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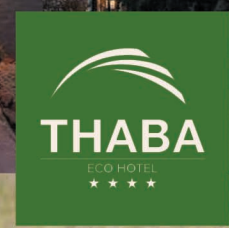


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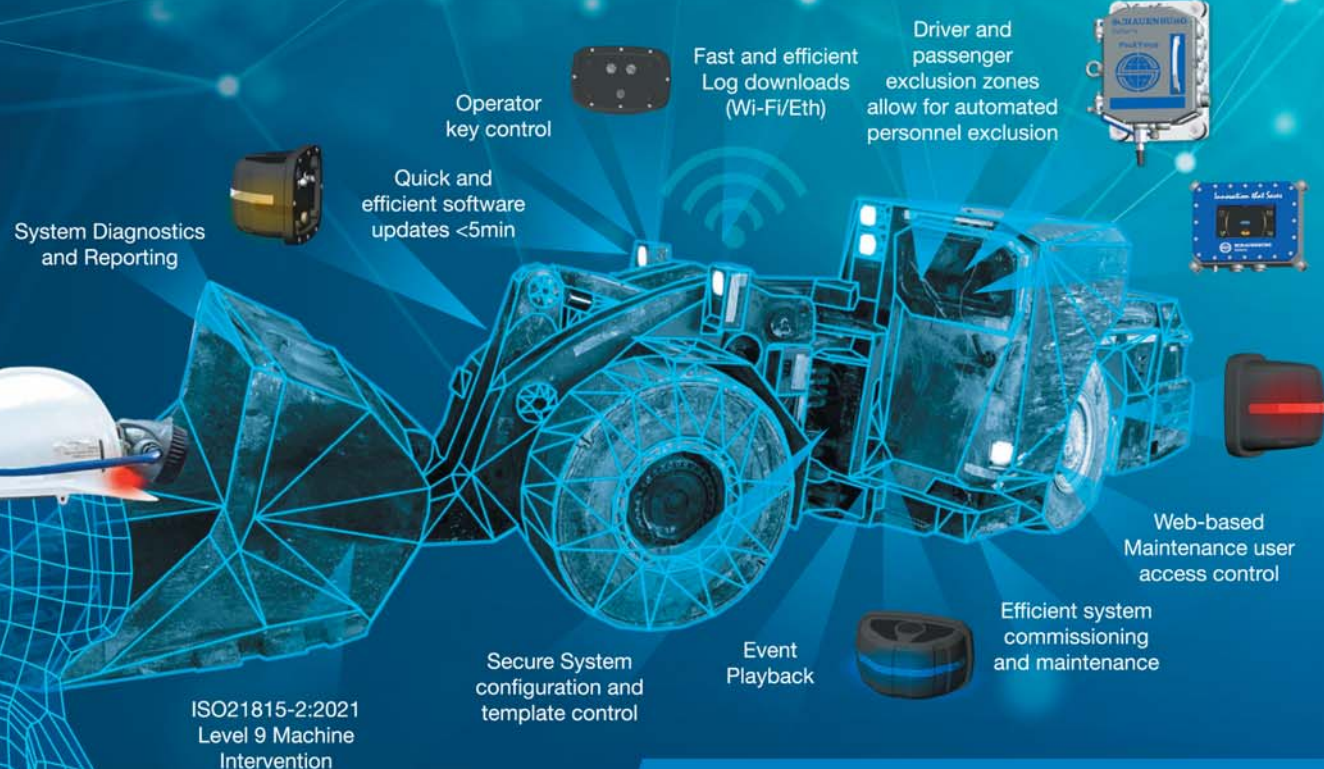


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Editor’s Comment

If you want to know what prompted Professor John Smallwood’s provocative statement: “If you do not know why buildings and structures collapse, then you should not be in construction!”, read his article.

Nazeer Hoosen worries about youth workers in construction who have limited practical experience and exposure to OHS principles. Their induction may not be adequate to recognise the risks of unsafe practices. Effective programmes combining early education, structured workplace training, mentorship, and strong supervision, can help reduce injuries and injuries.

Anil Amratlal argues that there is no reason for decay to be accepted in food management systems. Unfortunately, conventional food safety protocols often do not see the threat until it’s too late. He criticises the cultural acceptance of shrinkage, arguing that it is not a cost of doing business, but an unchecked failure of operational integrity.

Credential harvesting is a troubling practice in which registration and qualification certificates are copied and reused for various questionable reasons. This practice poses a danger to the contractor, professional and client alike. Kelvin Bhehane highlights the red flags, and provides guidelines and action models to help stakeholders and the industry identify these fraudulent activities. He calls for stronger verification, clearer agreements, and more rigorous accountability.

Rani Naidoo emphasises why decisive responsiveness is critical in occupational health and safety. OH&S is a profession with no room for hesitation: hazards do not pause and risks do not diminish while decisions are debated.

Willie Engelbrecht emphasises that the issuing of a work permit is one of the most important steps in controlling high-risk work. OSH practitioners must ensure that the permit system is understood, applied correctly, and enforced consistently. The consequences of ignoring permit conditions can include injury, death, legal action, financial loss, and damage to the organisation’s reputation.

After twenty three years in HSE, Fabian Buckley questions where the profession is heading. Reflecting on the mentors who shaped his career, he likens them to policemen whose knowledge he wishes they had shared more freely. Today, he is grateful to see many professionals doing exactly that. He concludes that currently, workers don't go home safely because someone has a certificate on the wall. They go home safely because competent people make good decisions when it matters most.

Tibor Szana examines the challenges involved in developing effective regulations. In particular, he focuses on the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety (ACOHS), explaining why the necessary procedural framework must first be established before it can become fully operational. Among the challenges he raises is the process of securing nominations for members of the Council.

Neil Franklin offers some valuable insights into the Critical Control Management (CCM) process, prompting readers to ask and answer important questions and set their own path forward. The CCM process challenges traditional thinking, particularly around what constitutes a Control and what should be considered Critical. If managed correctly, CCM can play an important role in preventing and mitigating serious incidents.

The introductory article to The Institute for Work at Height, South Africa is the first of many articles the Institute will publish in subsequent issues of African OS&H. We welcome the IWH and look forward to their future contributions.



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Construction Health and Safety:

What are we trying to achieve?



