOH Branch activities

The Gauteng branch hosted their fourth meeting, on Friday 1 December 2023. During this meeting, a call went out for nominations for the new Gauteng branch committee and that took place via the SAIOH survey monkey. The new Gauteng Branch Chairperson is Cecil-Roux Steyn.

The Mpumalanga Branch hosted their third and final branch meeting at Exxaro Matla, on Friday 24 November. This was a hybrid event.

The Western Cape branch's final meeting took place on Friday 17 Nov 2023 in person only. This was followed by an election of the new branch committee and a Lawn Bowls social competition, won by OHMS.

The Zululand branch had a re-launch meeting on 19 February at which a new committee was elected.

They are also organising the Noise Masterclass that will be held in Richards Bay on 24 April 2024.



Their newly elected Chairperson is Alott Baloyi from Foskor.

The Botswana Occupational Hygiene Association (BOHA) held their virtual Branch Meeting and AGM on 7 December 2023. The following

presentations were given D Swanepoel - *Emissions based maintenance*; K Sebina - *Safer workplace in the blink of an eye*; C Malibamba - *OH programme in the Lucara Mine*.

IOHA and OHTA feedback

IOHA NAR Committee continue to meet and are currently revising the accreditation evaluation matrix.

The IOHA 2024 Annual Scientific conference is in its final planning stages, and this will be held in the AVIVA Stadium in Dublin, Ireland over the period 9 – 13 June 2024, with the IOHA meetings scheduled for the 14th of June 2024.

It is with immense pride that we at SAIOH share with you that Deon Jansen van Vuuren has been awarded the 2024 IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award. An award that honours individuals who have made significant contributions to the promotion and development of occupational hygiene practice that improves the health and welfare of working men and women.

The Occupational Hygiene Training Association

won the 2024 IOHA Collaboration Award. This award honours collaboration between an occupational hygiene organisation and other countries or organisations to share ideas and technologies to improve the calibre of occupational hygiene.

With the overhaul of the OHTA examination system, reforms are taking place with the most notable being that, effective 1 May 2024, SAIOH will no longer administer and manage the OHTA201 Basic Principles in Occupational Hygiene assessments.

Approved Training Providers will be required to now request OHTA201 assessment papers directly from OHTA. OHTA201 assessment papers remain, for 2024, at an affordable cost.

SAIOH Technical Committee feedback

With the valuable assistance from Jakes Jacobs and his Sedulitas team, SAIOH is busy organising a series of Noise Masterclasses.

These masterclasses will be held in Potchefstroom (at the NWU) on 23 April 2024, the second in Richards Bay (Blue Marlin Guest lodge) on 24 April 2024, and the last one in Cape Town (Zevenwacht

Communications

SAIOH continues to communicate daily with its members and stakeholders using various platforms.

SAIOH-BAOH Annual 2024 Conference



The Botswana Branch will host the SAIOH-BAOH Annual 2024 Conference in Gaborone.

The Organising Committee have already met several times and exact dates, conference theme, and budget is in progress and will be shared with our members via Mailchimp.

From the Professional Certification Committee (PCC)

Lee Doolan: SAIOH PCC administrator, e-mail: lee@saioh.co.za

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH General Manager, e-mail: deon.jvVuuren@gmail.com

Corlia Peens: PCC chairperson, e-mail: corlia.peens@sasol.com

Certification assessments

Written assessments took place on 15 March 2024, and we look forward to welcoming new members to SAIOH as well as congratulating current members who have achieved the next tier in their careers.

The PCC Exco is evaluating:

- An electronic written assessment on the MS Excel platform to replace the current LMS Electronic Assessment system used and the proposed Moodle LMS (an open source LMS), or using MySAIOH's functionality, to iron out several glitches experienced and can be managed/administered by the PCC Admin team.
- The application form was overhauled and put on an electronic format. This will streamline the PCC evaluations and planning.

Other PCC activities:

- The subcommittee revising the skill set/self-assessment tool are meeting every 2 weeks. They finished the 17 skill sets and are now moving on to develop the questions in line with the requirements of the skill set modules, to be used in the oral assessments.



Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum (OHSF)

The next OHSF meeting is scheduled for 3 April 2024.

Obituary Craig Warren Garvie - 28-09-1968 — 18-03-2024



Craig Warren Garvie was Group CEO of African Boomerang Holdings (ABH) comprising Fibermill, Cape Coaters and North Safety Products Africa (4Tify Africa).

North Safety Products Africa (4Tify Africa) was a local manufacturer of Personal Protective Equipment and a proud member of SAPEMA. Craig was always passionate about the industry and devastated by the events which led to its liquidation.

Craig played a crucial role in fostering the growth and development of youth and the underprivileged, leaving a lasting impact within the ABH Group. He seized the opportunity to enhance the skill set of employees by initiating various developmental programmes.

These initiatives included providing tuition aid, resulting in 82 staff members completing degrees, advanced diplomas, and higher certificates. Additionally, 196 learnerships were offered to unemployed youth, while 120 learnerships were extended to employed staff. Furthermore, Craig established a dedicated corporate social bursary programme benefiting both staff families and unemployed individuals. The outcomes were remarkable, with numerous success stories highlighting how these bursaries transformed lives.

For instance, a general cleaner's daughter became a high school teacher, a storeman's son graduated as an accountant, and a creditor clerk achieved the status of chartered accountant, among many others.

In total, 200 bursaries were awarded, contributing significantly to societal progress.

Craig also championed a graduate placement programme, emphasising the importance of integrating youth into the workforce.

Through strategic partnerships with five SETAs, 95 graduates were trained and successfully placed within the group, furthering their professional development and career prospects.

Craig's legacy serves as a testament to the transformative power of belief, commitment, and compassion. His vision, leadership, and dedication have not only shaped the trajectory of the ABH Group but have also left an enduring imprint on the hearts and minds of all those fortunate enough to have been touched by his extraordinary spirit.



Impact of recreational activities on global warming



Rob van Hemert was associated with the magazine from the early 70s to 2017,

regularly contributing articles on industrial and process safety and risk, including many varied and occasionally life threatening personal experiences during his various careers. He retired from all work in 2015 and enjoys a daily walk on Jeffreys Bay's beaches with his dogs.

Global warming must be limited to 1,5°C. Going beyond that will have a devastating global affect on the weather, climate and sea level. Reducing the use (burning) of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) will assist in attaining this goal. However, to my knowledge GW conferences have never raised the impact of recreational activities on emitting greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Many of these activities can be curtailed, some even stopped, without causing major economical disruption, but certainly making a huge contribution to reducing these gasses.

All activities that require liquid fuelled engines to conduct them, add to the GW affect. The mother-of-all global warming affect sports must be **motor racing**! Calculating the collective fuel usage to run a race, bring everyone and their equipment together, get the fans there and back home, is beyond me. Halving the number of races will have a positive impact on reducing GW. But the economic repercussions are thought to be quite large, although also beyond my comprehension.