Professor John Smallwood
PhD (Construction Management)
Emeritus Professor of Construction Management,
Department of Construction Management,
Nelson Mandela University

INTRODUCTION

Fatalities, injuries and disease continue to occur in South African construction, unabated. Collapse is now a common term, and ‘construction smart’ participants await the next collapse with bated breath, wondering what the ‘fatality count’ will be.

What must be remembered is that the outcome of failures of management, which are referred to by many participants as ‘accidents’, is fortuitous as it could be minor, moderate, major or catastrophic, as in the case of the George building collapse, 6 May 2024.

Even worse, people enquire of the author why a specific building collapsed! During a presentation to the ACHASM 2024 one-day Interim Summit ‘Preventing Structural and Support Work Collapses During Construction’, Cape Town, 31 July 2024, the author said: “If you do not know why buildings and structures collapse, then you should not be in construction!”

Furthermore, anecdotal evidence and research indicate that construction health and safety (H&S) has become a ‘paper exercise’ accompanied by frivolous requirements such as numbering and load testing of wheelbarrows, the requiring of the submission of CVs, and more.

Then, client baseline risk assessments are activity based, and subsequent H&S specifications are misguided and constitute a regurgitation of the Construction Regulations.

Given the abovementioned, the question as to what we are trying to achieve, arises.

THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

Based upon a total of 300 850 workers insured by The Federated Employers Mutual Assurance Company (RF) (Pty) Ltd (FEM) (FEM, 2026) for the year 2025, the fatality rate (FR) was 13.96 / 100 000 workers, the accident rate (AR) was 2.17 / 100 workers, and the disabling injury incidence rate (DIIR) was 0.29 or 0.29 / 100 workers.

The FR does not compare favourably with the FRs of the Australian and United Kingdom (UK) construction industries, namely 2.8 for 2024 (Safe Work Australia, 2025), and 1.92 in 2024 / 2025 (Health & Safety Executive, 2025), respectively.

Clearly, the injury statistics amplify the need for a range of interventions to mitigate the ‘current reality’.

Furthermore, it should be noted that FEM insures approximately 50% of the industry’s workers, and that FEM’s clients are guided in terms of H&S by employer associations’ H&S advisors, which are

sponsored by FEM i.e., FEM’s clients are likely to constitute the ‘more committed to H&S’ employers and better performers in terms of H&S.

HEALTH AND SAFETY’S BIGGEST ENEMY IS?

According to Deon Bester, OHS Manager, Master Builders Association Western Cape, H&S is! The author concurs as it has become onerous, time consuming, irritating, and an exercise entailing endless paperwork and hurdles.

A study conducted among general contractors (GCs) in the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal, and Western Cape by Smallwood & Bester (2020) concluded, among others, the following relative to current H&S documentation: it is inappropriate in that it can be complex, generic, lengthy, onerous, repetitive (duplicative), and vague; it engenders dubious practices; it generally ‘does not add the potential value’; it shifts the focus from the physical process, and it could be improved.

Recommendations included, among others, the synergy between H&S documentation, and actions, interventions, and practices should be investigated, digested, and focused upon. For example, hazard identification and risk assessments (HIRAs) are ranked seventh, yet HIRAs (documents) are ranked thirty-eighth. The former is the more critical, especially if undertaken just prior to commencing an activity, and even more so, if reinforced by a toolbox talk (ranked sixteenth).

ENLIGHTENED CONSTRUCTION H&S DURING THE 1980’S / 1990’S

Prior to migrating to Construction Management Academia, the author was a Contracts Manager for Murray & Roberts (EP) (Pty) Ltd., and instrumental in the Mount Road Police Station Phase 2 project achieving the second ever Building Industries Federation South Africa (BIFSA) 5-Star Safety & Loss Control grading in 1986, followed by further 5-Star gradings, including while consulting to Stocks & Stocks (EC) (Pty) Ltd.

The point with respect to these achievements is that construction H&S was in its infancy, even though it was a value, as opposed to a priority, in both the organisations. In terms of infancy, among others, there were no sophisticated systems, a degree of paperwork was required, and there were no H&S Officers and H&S Agents.

What was different? In addition to H&S being a value, H&S was a strategic not just an operational issue in that it enhanced the attractiveness of M&R (EP) (Pty) Ltd. to clients, especially repeat clients. H&S was a construction management

responsibility, at middle and operational (site) management level, and top management enquired of the author when a project was going to achieve a 5-star grading.

Why the enquiry? Because post-project financial analyses indicated that 5-Star graded projects were more profitable than non-5-Star graded projects – simple!

In terms of staff versus line functions, Human Resource Management (HRM) included H&S, which is logical in that H&S contributes to ‘maintaining’ employees, and needs to be addressed during their ‘development’, the two components of HRM.

In terms of managing the physical construction process, the focus in terms of H&S was on HIRA, regardless of the activity. In addition to HIRA, all activities were preceded by concise H&S- and quality-oriented briefings.

All levels of site management, direct employees, apprentices included, and subcontractor employees, knew that H&S was ‘not negotiable’. H&S Representatives played a key role and generally included experienced Leading Hands and Team Leaders of general employees.

There were no H&S Officers, which are currently a staff function, and perceived by many participants as responsible for H&S. Furthermore, it is far easier for an H&S Representative and a Team Leader to integrate H&S into an activity than it is for an H&S Officer.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

This question leads to the issue of goals and objectives. A goal is a broad, long-term outcome, while an objective is a short-term measurable action to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the goal. Goals are aspirational and provide direction and vision, whereas objectives are specific and measurable, and provide a clear actionable plan.

In terms of management theory, goals are necessary for motivating people, an activity of the leading function of management work, and developing objectives, is an activity of the planning function of management work (Allen, 1973 in Smallwood, 2006).

H&S goals should include fatality, injury, and disease-free projects, businesses, and construction. Continuous H&S improvement is thus a complementary goal.

There are three categories of objectives, namely key, critical, and specific. Key objectives include, among others, hazard control, and preventing ‘failures of management’ (accidents), and compliance.

Critical objectives, which support each of the key objectives could include management commitment to H&S, H&S education and training, risk assessment, and worker participation in H&S.

Specific objectives could be: management attendance of 100% of H&S Committee meetings in the case of management commitment; 100% worker hazard identification and risk assessment (HIRA) training in terms of H&S education and training; HIRA undertaken for 100% of activities in the case of risk assessments, and worker participation in 100% of H&S inspections.

WHERE IS SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION IN TERMS OF ITS H&S JOURNEY?

Figure 1 presents Anglo American plc’s H&S journey model (Foster & Hoult, 2013), which was developed to assess the level of compliance and effectiveness with the standards-based H&S management system.

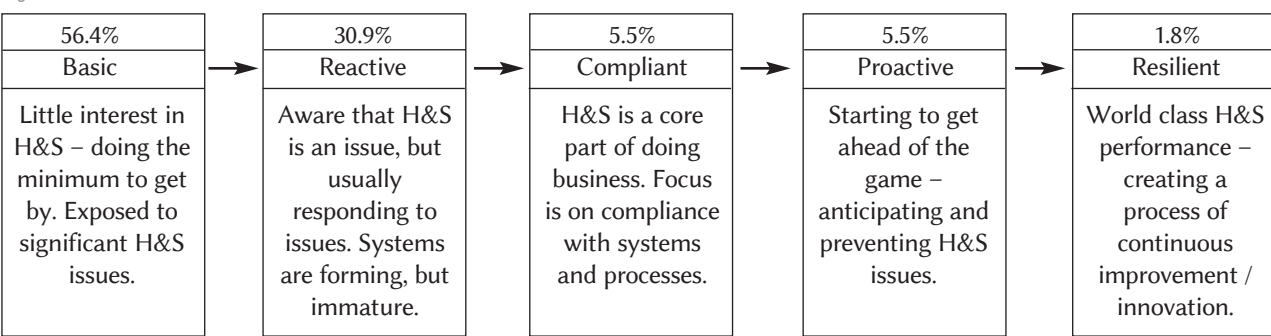
The model is unique in that it is directly linked to an organisation’s H&S management standards and any cultural elements. It has been successfully used by teams of managers, supervisors, and workers to assess the maturity of H&S management systems.

A study ‘The State of South African Construction H&S’ conducted by Smallwood & Raliile (2025) used Anglo American plc’s H&S journey model to assess the H&S status.

The percentage responses presented above the five stages in the journey are notable, especially relative to ‘Basic’ (56.4%) and ‘Reactive’ (30.9%).

The resultant MS of 1.65 between 1.00 and 5.00, which is = 1.00 < 1.80, indicates the status is between ‘Basic’ and ‘Reactive’, and that South African construction is non-compliant.

Figure 1: Current H&S status of South African construction





CLOSURE

The intention of this article is to remind all construction stakeholders regarding what we as an industry are trying to achieve relative to H&S.

Bearing in mind the construction process and activities, which at the very least can be described as daunting and challenging, and mostly exacerbated by compressed project schedules and financial constraints due to competitive tendering, the questions we must always ask are as follows:

- Are the required H&S-related actions onerous?
- Are they necessary?
- Will they detract from the H&S-related objectives and militate against the achievement of the H&S goals?

All H&S-related legislation including regulations, standards, systems, programmes, H&S specifications, procedures, and protocols must be tempered – tempered meaning moderated or controlled.

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SACPCMP reiterates critical importance of utilising registered professionals following collapse in Inanda



Ms. Sharon Shunmugam
SACPCMP President

Following a 5 metre wall collapse at the Nazareth Baptist Church complex in Inanda (KwaZulu-Natal) on 13 July, the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) reiterated the importance of utilising the relevant registered professionals when undertaking any construction activity, regardless of the size and scale of the project. Twelve people were injured in the incident.

"While all details into the cause of the collapse are yet to be confirmed, we understand, as a regulator of the Construction Sector, that ensuring the relevant professionals are involved in construction goes a long way to ensure that safety on projects is brought to the fore. This, in the form of registered Building Inspectors, Construction Health and Safety professionals, and Construction Project Managers, minimises risk and increases awareness pertaining to potential issues that may arise during construction practices," said SACPCMP President, Ms. Sharon Shunmugam.

"The safety of the public, workers and all users of the built environment must remain the foremost priority in every construction-related activity.

Registered professionals provide the necessary experience, competence and accountability required to ensure that projects are executed in accordance with lawful construction processes, applicable standards and sound professional practice."

Ms. Shunmugam extended the Council's sincere sympathies to all those injured in the incident, wishing all a speedy recovery. She also commended the site visit undertaken by the Minister of the

Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson (MP), and his commitment to the professionalisation of the Built Environment.

"The SACPCMP welcomes the Minister's commitment to strengthen building practices and prevent future collapses across the Built Environment.

"The SACPCMP stands ready, within its statutory mandate, to support these efforts aimed at strengthening compliance, professional accountability and public safety," she said.

She noted that the Council was deeply concerned that incidents of this nature continue to occur within the sector, particularly where construction activities may place members of the public, workers and communities at risk.

"As investigations proceed, the SACPCMP urges all stakeholders involved in construction projects to ensure that planning, design, implementation, inspection and oversight processes are undertaken in compliance with applicable laws, regulations and professional standards.

"The Built Environment has a direct impact on human life, public confidence and community well-being.

"Every construction project, regardless of scale or location, must be approached with the necessary professional oversight, lawful approvals, competent supervision and ethical responsibility, and the SACPCMP remains committed to promoting professional standards that protect the public and strengthen confidence in South Africa's Construction Industry," she concluded.

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Improving safety outcomes for young construction workers



Nazeer Hoosen
CEO FEM

Young workers play a significant role in South Africa's construction industry, a reality that is particularly relevant during Youth Month, which highlights the importance of empowering and protecting young people in the workplace. They bring energy and adaptability to a sector that remains essential to infrastructure development, economic growth, and job creation.

In a country where youth unemployment remains a major social and economic challenge, construction can offer a crucial pathway into the labour market, particularly for young people entering technical, artisan, and site-based roles.

However, young and inexperienced workers are also among the more vulnerable groups on construction sites. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that young workers aged 15–24 experience up to 40% higher rates of non-fatal occupational injuries than older workers.

In construction, where hazards such as working at height, moving machinery, electrical risks, falling objects, and changing site conditions are part of daily operations, this vulnerability demands focused attention.

Improving safety outcomes for young workers is therefore not only a compliance issue but also a long-term investment in the construction industry's future safety culture.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Young construction workers often enter the workplace with limited practical experience and exposure to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) principles. Although they may receive general instruction during induction, many have not yet developed the confidence or judgement to recognise risks, ask questions, or challenge unsafe practices.

The risk is not only technical but also behavioural. Young workers may feel pressure to prove themselves, avoid appearing inexperienced, or keep up with older, more experienced colleagues.