Cruising is a recreational past time with quite a large carbon footprint. ~5 500 cruise ships operate in the world with an average daily consumption of ~200 tons of oil per ship. LNG is also used with a smaller greenhouse footprint. The combustion products from this fuel add hugely to global warming. ~1 500 passengers each uses (thumb suck) ~10l of fuel to get from home to ship and back, not counting air flights. 24 trips/year thus accounts for ~500 million tons/year of fuel being used, not even counting that used for the ship crews' travel and fuelling the ships, or the many shore excursions. Reduce this activity and the positive GW affect will be enormous, but so will be the negative economic impact. Can a balance be found?

I began **skiboat fishing** in 1970, launching from Warner Beach in KZN. The fuel use was minimal as we did not go far and only went seasonally. Later I would travel 25km to Durban from Doonside to help a friend prepare his boat, then drive with him towing the boat to Scottburgh and fish on the Aliwal Shoal, off Umkomaas. Eventually I launched from Jeffreys Bay, sometimes going out ~20km to catch Tunny. The total fuel usage for these trips probably amounts to about 30l every time a boat is launched. In SA alone that could be 250 boats every weekend day – 750 tons pa of fuel use for the pleasure of about 1000 people.

Water skiing is another fuel hungry sport. Even **scuba diving** often needs a long boat ride to a good reef. This could all be reduced without causing economic grief.

Whilst living in Singapore from '78-'81, I started **skydiving**. For a jump I would take a private launch

from the island I lived on to the main island, then drive about 12km to pack the chutes. Then drive back and take the boat back 3km to my island. The next day would be a boat ride followed by an 18km drive to the Sembawang military airbase. There, 5 of us carrying bulky, military TU type chutes, and the pilot would cram into a tiny Cesna with the side door and seats removed (except the pilot's). We'd climb at full power to 10 000 feet where we'd all pile out (except the pilot, of course). The collective fuel consumption for this short duration thrill was quite large – ~75l of fossil fuel for a pleasure totalling 20 minutes. We did this for many weeks! How many others around the world are doing this now?

Some sports do not use liquid fuelled equipment, but the fuel needed to get the participants and officials there and back home must be addressed. Over 17 000 participants run the **Comrades**, coming from all over the world and all parts of SA, consuming fuel that would not have been burnt if they'd stayed at home. Am I trying to make Bruce, Frith, Gatebe etc feel guilty? No, not at all. But I am trying to make people understand that even simple activities are adding to our global metereological woes.

The **Cape Argus cycle** and running races, and the local **Trans Baviaans cycle** race, are other examples of the addition to GW created by recreational activity with little economic value. Done purely for pleasure – if riding a bike in freezing rain, in pitch dark, on an overgrown rocky path, can be called pleasure!

Globally, if the above running and cycle races, and the New York, London, Madrid, Montreal etc marathons, were only held every other year, or if the number of participants was restricted, it would certainly aid in attaining the GW target, without causing economic mayhem.

The biannual **Holiday Run** (Xmas and Easter) from the cities, mines and farms in the northern provinces to the seaside, is another collective fuel guzzler. On average each of the ~200 000 fully loaded vehicles, some towing loaded Ventertjies, uses ~200l fuel to get to the beach and back home – 40 000 tons/run. Participate every second year and thus do your bit to save the planet from becoming a metereological disaster zone!

The greenies are actively trying to prevent certain activities from adding to global warming, and they are to be lauded for caring. However, they've grabbed the bull by the wrong bits! To my knowledge they have not (yet) targeted any of the above activities. I hope they wake up and realise there is low hanging fruit out there!



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Navigating the evolving landscape of education and training compliance in South Africa



Stephanie Nelson,
Founder/Director of Nelson
Academic Accreditation:
Stephanie's expertise
varies from project
management to academic
regulatory compliance,
quality management
systems, assessment,
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and student related
support.

In the private education and training space, with each implementation of change comes the imperative to recalibrate one's understanding, ensuring alignment with evolving requirements while sustaining relevance and compliance.

Negotiating these transitions amidst the perpetual flux of regulatory adjustments poses a formidable challenge, necessitating a nuanced comprehension of the underlying rationale driving each modification.

Such an approach demands not only technical proficiency but also a profound appreciation and empathy for the custodians tasked with enforcing and safeguarding these regulatory mandates.

DIRECTIVES AND AMENDMENTS

The regulatory landscape underwent significant changes, particularly impacting the occupational health and safety sector.

Preceding 2016, this sector fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labour, now rebranded as the Department of Employment and Labour.

A directive issued by the Department of Employment and Labour in 2020, specifically Communiqué No. 682, outlined amendments to the Notice of Direction in accordance with Section 27(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and coupled with Regulation 3(4) of the General Safety Regulations.

According to this directive, providers offering workplace first aid training were mandated to be registered with the Department of Employment and Labour, contingent upon possessing accreditation from a recognised accrediting body, namely a SETA or the QCTO.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **SAQA** – South African Qualifications Authority
- **SETA** – Sectoral Education and Training Authority
- **QCTO** – Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
- **Umalusi** – The quality assurer of General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET)
- **CHE** – Council of Higher Education and Training (HET)
- **DHET** – Department of Higher Education and Training
- **DEL** – Department of Employment and Labour

This stipulation applies to those training individuals in first aid, firefighting, and health and safety representation within workplaces.

To comply with legal requirements, training providers must meet the following criteria:

- a. Obtain accreditation from a recognised body such as SETA or QCTO, along with an accreditation number.
- b. Register with the Department of Employment and Labour as a First Aid Training Provider, securing a CI number.

These measures aim to ensure the quality and reliability of first aid training within workplace environments, aligning with regulatory standards set forth by the Department of Employment and Labour.

ACCREDITING BODIES

A further paradigm shift, observed in 2023/2024, marked the transition from the 21 SETAs as accrediting bodies to the consolidated oversight of the QCTO as the singular accrediting entity for qualifications and part qualifications across diverse skill sets and occupations.

For prospective entrants into the education and training sector, amid growing demand for skilled personnel, stringent compliance measures are a prerequisite for an official establishment.

Failure to adhere to these regulatory imperatives, risks relegation to the disreputable status of 'Fly by Night' entities, reminiscent of the unaccredited private education skills providers of the 1990s whose offerings lacked substantive pedagogical underpinnings and traceable credentials.

IS YOUR TRAINING PROVIDER LEGITIMATE?

Against the backdrop of the Skills Development Act and the National Skills Development Strategy, which incentivise employer-driven training through accredited channels, a frenzied rush ensues among training providers to secure accreditation, underlining the symbiotic relationship between compliance and sustainability.

Robust governance structures

Central to the credibility of any educational entity is the establishment of robust corporate governance structures in line with the Companies Act together with the principles, policies and processes intrinsic to the education and training sector.

Accreditation with Quality Council

Subsequent accreditation by a designated Quality

Council—be it the QCTO, Umalusi, or the CHE—alongside registration with the DHET or DEL, emerges as pivotal milestones in the journey towards legitimacy.

Navigating the complex process of accreditation necessitates strategic discernment in identifying the appropriate Quality Council, leading one to seek direction from a more knowledgeable person or entity or the appropriate accrediting body.

Many have indicated difficulty in being able to reach a person at the regulatory bodies who is able to guide the accreditation process step by step, leading to guidance and assistance being sought from an entity with expertise in accreditation processes as a proxy service.

However, the onus lies with stakeholders to exercise prudence in selecting reputable guidance, given the proliferation of ill-informed service providers in the accreditation domain.

Shifting paradigms to improve opportunities

In adopting a pedagogical ethos underpinned by principles of quality management, Nelson Academic Accreditation leverages three decades of experiential insights to navigate regulatory requirements with discernment and integrity.

Anchored in universal precepts company governance, pedagogy, teaching methodologies, and principles of quality assurance, our approach embodies a steadfast commitment to excellence amid shifting paradigms.

By meticulously aligning accreditation submissions with prescribed criteria, Nelson Academic Accreditation upholds the sanctity of compliance processes, ensuring that educational pursuits yield tangible outcomes in terms of enhanced employability and upward mobility.

Quality education training provision is therefore facilitated in the pursuit of improving employment and promotion opportunities.

Amidst the confluence of regulatory imperatives, skill shortages, and economic needs, the onus rests on stakeholders to adopt a judicious approach to compliance.

By prioritising informed inquiry, reliance on reputable service providers, and intuitive discernment, stakeholders can navigate the regulatory maze with confidence, thereby fostering a culture of educational excellence and socio-economic empowerment.

FINDING A REPUTABLE SERVICE PROVIDER

What to look for in a reputable service provider and how to approach the journey of accreditation as both a company seeking to be accredited and as a student embarking on further studies, continues to be a problem.

I have outlined some pointers which should help towards overcoming this problem.

1. Use a supplier that is traceable:

- Should have a company email address and not just a Gmail account.

This may seem insignificant but companies who are traceable generally have their own domain with an email address that is linked to their website domain and registered company name.

- Is a registered business with CIPC and is Tax Compliant as a business (this is crucial).
- Has a website showing their actual location, more than one contact number, service offerings and brand promise with contactable previous clients whom you are free to contact to request a reference.

- Enquire about the provider's accreditation number or accreditation letter. This simple question helps ensure that you're selecting a reputable training provider that will issue a recognised certificate upon successful completion of your studies.

This step is crucial in verifying the legitimacy and quality of the educational institution you're considering, providing you with confidence in your choice and assurance that your efforts will be rewarded with a recognised certification.

2. Have a conversation with someone who you have been told is knowledgeable.

Ask that person all your questions. Then decide if their advice makes sense and is not self-seeking.

3. Trust your gut when dealing with people.

A gut feel will lead you to enquire further and make a more informed decision based on facts and your understanding of what is sound and of good character.

REFERENCES:

- SAQA ACT 1995: [Link](#)
- Skills Development Act 1998: [Link](#)
- National Skills Development Strategy III (NSDS): [Link](#)
- Promulgation of the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP): [Link](#)
- The Companies Act of 2008: [Link](#)
- Amended Notice – Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act: [Link](#)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act: [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

The importance of site-specific approaches in OH&S



Herman (Harry) Fourie has a passion for occupational health and safety and has been working in the industry for many years. He is Vice-Chairman of the Safety First Association.

In the realm of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), the term "site-specific" holds paramount significance, yet it often remains a point of confusion among practitioners. Despite the extensive regulatory frameworks in place, such as those in South Africa, the true essence of site-specificity and its implications tend to be overlooked or misunderstood. This article aims to shed light on the concept of site-specificity in OHS, elucidating its importance across various facets of risk management and compliance.

DEFINING SITE-SPECIFICITY

At its core, site-specificity in OHS refers to tailoring safety protocols, risk assessments, and corrective measures to the unique conditions and characteristics of a particular worksite. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, OHS practitioners are tasked with analysing the specific hazards, environmental factors, and operational nuances inherent to each site. This personalised approach is vital for mitigating risks effectively and ensuring the health and safety of workers.

The role of risk assessments and site evaluations:

Central to the concept of site-specificity are comprehensive risk assessments and site evaluations. These processes involve identifying, analysing, and prioritising potential hazards and risks within a specific workplace environment. By delving into site-specific factors such as machinery, chemicals, layout, and workflow, OHS professionals can accurately gauge the level of risk and implement targeted control measures. Site evaluations further provide valuable insights into existing safety practices, enabling practitioners to address deficiencies and optimise safety protocols accordingly.



Crafting site-specific safety files:

Safety files serve as comprehensive repositories of information about OHS practices and procedures within a workplace. In the context of site-specificity, these documents should be meticulously tailored to reflect the unique risks and safety measures relevant to the site in question. From emergency response plans to equipment maintenance schedules, every aspect of the safety file should align with the specific requirements and circumstances of the workplace. This ensures that all stakeholders, including employees, contractors, and regulatory bodies, have access to pertinent safety information tailored to the site's realities.

Implementing Corrective Action Reports:

When deviations from safety standards or incidents occur, corrective action reports are crucial in rectifying deficiencies and preventing recurrence. However, the effectiveness of these corrective measures hinges on their site-specificity. Rather than adopting generic solutions, OHS practitioners must delve into the root causes of incidents within the context of the particular worksite. By addressing underlying site-specific factors such as equipment malfunction, procedural lapses, or environmental hazards, corrective actions can be tailored to prevent similar occurrences and bolster overall safety performance.

Legal Implications and Compliance:

In South Africa, as in many jurisdictions, legislation mandates adherence to stringent OHS standards aimed at safeguarding the well-being of workers. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in severe penalties, legal liabilities, and reputational damage for organisations. Site-specificity is not merely a best practice but a legal imperative in ensuring compliance with OHS legislation. By demonstrating a proactive commitment to addressing site-specific risks and implementing tailored safety measures, organisations can mitigate legal risks while fostering a culture of safety and responsibility.

In conclusion, in the dynamic landscape of OHS, a site-specific approach is indispensable for effectively managing risks, ensuring regulatory compliance, and safeguarding the health and well-being of workers. By understanding and embracing the concept of site-specificity, OHS practitioners can navigate the complexities of diverse workplace environments with precision and efficacy. Through rigorous risk assessments, personalised safety files, and targeted corrective actions, organisations can create safer, healthier, and more resilient work environments, ultimately fostering a culture of safety excellence.

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Lessons learned: Investigation report into fatal dust explosion in Wisconsin



Dr. Bill Pomfret has over 50 years of experience as a safety consultant working for leading companies around the world.