In fast-paced construction environments, where deadlines and productivity pressures can dominate, this may discourage them from reporting hazards or seeking clarification before undertaking unfamiliar tasks.

Common risk factors include insufficient supervision, limited hands-on training, a lack of hazard recognition skills, poor communication, deadline pressures, and uncertainty about workers' rights and responsibilities. For this reason, structured onboarding, ongoing training, visible supervision, and mentorship are essential.

The early years of employment are especially important. The behaviours young workers develop

early in their careers often shape their long-term approach to safety. If they learn from the start that safety is practical, respected, and actively enforced, they are more likely to carry those habits throughout their working lives.

CLOSING THE OH&S GAP

One of the major challenges facing the industry is that OHS education is often introduced only after a young person has entered the workplace. By then, there may already be gaps in safety awareness, risk perception, and confidence.

This reactive approach places unnecessary pressure on employers, supervisors, and new workers. It also means that many young people arrive on site without a basic understanding of workplace hazards, personal protective equipment, emergency procedures, or the importance of reporting unsafe conditions.

Increasingly, safety specialists advocate that safety awareness begins earlier, before young people enter high-risk sectors. Just as learners are exposed to road safety, health education, and environmental awareness, basic workplace safety can also be introduced as a life skill.

This is where FEM's Health and Safety School Awareness Programme serves as one example of an industry initiative aimed at addressing this gap. By bringing safety education into schools, FEM helps bridge the gap between education and employment. These initiatives are intended to support early awareness and do not replace formal workplace training and regulatory compliance obligations. The programme introduces learners to basic workplace safety concepts before they enter the industry, helping them understand hazard recognition, personal responsibility, and the importance of prevention.

This early-intervention model strengthens the construction safety pipeline. It prepares future workers before they arrive on site and fosters a more proactive culture of injury prevention.

FEM'S ROLE IN INDUSTRY SAFETY

The Federated Employers Mutual Assurance Company (RF) (Pty) Ltd (FEM) is a non-life insurer licensed under the Insurance Act 18 of 2017 and a COIDA mutual licensee that provides compensation cover for occupational injuries and diseases within the construction sector.

FEM also supports occupational health and safety awareness initiatives in the South African construction industry. Its participation extends beyond compensation cover.

Through its safety programmes and awareness

campaigns, FEM supports prevention, education, and behavioural change.

FEM's Construction Safety Report for the period 2015 to 2021 found that, within its insured portfolio, an average of 36 construction workers were injured on construction sites each day. This statistic underscores the need for stronger safety systems, particularly for new and young workers entering the sector.

FEM's prevention work includes initiatives such as Safetember, which raises awareness of common construction hazards and promotes practical measures to improve site safety.

FEM's "ZERO Is No Accident" campaign further reinforces the message that injuries are not inevitable. With proper planning, compliance, supervision, training, and worker engagement, safer outcomes are achievable. This approach reflects a broader industry focus on strengthening occupational health and safety practices.

Compensation remains vital when injuries occur, but prevention delivers the greatest benefit to workers, employers, and the industry.

Workplace injuries can disrupt projects, reduce productivity, undermine morale, and have long-term consequences for workers and their families.

For a young worker, a serious injury early in life can affect future earnings, confidence, employability, and career development.

By investing in awareness, education, and prevention, FEM helps strengthen not only individual workplaces but also the broader safety culture of the construction industry.

BUILDING SAFER WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Effective safety management starts with practical, site-specific training.

Young workers need to understand the real risks they will face in daily operations. This includes identifying hazards, using machinery safely, working at height, wearing and maintaining appropriate personal protective equipment, following emergency procedures, and reporting unsafe conditions.

Induction should not be treated as a one-off administrative requirement. It must be supported by regular toolbox talks, refresher training, safety demonstrations, visible leadership, and active supervision. Training is most effective when it is practical, repeated, and directly linked to the tasks workers perform.

Employers also need to create an environment in which young workers feel able to speak up. A worker who fears being mocked, ignored, or punished is less likely to report a hazard.

A strong safety culture is one in which reporting is encouraged, questions are welcomed, and unsafe behaviour is corrected before an incident occurs.

THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP AND SUPERVISION

Mentorship is one of the most effective ways to improve safety outcomes among young workers. Experienced supervisors and workers can help younger employees understand not only the rules but also the reasons behind them.

Effective mentorship fosters confidence, reinforces safe practices, and supports the development of judgment among young workers. Furthermore, it offers a practical link between formal training and on-site conditions.

Supervisors play a crucial role by setting the tone for safe behaviour, spotting unsafe practices early, and ensuring that pressure to produce does not compromise safety procedures.

When supervisors demonstrate safe behaviours and communicate clearly, young workers are more inclined to prioritise safety.

FOSTERING A PREVENTION-ORIENTED CULTURE

A strong safety culture is built on shared responsibility. Employers must provide safe systems of work, training, and supervision. Workers must follow procedures, use protective equipment correctly, and report unsafe conditions. Industry stakeholders, insurers, training institutions, and schools also have a role in preparing young people for safer participation in the workplace.

FEM's work in this area demonstrates the value of early, practical, and sustained safety awareness.

The Health and Safety School Awareness Programme supports prevention before employment. **Safetember** and **ZERO Is No Accident** are messages that must continue to be reinforced across the industry.

These initiatives reinforce the principle that safety is not only a legal obligation but also a human responsibility and reflect a broader industry focus on strengthening occupational health and safety practices.

As South Africa continues to invest in infrastructure, protecting young workers must remain a priority.

The industry's future depends on attracting and retaining skilled young people while ensuring they return home safely each day.

By combining early education, structured workplace training, mentorship, and strong supervision, the construction sector can reduce injuries and build a more resilient workforce.

Programmes such as FEM's Health and Safety School Awareness Programme exemplify how proactive measures can help cultivate not only safer workers but also a more robust safety culture for the future of the construction industry.

Your food safety cold chain is aging twice as fast as necessary: Here's the proof



By Anil Amratlal,
Founder & CEO,
Odour Science (Pty) Ltd

STOP ACCEPTING DECAY AS A COST OF BUSINESS

Your Food Safety Management System (FSMS) has an Unchecked, Multi-Million Rand Loophole.

If your facility only reacts to surface swabs and cold chain data, your food safety protocols are negligent. That is not hyperbole.