Dr Bill is a passionate advocate for safety training.

In this article, I will discuss the final report into the deadly explosions and fires at the Didion Milling, Inc. (Didion) dry corn milling facility in Cambria, Wisconsin.

The explosion occurred in May 2017, killing five employees, seriously injuring another 14. The incident also destroyed the facility, resulting in over \$15 million property damage.

On the night of May 31, 2017, during normal mill facility operations, employees smelled smoke in parts of the mill. They investigated the source of the smoke and determined that it likely was located on the first floor of one of the buildings.

While investigating the milling process equipment, several employees heard an explosion and saw fire coming from piping on the rotary gap mill equipment discharge. They began to evacuate and attempted to notify other employees of the emergency using their radios, but conflicting radio traffic caused confusion with the message.

A fire spread through the process equipment via interconnected dust collection systems resulting in

explosions in some of the dust collection equipment. Secondary explosions subsequently occurred throughout the facility. The employees who were not within the immediate vicinity of the observed fire were unaware of the emergency and the need to evacuate.

WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE TRAGEDY

Combustible dust explosions and fires can be deadly and incredibly destructive. The tragedy at Didion was made even worse due to the lack of important safeguards in the design of the mill equipment and the lack of engineering controls at the facility which could have reduced the potential for serious fires and explosions. The investigation also determined that Didion had poor safety culture and inadequate leadership on safety issues.

It was also determined that the dust explosions and collapsed buildings were caused by the ignition of combustible corn dust inside the process equipment resulting in multiple explosions.

The report emphasised that Didion did not

recognise the hazards posed by combustible dust throughout the milling process. This resulted in Didion not understanding or addressing these hazards.

The investigation also found that a key factor which contributed to the seriousness of the injuries was that Didion did not evaluate the risk of fires nor the need for flame-resistant personal protective equipment.

Because of this, Didion did not provide personal protective equipment to employees in the mill, some of whom suffered burn injuries during the incident, including some fatal injuries.

The investigation further found that the company failed to investigate prior incidents at the mill and therefore implement corrective measures to prevent recurrence. Despite several previous fires, no effective corrective measures were taken to prevent fires from happening again.

SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

Contributing issues included:

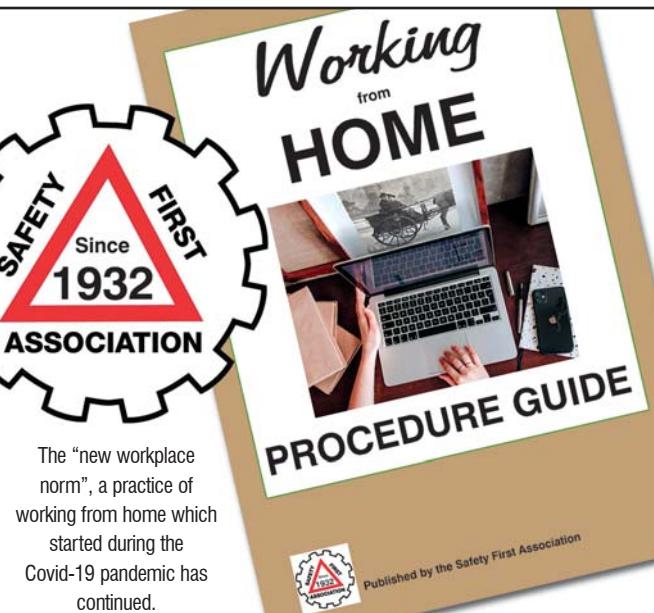
- Lack of hazard recognition
- Failure to provide proper engineering controls
- Failure to implement safety management systems to mitigate combustible dust hazards.

The investigation report also determined insufficient safety regulations in the U.S.A. which cover combustible dust operations. While the

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates some aspects of combustible dust hazards, OSHA does not have an overarching standard to manage the hazards presented by combustible dust. As a result, Didion was not required to implement safety management systems, such as those required for other highly hazardous materials.

RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Didion:** The Investigation team recommended that Didion develop a comprehensive combustible dust safety programme to include management of change, safety information management, fugitive dust management, management of audits, incident investigations, dust hazard analyses, personal protective equipment, and emergency preparedness.
- OSHA:** The Investigators recommended that OSHA develop a national regulation for industries that handle combustible dust, as well as increase follow-up inspections when combustible dust hazards have been identified at facilities.
- NFPA:** The Investigator called on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), to update its combustible dust standards to include more comprehensive requirements for dust hazard analyses, incident investigations, and management of change.

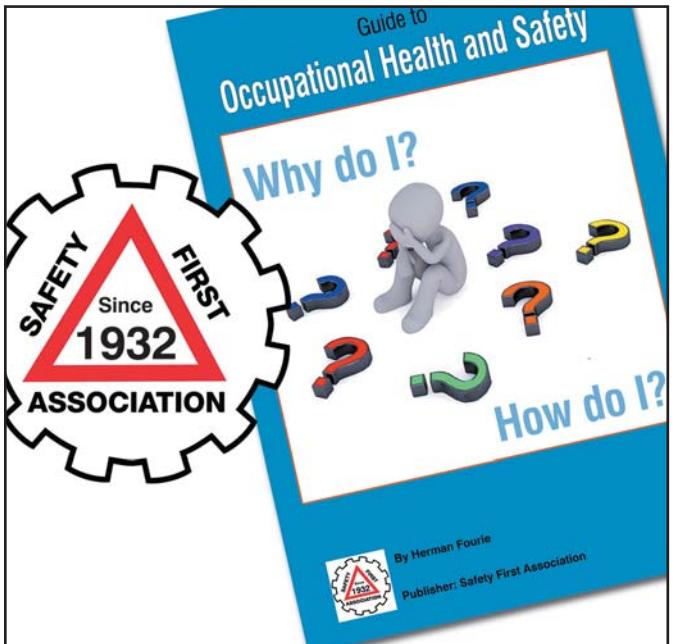


The "new workplace norm", a practice of working from home which started during the Covid-19 pandemic has continued.

The employer is required to provide, maintain and ensure a safe and healthy workplace for all his/her employees at the company premises and this extends to work at essentially a remote employee "workplace" venue where required.

This guide details all health and safety requirements that need to be applied to both the company employee working from home and the responsibility of the employer.

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Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is the practice of ensuring the safety and well-being of workers in their workplace. Employers and employees need to understand the Dos and Don'ts of OHS to maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

This guide discusses some of the key Dos and Don'ts of OHS.

To order a copy email: debbie@safety1st.co.za



Elevating safety in the mining industry: Collision avoidance system Level 9 requirements in South African mining

In the mining landscape of South Africa we have made major headway in improving on the fatalities experienced through the years.

We have come a long way since the Coalbrook mining disaster which happened on the 21st of January 1960. This was the worst mining disaster in our mining history in South Africa.

Although this was not an accident caused by CAS it is a reminder how quickly things can escalate within the mining environment, and how important it is to always be cautious within the mining space.

As we are well aware, mining is a cornerstone of our economy, and the need to reduce fatalities for outside investment and shareholder peace of mind is paramount for the government.

Therefore, the implementation of advanced safety technologies is crucial in assisting us to achieve these targets.

Among the various technologies available, we have the Collision Avoidance System (CAS), which stands out as a game-changer, with Level 9 requirements pushing the boundaries of safety to new heights.

This article explores the significance of CAS Level 9 requirements in the South African mining sector, focusing on its impact on safety and operations.

We are all aware that the DMRE issued a gazette which was published December 21, 2022. This means it is now law.

As I write this article it should have already been implemented in all mines across South Africa. Unfortunately there have been numerous challenges in its full implementation and compliance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLISION AVOIDANCE SYSTEMS

Before diving into the CAS Level 9 standard, it's essential to understand the role of collision avoidance systems.

These systems are designed to prevent accidents in mining environments by alerting operators and vehicles to potential collisions.

They use a combination of sensors, cameras, and communication technology to detect nearby equipment, personnel, and obstacles, providing real-time warnings and, in some cases, taking autonomous actions to avoid accidents.

Currently the CAS Level 7 system only issues a warning to the TMM operator and the pedestrians when coming within 10m of each other. With the CAS Level 9 the system will automatically initiate the vehicle to go into crawl mode.

If a pedestrian comes within 5 meters or less, the vehicle will break and stop automatically.



Fabian Buckley
Idip Nebosh

CAS LEVEL 9: SETTING THE BAR FOR SAFETY

CAS Level 9 represents the pinnacle of safety within the South African mining industry. Achieving this level requires a comprehensive commitment to safety and the implementation of advanced collision avoidance technologies.

Here's why CAS Level 9 requirements are crucial:

1. Advanced Technology

At CAS Level 9, mining companies must employ the most advanced collision avoidance systems available. These systems should be capable of detecting not only large mining vehicles but also personnel, small equipment, and other potential hazards.

2. Operator Training

Level 9 requirements emphasise the training and certification of equipment operators. Operators must demonstrate a deep understanding of CAS technology, ensuring they effectively respond to warnings and avoid collisions.

3. Data Analysis

CAS Level 9 requires in-depth data analysis of system performance. This includes reviewing near-miss incidents, system alerts, and operator responses to continually improve the system's accuracy and effectiveness.

4. Integration with Mine Planning

Level 9 necessitates seamless integration of CAS into mine planning and operations. This includes the establishment of clear protocols for CAS use in different mining scenarios.

5. Continuous Improvement

Achieving CAS Level 9 is not a one-time accomplishment. Companies must demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement in collision avoidance technology and safety protocols.

IMPACT ON SAFETY AND OPERATIONS

The adoption of CAS Level 9 requirements in the South African mining sector has several significant impacts:

1. Reduced Accidents

CAS systems significantly reduce the risk of accidents, protecting both miners and equipment. This leads to a safer work environment and fewer disruptions due to accidents.

2. Enhanced Efficiency

CAS technology optimises the flow of vehicles and equipment within the mine, reducing delays

and improving overall operational efficiency if rolled out effectively.

3. Compliance and Reputation

Meeting CAS Level 9 requirements ensures compliance with safety regulations, enhancing a mining company's reputation and reducing legal and financial risks.

4. Workforce Morale

Miners working in an environment with advanced safety measures, including CAS, experience higher morale and job satisfaction.

5. Possible delays

Also, it is important to highlight some of the possible effects on production witnessed during testing on one of the mines I am working on. There have been cases where equipment has stopped due to someone having placed their cap lamp upside down on their belt.

CAS Level 9 requirements represent a transformative step in ensuring safety and operational efficiency in South African mining. By pushing for the highest standards in collision avoidance technology, operator training, data analysis, and integration, these requirements not only reduce accidents but also elevate the mining sector's overall safety culture. As the mining industry continues to evolve, CAS Level 9 will remain a critical benchmark for safety and

operational excellence in South Africa.

The Level 9 standard is a major leap from Level 8, which required systems to deliver an advisory instruction to operators.

Now, electronic systems must automatically take mechanical control of the vehicle and slow down and apply the brakes at any mine where there is a significant risk of such collisions.

Implementing reliable integrated systems that can comply with Level 9 requires long term commitment and solid investment in sophisticated CAS systems that provide high integrity object detection, operator warning and automatic intervention, when necessary, in order to prevent an accident.

It must be far more than a box ticking exercise, with integrated technology implemented in a holistic way that avoids the challenges of operator alarm fatigue, sensing technology inaccuracies, unnecessary alarms during normal operations and reduced system availability – all of which can impact production.

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ACHASM: Appointment of Directors

The Association of Construction Health and Safety Management (ACHASM) (NPC) announces the appointment of the following two Directors, bringing the number of Directors to five.

Mr Benny Boyce



Benny Boyce who is registered as a Construction Health & Safety Manager (CHSM) with the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCM), is the Health, Safety, Environmental and Quality Manager, GVK-Siya Zama (KwaZulu-Natal). In addition to Benny contributing nationally, he will be spearheading ACHASM activities in KwaZulu-Natal.

Mr Mongezi Kubukeli



Mongezi Kubukeli who is registered as a Pr Construction Health & Safety Agent (CHSA) with the SACPCM, is an Associate, Maninga Engineering (Pty) Ltd. In addition to Mongezi contributing nationally, he will be spearheading ACHASM activities in Gauteng and adjoining provinces.

The other three Directors are Mr Yaseen Francis (Executive Director), Dr Claire Deacon, and Prof John Smallwood.





Menopause in the workplace - a UK legal case outcome



By Leighton Bennett, Benrisk Consulting,
Safety First Association
Chairman.
OHS & Risk Management
Consultant

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER?

1. Severe menopause symptoms

UK reports indicate that a significant proportion of women have reported that menopause symptoms can negatively affect them at work and in some cases force them to leave the workplace.

UK data shows an increasing number of menopause cases being recorded in the workplace.

2. Adverse affects of menopause in the workplace

The UK reports state that those women negatively affected at work indicate that:

- a. 79% said they were less able to concentrate.
- b. 68% said they experienced more stress.
- c. nearly half (49%) said they felt less patient with clients and colleagues.
- d. 46% felt less physically able to carry out work tasks.

3. Negative symptoms of menopause

In another UK report, 2000 menopausal women were interviewed about how the symptoms had affected them negatively in the workplace

- a. 53% said there were times when they were unable to go into work due to their symptoms.
- a. 67% reported common symptoms such as mood disturbances, anxiety, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration.
- a. Difficulty sleeping due to symptoms was also reported to impact on one's work performance.

4. Unfair discrimination

Under the UK Equality Act of 2010 and particularly under our South African Constitution and our workplace related legislation, no person (including Employers) may "unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more

grounds including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, social orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Constitution Ch2 sections 9.3 & 9.4).