Right now, a silent, chemical aging hormone is flooding your cold storage, actively attacking the organoleptic integrity and safety margins of your perishable foodstuffs—from premium meats to delicate produce.

You are effectively paying a multi-million rand monthly "tax" on accepted decay, simply because conventional food safety protocols do not see the threat until it's too late.

This cultural acceptance of shrinkage is not a "cost of business"; it is an unchecked failure of operational integrity.

WE CALL IT "INHERENT VICE." YOU SHOULD CALL IT A CRISIS

Conventional utilities cannot stop this invisible deterioration. Chemical fogging leaves residue. Ozone is unsafe. Blue light is a surface utility with no penetration power. These are not professional risk-engineering tools; they are outdated operational compromises.

RE-ENGINEERING THE EQUATION: VOLUMETRIC ATMOSPHERIC INTEGRITY

To protect foodstuff's integrity, standard utilities must transition to authenticated environmental

engineering. You must protect the atmosphere itself, volumetrically, ensuring integrity guaranteed from the core to the crate.

At Odour Science, we have spent a decade developing Atmospheric Engineering platforms with world class scientists, specifically designed to manage airborne contaminants, odours, and ethylene accumulation inside controlled environments. This is a significant proactive change in thinking, a paradigm shift.

Our platform is built around sustained-release gas-phase technologies engineered for controlled environments, drawing on globally recognised advancements in chlorine dioxide atmospheric applications.

CLOSING THE 'VICE' LOOP: AUTHENTICATED OUTCOMES

This system is an engineered tool for proactive risk mitigation. It is designed to be integrated into an advanced Food Safety Management System (FSMS), explicitly closing the logistical and operational risk loops that swabs and sensors cannot address. It continues to work, volumetrically, even if standard refrigeration equipment possesses brief failures.

The rigorous outcome has been documented across active operational environments:

- **Continuous, volumetric protection:** Ensuring every node of your cold room possess environmental integrity, from Johannesburg to Cape Town or across a cross-border reefer node.
- **30-40% operational lift in shelf-life extension:** Directly improves product quality consistency, reduces claim frequency, and eases replenishment stress.
- **99.9% microbial load reduction:** Providing non-residue protection that conventional cleaning cannot match.

Atmospheric integrity inside a cold room creates operational stability and margin protection outside of it.

If you manage high-volume perishable goods, your portfolio is probably already paying an "Inherent Vice tax"—compromising your margins and your FSMS integrity. **Stop accepting decay.**

The food safety model of the future does not wait for a swab to fail. It engineers the failure out of the atmosphere entirely.

Does your FSMS possess engineered atmospheric integrity?



When the clipboard cometh: A takeaway restaurant's guide to surviving the health inspector



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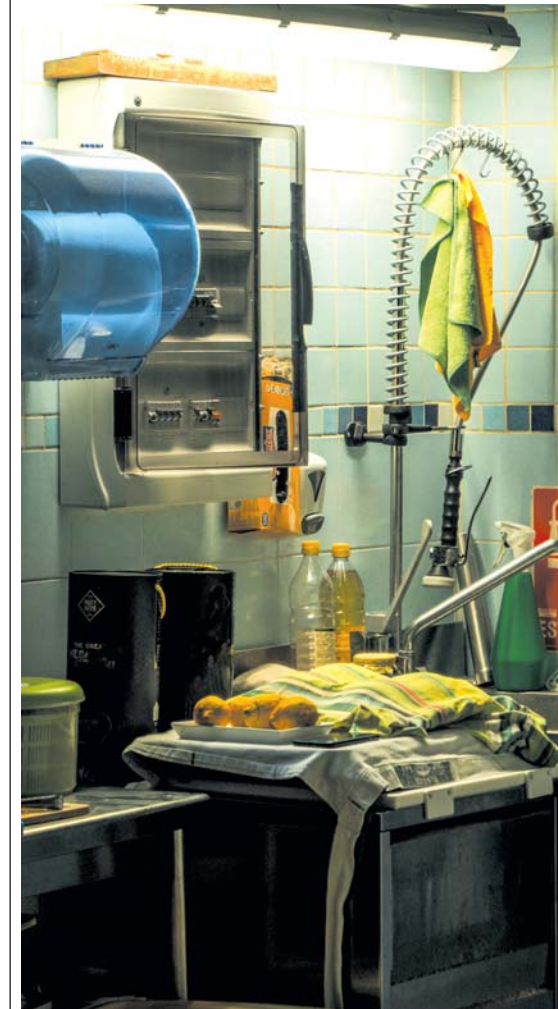
We have all been there. That white bakkie pulls up outside your business and out steps a health inspector. The white coat is spotless; the clipboard is held high and your kitchen staff are frozen solid. That all too familiar phrase of doom escapes the health inspector's lips: "I'm from the Department of Health."

That dreaded prospect: a health inspection. For a takeaway restaurant it is a foregone conclusion and it is all part of the job description. So what can you do to make a good first impression?

THE RULEBOOK

Let's begin by looking at the rules. As a food handler you will primarily fall under the *Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act and Regulation 638* which relates to hygienic handling of foodstuffs.

You also need to be aware of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and municipal by-laws concerning health inspections. Basically, it boils down to cleanliness.



EXPIRY DATES AND DAMAGED GOODS

This seems like common sense but a lot of places fall foul of the law when it comes to stock control. Damaged or expired goods must be isolated and removed from the food supply chain.

A separate bin (preferably clearly marked) should be available for damaged or expired goods and this must be located some distance away from food preparation areas.

Do not keep expired or damaged goods on display in your cool room. Dispose of them into the bin as soon as possible and, most importantly, do not attempt to use them—the health inspector is not going to be lenient if you try to use up expired goods during your inspection.

FIFO (First In First Out) is a stock control method that is essential to your survival. If you follow this system, you can't go wrong.

USED COOKING OIL

Throwing used cooking oil down the sink is an offence punishable by a fine levied by the water board and the National Environmental Management: Waste Act.

Once oil has been used it should be cooled and placed in a secure storage container—not the sink!

Contact a waste disposal company that is registered with the municipality to collect and dispose of the oil. It may cost you a few rands but it will save you paying a sizeable fine.

QUICK CHECKLIST

When the moment of reckoning arrives and the health inspector walks through your door, here is a quick checklist of the most common requirements:

1. Hand washing facilities

Wash basins must have running water, soap and paper towels. A clean bar of soap alone is not going to cut it.