5. Menopause in the workplace

On this basis, should the negative impacts of menopause in the workplace be considered? A week or so ago, I saw a receptionist at a doctor's consulting rooms suffering from menopause holding a hot water bottle to her abdomen. She was therefore working using one hand only.

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

Menopause is when a woman's periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55 but it can also be earlier or later.

Its onset can happen for a number of reasons, including:

- naturally
- genetics (also consider ethnic and cultural issue differences and stigmatisation)
- surgery
- cancer treatments
- hormone replacement therapy (HRT) treatment, etc, so such causal situations may need to be considered.

IS MENOPAUSE CONSIDERED A DISABILITY?

As and where menopause symptoms have a long-term and substantial impact on a woman's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, these symptoms could be considered a potential disability.

If menopause symptoms amount to a disability, an employer will be under a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the work output performance requirements, as for any "disabled person".

They will also be under legal obligation to not directly or indirectly discriminate because of the disability, nor to subject the woman to discrimination.

Furthermore, as was indicated above, women experiencing menopause symptoms may and should be considered to be protected from direct and indirect discrimination, as well as from harassment and victimisation on the grounds of age and sex.

Under health and safety legislation, employers (e.g. OHSAct S8.2.d) also have a legal obligation to conduct an assessment of their workplace and work task risks. Is this age and sex factor considered during the work and job task risk assessments?

More women are being employed in today's



workplace and many are returning to work as soon as possible after child birth and working longer through menopause to a retirement age.

Consequently the risk of menopause impacting on women in the workplace needs to be considered going forward.

The UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published new guidance on menopause in the workplace to help employers understand their legal obligations relating to women who are going through the menopause as well as details on the support they should provide affected employees.

This includes advice on making reasonable adjustments for women who are experiencing the menopause so they can continue to contribute to work. It also encourages positive conversations about this personal issue to help create a safe and supportive work environment.

RESULTS OF A SURVEY

During a September 2021 UK survey relating to experiences of menopause at work and beyond, it was asked, "What do you think is the most important thing employers can do to support employees experiencing menopause?" On analysing a representative sample, it was found that a number of themes emerged as to what respondents wanted their employers to do:

a) "Provide adjustments"

Respondents referred to a number of practical adjustments that would help them including:

- i) placing fans at desks,
- ii) better ventilation (often there is an ongoing male vs female conflict over the acceptable room temperature in open plan work environments),
- iii) where uniforms are mandatory, these should be appropriate for menopause, for example made of breathable materials,
- iv) access to drinking water (a SA OHS legal requirement),
- v) easy access to toilets and to washing facilities (a SA OHS legal requirement).

b) "Have policies"

Respondents called for specific policies in their organisations that recognised the impact of menopause. Sickness policies were frequently mentioned, with respondents asking that absence policies do not penalise those needing time off to deal with symptoms, or for menopause-related appointments. (A Basic Conditions of Employment Act legislation change, or an employer policy established)

c) "Provide flexibility"

Respondents called for flexibility in their working hours, as well as their place of work. Working from home was frequently mentioned. (Employer agreed working from home could be a possibility).

d) "Education"

Respondents wanted to see a greater understanding of the menopause, and its impact, in the workplace. Many pointed to the need for managers to receive training. (Medical issues are considered confidential but menopause symptoms may need to be divulged to an employee's management).

e) "Support cultural changes"

The removal of stigma and taboo relating to menopause was a repeated theme, as was a desire to move away from menopause being an acceptable topic for jokes or workplace 'banter'.

Survey respondents said they wanted to feel like it was possible and safe to discuss menopause with their managers and colleagues.

Respondents called for an 'open space' for women to talk about what they are going through and for a willingness of others in the workplace to listen to the lived experience of menopause.

A few respondents were concerned that the introduction of further workplace support could have the unintended consequence of further stigmatising women.

f) "Trust"

Respondents want to know that they are trusted to manage their work alongside menopause, without the fear of being disciplined or facing other negative consequences for being open about menopause or having to take time off.

g) "Develop support networks"

Respondents emphasised the importance of feeling supported in the workplace and knowing how to access that support.

Survey respondents want a safe place for women to discuss, or seek support or advice for what they are going through. Some respondents emphasised being able to speak to female colleagues; others wanted to be able to speak with managers and some sought the support of external professionals who understand menopause.

In addition to the above ERHC guideline, the British Standards Institution's (BSI) has also published a 'Menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace – Guide' (BS 30416) which has been seen as a step in the right direction.

However, these documents and hopefully this article is only the start of the conversation in our workplaces.

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Climate of a worksite with ostracism: The anatomy of an organisation safety culture

Ostracism against Occupational Health & Safety professionals in a workplace is common, as they are perceived as a “deterrence or obstruction” towards fast progressive production.

The power distance between OH&S professionals and project managers / directors are far apart. Resources all fall under the control of project managers / directors. They can simply override the safety protocols such as mobilising contractors to start work without thorough onboarding OH&S screening requirements to ensure legal compliance.

The reasons commonly said are: “We need them to start work asap to catch up for schedule”. “They are the cheapest tenderer please be lenient with them”. “Do not stop the work or you will be labelled as the bad guy who is obstructing progress”.

REMOVING BARRIERS FOR SUCCESS

Project managers who possess individualism are result-oriented and will take all steps to achieve their targets by removing any potential barriers in order to achieve their aim (project schedule ahead of time and save costs).

Leadership styles of collectivism stress the importance of the community, while individualism is focused on the rights and concerns of each person.

Where unity and selflessness or altruism are valued traits in collectivist cultures, independence and personal identity are promoted in individualistic cultures.

OSTRACISM AND STRESS

OH&S professionals are subjected to ostracism, have exhibited heightened levels of stress, diminished job satisfaction, and a decline in perceived health.

These outcomes not only compromise individual performance and morale but may significantly contribute to a toxic work environment that can erode the quality of trust and empowerment.

Human well-being and the issue of job satisfaction are of crucial importance in the public domain, where low performance can lead to lost lives. Traditionally, job satisfaction has been defined as a personal experience indicating an individual's satisfaction with her/his job.

JOB SATISFACTION IMPACTS HEALTH

Several factors affecting job satisfaction have been identified, such as interaction with colleagues and relationships with stakeholders, co-workers and managers. Exclusion and rejection from others threaten the sense of belongingness within the



Han Wenqi is an experienced workplace safety and health professional from Singapore, and an advocate with 15 years of industrial safety experience. He is a lecturer for the Bachelor of Science in SHEM and MSc in OHSW. He is currently a guest speaker / associate lecturer with the Leeds Beckett University, Cardiff Metropolitan University. His experience is highly sought after in Singapore mega projects.

work community.

Workplace ostracism has a clear direct association with job satisfaction, stress and perceived health.

Loneliness fully mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism, stress and perceived health, and partly mediates the association between workplace ostracism and job satisfaction.

Self-esteem partly mediates the association between workplace ostracism, stress, job satisfaction and perceived health.

The experience of workplace ostracism in organisations is a significant factor in job satisfaction, stress and perceived health.

JOB SATISFACTION AND INCREASED TURNOVER

Organisations could strengthen job satisfaction and increase workers' well-being by strengthening social relationships in the organisation and via that, increasing turnover.

Workplace ostracism decreases interaction, which can also endanger co-workers' care and supervision if information is not openly exchanged or briefed.

This article indicates that impacts posed by workplace ostracism weakens job satisfaction more than loneliness.

More commonality and consideration for others at work are needed because these factors may help increase work well-being and decrease exits from working life.

OSTRACISM EXCLUDES NO-ONE

Ostracism is a universal phenomenon that manifests in any age group, culture, or organisation.

Workplace ostracism surveys have been conducted largely in Asian countries, where people who tend to emphasise collectivistic values such as harmonious, are superficial or otherwise called cosmetics.

Workplace culture is strongly individualistic, where privacy and achievement are appreciated as well as surviving alone. Each individual is selfish and careful for their own rice bowl.

A psychological unsafe workplace will often see workplace ostracism, as those ostracised employees may be employed only because there is a mandatory requirement, or because there is a need for fulfilment of certain headcounts by stakeholders.

Therefore, we also considered other occupational groups - environmental control officers, workplace safety and health coordinators and officers as well as managers from all levels.

This article focuses on workplace ostracism and

its association with cognitive dissonance, stress, job satisfaction, perceived health and well-being, psychosocial hazards, loneliness and self-esteem.

WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

There is a need to clarify and understand the relationship between workplace ostracism and work well-being in association with the selected factors.

The construction industry is strongly people-oriented, and work is often done in teams. However, workplace ostracism undermines this interaction.

Those who are ostracised have a negative image of co-workers, line management, top management and the work environment, which leads to a decrease in job satisfaction. Good relationships and feelings of belongingness at work may help employees remain at work.

Human well-being and the issue of job satisfaction are of crucial importance in the public domain, where low performance can lead to lost lives.

Traditionally, job satisfaction has been defined as a personal experience indicating an individual's satisfaction with her/his job.

Several factors affecting job satisfaction have been identified, such as interaction with colleagues and relationships with patients, co-workers and managers. Exclusion and rejection from others threaten the sense of belongingness within the work community.

The theory of belongingness is built on the idea that the individual has a need to belong.

According to the need-threat theory, ostracism threatens four fundamental needs namely: belongingness, self-esteem, control and a meaningful existence.

After being ostracised at work, employees try to reinforce their thwarted needs and reconnect with others.

If despite the effort an employee cannot connect with colleagues, it may increase stress, weaken resources and lead to various harmful phenomena, such as cognitive dissonance, increased anger, sadness, or depression. These, in turn, lead to

reduced health conditions.

The majority of workplace complaints have identified workplace ostracism as a stressor that threatens the resources that employees need.

STRESS AFFECTS MOTIVATION

Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) is a stress theory that describes the motivation that makes individuals maintain their existing resources and look for new ones.

According to the COR, different stressors at work, including workplace ostracism, can deplete employees' resources and subsequently even cause job burnout.

Stress has been defined as a “particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being”.

According to COR, stress and workplace ostracism cause the employee to experience resource loss. In this case, she or he begins to save personal resources by ignoring, for example, a colleague's need for help or the needs of clients and stakeholders.

A worker has a need to preserve his/her own resources at work and seeks to protect them and reduce threats that may degrade the available resources.

In light of the COR, it can be assumed that the repeated experience of ostracism eventually exhausts the employee due to the subsequent increased stress.

This is also supported by the view that different contributory factors may lead to higher absenteeism, personnel turnover, conflicts and consequently lower job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Long-term cognitive dissonance arising from the impact of workplace ostracism will lead to arguments, disagreement, silent-quitting, frequent absenteeism or even high turnover rates.



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Dangers and ethical AI in workplace safety: Insights from "Dialogue with Steven Bartlett" on the Diary of a CEO podcast

INTRODUCTION

In a thought-provoking podcast with Steven Bartlett on "Diary of a CEO," Mo Gawdat, a visionary in the field of AI, shares his insights on the evolution of Artificial Intelligence and its profound implications for society and workplace safety.

His perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the ethical boundaries and potential dangers of AI in the modern world and modern workplaces.

AI'S ETHICAL AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

Gawdat's conversation with Bartlett highlights the need for ethical frameworks in the development and implementation of AI technologies.

He discusses the dual-edged nature of AI: while it has the potential to enhance efficiency and safety in workplaces, it also poses risks related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the displacement of jobs. Gawdat strongly emphasises the importance of developing AI in a manner that aligns with human values and ethics, ensuring that its integration into society, especially in the workplace, is beneficial and non-exploitative.

In his discussion about AI, Gawdat expressed that AI could potentially have more significant and rapid impact on humanity than climate change. This viewpoint is grounded in several key considerations:

- Speed of advancement,
- Unpredictability,
- Potential for misuse,
- Ethical and moral implications,
- Irreversibility.

His discussion is also a call to recognise the urgency and potential risks associated with AI and advocates careful and ethical development of AI technologies.

AI'S ROLE IN ENHANCING WORKPLACE SAFETY

In the realm of Occupational Health and Safety, AI can be a pivotal tool.

AI can be employed to predict potential workplace accidents, automate risky tasks, and analyse data to improve safety protocols. However, he stresses the importance of balancing AI integration with human oversight to ensure that AI assists rather than replaces human judgment and expertise, thereby enhancing safety without compromising ethical standards.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IN GUIDING AI

A key highlight of the interview is Gawdat's perspective on AI as potential "invaders."



Delene Sheasby has over three decades of experience, excelling in health and safety educational training and development. Her skills include impeccable knowledge of legal compliance, and a deep commitment to occupational health and safety.

INSIGHTS

The dialogue between Mo Gawdat and Steven Bartlett offers invaluable insights into the future of AI, emphasising its potential to revolutionise workplace safety and the ethical considerations that must guide its advancement.

This discussion reminds us that the trajectory of AI is not predestined but is rather in our hands, and it is our responsibility to steer it towards a future where it serves as a benevolent partner in our societal and occupational endeavours.

Decide for yourself. The podcast can be accessed on YouTube on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bk-nQ7HF6k4>

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in an example of five outlined areas of workplace health and safety is not merely a futuristic concept but is already possible and, in some cases, actively being implemented.

Here's why:

1. Risk Assessment and Prediction:

Modern AI algorithms are capable of processing large datasets much more efficiently than humans. They can identify patterns and predict potential hazards by analysing historical data, such as accident reports and equipment logs.

This capability is not only possible but is already being used in various industries to enhance safety.