2. Temperature control

Your fridge must be set at a maximum of 5 degrees Celsius with a thermometer on display to prove it. (Take note of this during loadshedding.)

3. Pest Control

If you see one mouse, the inspector will take it as a sign that there are fifty. Have a pest control company on speed dial and keep their invoices and certificates on hand.

Running a takeaway is not for the faint-hearted. But by keeping these few pointers in mind you are sure to pass any surprise inspections.

Stay safe out there.





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working environments

trust the
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Ending “Credential Harvesting” in safety procurement

Why construction tendering must protect professional integrity, commercial fairness and personal data

Are we appointing safety professionals to protect people - or merely borrowing their credentials to win tenders?



Kelvin K. Bhehane is a health and safety professional, consultant and industry writer with extensive experience in OSH and SHEQ management across South Africa and the United Kingdom. He is the founder of KEPUS Safety Consulting.

Across the construction sector, a troubling practice is becoming increasingly normalised. Before a project has been awarded, contractors are often required to attach the SACPCMP registration certificates and supporting qualification certificates of named construction health and safety practitioners to tender submissions.

These may include a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Officer (Can CHSO), Construction Health and Safety Officer (CHSO), Candidate Construction Health and Safety Manager (Can CHSM), Construction Health and Safety Manager (CHSM), Candidate Construction Health and Safety Agent (Can CHSA), or Professional Construction Health and Safety Agent (PrCHSA).

There is generally no harm in providing a professional CV: it explains a person’s experience and suitability. The greater risk lies in circulating registration certificates and qualification certificates that can be copied, reused and attached to unrelated tenders without the practitioner’s informed consent or any genuine intention to appoint that person.

This is credential harvesting: the acquisition and repeated use of a practitioner’s SACPCMP registration certificate and qualification certificates primarily to strengthen a bid, rather than to establish a transparent appointment relationship.

A CV may reasonably be shared because it presents professional experience: the SACPCMP registration number should normally be sufficient for preliminary verification. Circulating the certificate itself creates an easily reusable compliance asset and increases the risk of unauthorised tender submissions, false representation and reputational harm.

THE COMPLIANCE PARADOX

The intention behind pre-qualification requirements is sound. Clients want assurance that a bidder has access to competent people who can plan, supervise and monitor construction health and safety performance. In South Africa, the relevant SACPCMP registration categories include (Can CHSO), (CHSO), (Can CHSM), (CHSM), (Can CHSA), and (PrCHSA).

This article focuses particularly on Candidate

Construction Health and Safety Agents and Professional Construction Health and Safety Agents, whose registration documents are frequently requested for tender submissions.

The paradox arises when proof of future capability is demanded in the form of complete personal documentation before any contract exists.

A main contractor may be preparing several bids at once, each requiring named personnel. Yet the contractor cannot guarantee work until a client makes an award.

At the same time, the professional is expected to release highly reusable documents without knowing whether the opportunity is genuine, how the information will be stored, where it will be submitted or whether it will later be deleted.

The tender system therefore creates a vulnerable space between bid submission and project mobilisation. It is in this gap that commercial pressure, weak data governance and unethical behaviour can flourish.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME EXPLOITATION

The contractor’s dilemma

Some practitioners or intermediaries request an upfront ‘document release fee’ before allowing a contractor to use an SACPCMP registration certificate or qualification certificate in a tender.

The frustration behind such fees is understandable: professionals have seen these documents circulated widely, used without payment and attached to projects on which they were never appointed. A CV is different and may ordinarily be shared to demonstrate experience. However, asking contractors to purchase loose registration documents before an award merely replaces one unfair practice with another.

For small and emerging contractors, tendering is already expensive. Bid documents, travel, printing, guarantees, estimating and professional inputs all consume working capital. Paying repeatedly for credentials across several unsuccessful bids can turn compliance into a speculative cost rather than a genuine investment in project safety.

The practitioner’s dilemma

The professional faces a different but equally serious risk. An SACPCMP registration certificate may be submitted to one contractor for one tender,

then copied into other bids, altered, stripped of its watermark or presented as evidence of an appointment relationship that does not exist. The practitioner may later discover that their registration helped a contractor qualify while a cheaper, less experienced or unregistered person was deployed after an award. A CV may still be provided, but it should be accompanied by clear tender-specific consent and should not be treated as permission to reuse the practitioner’s registration documents.

This creates the phenomenon of the ‘ghost professional’: visible in the tender file, absent from the site. The damage is not merely financial. If an incident occurs, the named professional may have to explain why their details appeared in the project documentation. Their professional standing and reputation may be placed at risk even though they had no operational control.

WHEN SAFETY DOCUMENTS BECOME IDENTITY ASSETS

A construction health and safety practitioner’s tender file may contain qualification certificates, an SACPCMP registration certificate, identity details, a signature, contact information and a detailed employment history. The CV itself is normally useful and comparatively low-risk when unnecessary personal details are removed. The SACPCMP registration certificate and qualification certificates are more sensitive because they can be detached from the CV and repeatedly used as stand-alone evidence of compliance.

The risk increases when documents are requested through informal WhatsApp groups, social-media posts or unverified personal email accounts. These channels may be convenient, but convenience is not the same as accountability. A professional has little assurance about who controls the inbox, how many people can access the file, whether the information is encrypted, or how long it will be retained.

Under modern privacy laws, including South Africa’s Protection of Personal Information Act and the UK/EU data-protection frameworks, organisations are expected to collect personal information for a clear purpose, limit what they collect, protect it appropriately and avoid retaining it indefinitely. Poor handling may expose both the bidding company and the individual to fraud, identity theft, regulatory complaints and reputational damage.

THE REGISTRY-FIRST ALTERNATIVE

The most practical reform is also the simplest: use the SACPCMP public register at the preliminary tender stage. A bidder should initially be allowed to submit the practitioner’s full name, exact SACPCMP designation and registration number. The evaluator can then confirm whether the

registration is current and whether the designation matches the tender requirement.

This allows the contractor to demonstrate access to a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Agent (Can CHSA), Professional Construction Health and Safety Agent (PrCHSA), or another correctly registered category without circulating the practitioner’s registration certificate.

Complete certified documents should be reserved for the preferred-bidder, award or mobilisation stage, when there is a genuine commercial reason to collect and verify them.

This approach follows the principle of data minimisation: collect only what is necessary, at the point when it becomes necessary.

It also improves the quality of verification. A scanned SACPCMP registration certificate can be outdated, altered or reused, whereas the official registration number enables a direct check of current professional standing. The certificate still has a place during preferred-bidder verification, formal appointment or mobilisation, but it should not be demanded as the primary proof at the initial tender stage.

A FAIR PRE-TENDER RELATIONSHIP

Contractors and professionals do not need to choose between free document sharing and upfront document-selling. A fairer middle ground is a conditional pre-tender agreement.

A short memorandum of understanding or letter of intent can confirm that the practitioner has authorised the use of limited information for one named tender. It can define the proposed role, anticipated remuneration, availability, duration, confidentiality obligations, the conditions that apply if the bid succeeds and the date on which the authority expires if the bid is unsuccessful.

This transforms the interaction from an informal exchange of files into a professional commercial relationship. The contractor gains credible evidence that the person is available. The practitioner gains control over where and how their identity is used.

PRACTICAL PROTECTION FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

- Share the minimum necessary information. A professional CV may be provided, but at the initial stage give the exact SACPCMP designation and registration number rather than the SACPCMP registration certificate itself.
- Watermark every document. Use wording such as: ‘FOR TENDER SUBMISSION ONLY - [CONTRACTOR] - [PROJECT/TENDER NUMBER] - [DATE]’.
- Keep the CV professional and proportionate. A tender CV rarely needs a full home address, identity document, banking details or handwritten signature. Avoid attaching

Red flags when sharing professional credentials

- Documents are requested through a public social-media group.
- The recipient uses an unrelated personal email address and provides no privacy notice.
- There is no letter of intent, MOU or written explanation of the proposed role.
- The requester demands an unwatermarked SACPCMP registration certificate or qualification certificate.
- There is pressure to send documents immediately without verification.

A WORKABLE STAKEHOLDER ACTION MODEL

Stakeholder	Initial tender stage	Post-award / mobilisation
Safety professional	Provide a CV, exact SACPCMP designation and registration number; withhold the registration certificate at the initial stage.	Provide certified documents, sign a formal contract and accept appointment.
Main contractor	Verify registration and sign a tender-specific conditional MOU.	Submit the formal appointment and deploy the named practitioner.
Client / authority	Accept official registry verification where appropriate	Audit the appointed person against the tender proposal and actual site presence.

- SACPCMP and qualification certificates unless they are genuinely required at a later verification stage.
- Use controlled channels. Send files to a verified corporate address or secure document portal, and confirm the identity of the recipient.
 - Keep a disclosure register. Record the contractor, project, tender number, documents shared, recipient and expiry date.
 - Insist on written authority. Require an MOU or letter of intent describing the proposed appointment and prohibiting reuse.
 - Follow up after the tender. Ask whether the bid was successful and request written confirmation that unsuccessful-bid documents have been deleted or archived in line with policy.

WHAT RESPONSIBLE CONTRACTORS SHOULD DO

- Verify the practitioner's SACPCMP status using the registration number before requesting the registration certificate or qualification certificates.
- Explain the project, client, tender number, role, expected duration and likely mobilisation date.
- Use a conditional MOU rather than purchasing documents with no genuine appointment relationship.
- Limit internal access to SACPCMP registration and qualification certificates and store them in a controlled, tender-specific folder.
- Do not reuse a candidate's information for another bid without fresh written consent.
- After award, issue a formal appointment, agree remuneration and ensure the named practitioner is actually deployed.
- After an unsuccessful bid, delete or securely archive information according to the stated retention period.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CLIENTS AND TENDERING AUTHORITIES

Real reform will not occur through individual caution alone. Clients and procurement authorities shape the market through their tender conditions. When a tender insists on full personal documentation at the earliest stage, it unintentionally encourages mass collection. When it accepts verifiable registration details initially and audits documents at mobilisation, it reduces the incentive for harvesting. Tender authorities should also test whether the professional named in the bid is the person deployed on the project. A

post-award site audit should compare the tender proposal, formal appointment letters, employment or consulting agreements, induction records and actual site attendance. Substitution should be controlled and justified, not quietly used to replace competent personnel with cheaper alternatives. This is where procurement becomes a safety control rather than a paperwork exercise. The objective is not simply to prove that a name appeared in a bid; it is to ensure that competent advice is present when hazardous work begins.

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: REBUILDING TRUST

Credential harvesting survives because trust has broken down. Contractors fear paying for professionals before work exists. Professionals fear being used and discarded. Clients fear that bidders may exaggerate their capability. The answer is not more uncontrolled paperwork. It is stronger verification, clearer agreements and accountability at the point of mobilisation. A mature construction health and safety professional should not operate as a marketplace for SACPCMP registration certificates. Competence is not a PDF attachment. It is the ability to influence design, challenge unsafe decisions, assess risk, communicate with workers, monitor controls and intervene when lives are in danger. Procurement systems must therefore distinguish between evidence of professional standing and evidence of actual delivery. The registration number confirms that a person exists and is recognised. The contract confirms that a relationship exists. Site presence and performance confirm that safety is being delivered

THE CALL TO ACTION

The construction industry can end credential harvesting without weakening tender assurance. Clients can adopt registry-first evaluation. Contractors can use conditional agreements and secure information-handling processes. Professionals can minimise, watermark and track every disclosure. Regulators and professional bodies can strengthen digital verification and create channels for reporting suspected misuse. Most importantly, the industry must reject the idea that safety competence can be borrowed for a closing date and forgotten after award. Every name in a tender should represent a real professional, a real commitment and a real intention to protect people. When we protect the integrity of safety professionals, we protect the integrity of safety itself.

Managing worker illnesses:
What every employer and employee should know



Dr Robin George, Senior Occupational Medicine Practitioner and National Operations Manager at Workforce Healthcare

A recent tragic event at a Johannesburg workplace during June placed a sharp spotlight on how South African workplaces should handle employee illness and the human cost when systems fail. For employers and employees alike, navigating illness in the workplace is complex. Getting it wrong can have devastating consequences. Dr Robin George, Senior Occupational Medicine Practitioner and National Operations Manager at Workforce Healthcare explains “When an employee becomes ill, they may be afraid to disclose their condition for fear of losing their jobs. Employers and managers don’t always know what they are legally allowed to ask, or what support structures they should activate. Meanwhile, the employee’s condition deteriorates.”