Human Role:

Safety professionals would interpret AI predictions to implement proactive measures.

Human judgment is essential in evaluating the context and severity of these risks and deciding on appropriate interventions.

2. Ergonomic Assessment:

The use of wearable AI devices and computer vision for ergonomic assessment is a reality.

These technologies can track and analyse movements and postures to identify ergonomic risks in real-time, a practice that is increasingly being adopted in workplaces with a focus on physical health and ergonomics.



Human Role:

Ergonomic specialists and occupational therapists would use AI-generated data to provide personalised recommendations for workers, ensuring ergonomic solutions are tailored to individual needs and workplace specifics.

3. Incident Response and Management:

AI systems are currently able to automate certain responses in emergency situations.

For example, in industrial settings, AI can detect anomalies that may indicate a safety hazard and trigger automated safety protocols or alerts.

This technology is evolving but already plays a role in enhancing safety responses.

Human Role:

Safety managers would oversee these automated systems, ensuring they function correctly and intervene manually when necessary. They would also be responsible for post-incident analysis and learning.

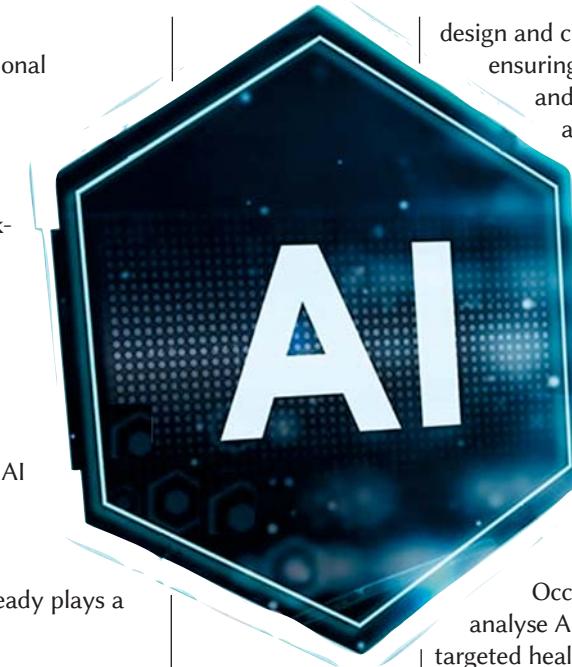
4. Training and Education:

AI-driven personalised learning and the use of VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) for safety training are actively being explored and implemented in various sectors.

These technologies offer more engaging and effective training experiences, tailored to individual learning styles and needs.

Human Role:

Training coordinators and safety trainers would



design and curate these AI-driven programmes, ensuring they align with real-world scenarios and regulatory requirements. They would also provide human interaction and support, which are crucial for effective learning.

5. Health Monitoring and Wellness:

Wearable devices that monitor health indicators are not only widely available but are also becoming more sophisticated.

The use of such devices in a workplace context to monitor stress levels or fatigue and prevent accidents is a growing trend.

Human Role:

Occupational health professionals would analyse AI-generated health data to provide targeted health interventions and advise on workplace adjustments to support employee wellbeing particularly in industries where employee health directly impacts safety.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the application of AI in these areas of workplace health and safety is grounded in current capabilities and is being progressively adopted across different industries.

The technology is continually advancing, making these applications more sophisticated and integrated. The key lies in how these AI tools are implemented and the extent to which they are complemented by human expertise to ensure they meet the specific needs and contexts of different workplaces.



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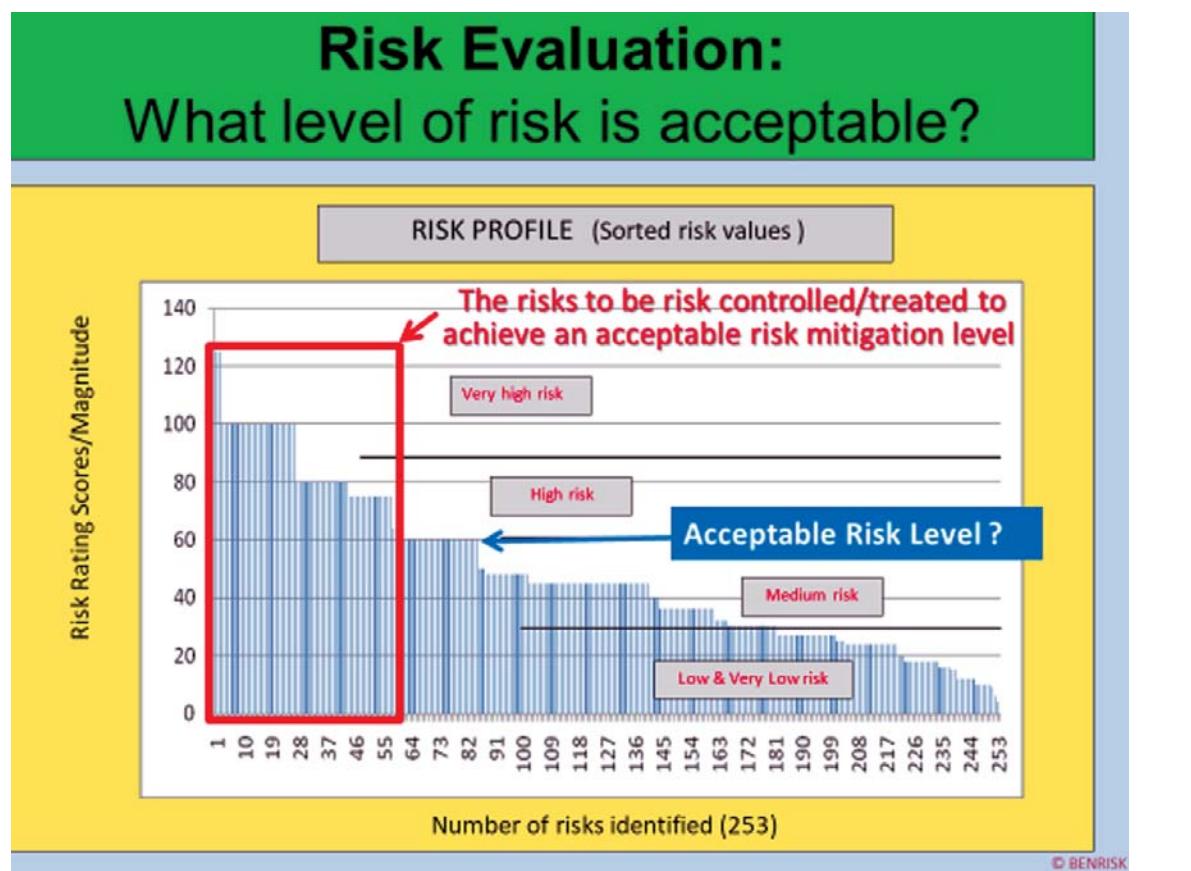
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