AN EMPLOYEE’S RIGHTS WHEN ILL

South African labour legislation is clear. Under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, employees are entitled to paid sick leave, and employers cannot legally penalise a worker for taking sick leave that complies with company procedures and applicable law. Beyond that, the Employment Equity Act prohibits unfair discrimination on the grounds of illness. Employees may not be dismissed simply because they are sick. Before any termination on health grounds is considered, an employer must demonstrate that the illness genuinely prevents the employee from performing their duties and that all reasonable options have been exhausted. Dr George adds, “Early disclosure is almost always in an employee’s interest. It protects your rights, it activates the support structures you are entitled to, and it gives you the best possible chance of a good outcome, whether that is a return to work, a transition to light duty, or access to disability benefits.”

ACTION THE EMPLOYER SHOULD TAKE

Many managers are ill-equipped to handle an employee who is visibly unwell, repeatedly absent, or deteriorating over time. The instinct may be to manage the situation through the performance or disciplinary route. This is frequently the wrong approach and can expose the employer to significant legal and reputational risk. Workforce Healthcare recommends that organisations have an incapacity and illness management policy that addresses:

- How and when to refer an employee to an Occupational Medicine Practitioner (OMP).

- When to activate employee assistance programmes and wellness resources. A 24-hour confidential helpline can be a lifeline for an employee who is struggling but too afraid to raise the issue formally.
- How to manage the transition from short-term sick leave to long-term illness or incapacity, including when and how to approach disability benefits through insurers. Delays in this process are costly for both employee and employer.
- How to handle the often-sensitive communication between treating specialists, the OMP, and the employer, particularly where the treating doctor has made a fitness-to-work recommendation without fully understanding the nature of the employee’s job. “We routinely work with employers who have been sitting on a difficult situation for months because nobody knew what to do. By the time they call us, the employee has exhausted all their leave, the insurer has not been notified, and the path back to health and work has become far more complicated than was necessary.”

ADDRESSING FEAR

Fearing for their job, employees may withhold information from their employers, and their treating doctors. Fear is often based on a misunderstanding of how the system is supposed to work. An OMP operates within a strict framework of confidentiality. What the OMP shares with the employer is not a clinical diagnosis but a fitness-to-work assessment: whether the employee can perform their duties, whether adjustments are needed, and the likely timeline for recovery. The employee’s underlying diagnosis remains protected. Employers who create cultures where employees feel safe disclosing health concerns and who have systems in place to respond appropriately, protect themselves as well as their staff. The legal, financial, and reputational consequences of failing in this duty can be severe. Disputes may be referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) or the Department of Employment and Labour. All employers, regardless of size or sector, must review their current policies, ensure their management teams understand their obligations, and put in place the right support structures. For employees who believe their rights are being infringed, professional guidance is available.

Raising the standard for safe work at height internationally

The Institute for Work at Height (IWH), South Africa

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WORK AT HEIGHT

The Institute for Work at Height (IWH) is South Africa's recognised Trade Association and SAQA-recognised Professional Body for the work-at-height industry. Representing seven specialist sectors, the Institute promotes competence, professional recognition, ethical practice, skills development and industry collaboration to improve safety for everyone working at height.

BUILDING A SAFER FUTURE—ONE PROFESSIONAL AT A TIME

Every day, thousands of employees work at height in industries such as construction, mining, telecommunications, energy, manufacturing, infrastructure maintenance and renewable energy. Whether installing transmission lines, erecting scaffolding, maintaining wind turbines or operating mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs), these professionals face one common risk — the consequences of a fall.

While equipment continues to improve, one fact remains unchanged: people, competence and professionalism save lives.

For more than 17 years, the Institute for Work at Height (IWH) has been leading the development of safer work at height practices in Southern Africa by bringing together industry, government, employers, training providers and practitioners under one recognised professional framework.

Established in 2009 through the merger of the Specialised Access Engineering Manufacturers Association (SAEMA) and the Rope Access and Fall Arrest Association (RAFAA), the Institute has grown into both a Trade Association and a SAQA-recognised Professional Body dedicated to advancing standards across the industry.

A UNIQUE INDUSTRY MODEL

Unlike many industry organisations that focus solely on advocacy or training, the Institute for Work at Height combines two complementary functions. As a Trade Association, IWH represents companies involved in work-at-height products and services, providing a unified industry voice, encouraging collaboration and supporting the development of technical standards and best practice.

As a Professional Body, recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Institute promotes professional recognition, ethical conduct, competency assessment and continuing professional development for individuals working at height.

This dual structure ensures that both organisations and practitioners are held to consistently high standards while creating a sustainable pathway for professional growth throughout a worker's career.

REPRESENTING THE ENTIRE WORK-AT-HEIGHT INDUSTRY

One of the Institute's greatest strengths is its broad industry representation.

Today, IWH consists of seven specialist chambers, representing:

- Fall protection and wind turbine safety
- Rope access
- Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs)
- Suspended access equipment and vertical access platforms
- Scaffolding
- Falsework
- Access towers and ladders.



Each chamber brings together subject matter experts who contribute to technical guidance, industry standards, training requirements and legislative engagement within their specialist field.

This collaborative approach enables the Institute to address emerging technologies and changing work-place risks while ensuring practical solutions remain aligned with industry needs.

PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION THAT MATTERS

Safety equipment alone cannot prevent incidents without competent people using it correctly.

Recognising this, the Institute became one of South Africa's first non-statutory professional bodies recognised by SAQA.

Through its Professional Body, IWH administers nationally recognised professional designations, including:

- Certified Work at Height Technician
- Certified Work at Height Practitioner
- Certified Work at Height Professional.

These designations recognise competence, experience and ethical commitment while encouraging continuous professional development throughout a practitioner's career.

For employers, this provides confidence that registered practitioners meet recognised competency standards. For employees, it offers a structured professional career path within the work-at-height sector.

SUPPORTING INDUSTRY BEYOND COMPLIANCE

Compliance with legislation is only the starting point.

The Institute actively develops practical resources that help organisations improve safety performance, including:

- Industry guidelines
- Good Practice Notes
- Technical publications
- Posters and awareness material
- Professional Development Partner (PDP) recognition
- Member verification programmes
- Practitioner validation services.

These resources help businesses move beyond minimum legal requirements toward genuine safety excellence.

EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

An informed workforce is a safer workforce.

One example is the Institute's Smart Start initiative, which provides short, practical safety

awareness content covering topics such as MEWP inspections, battery care, loading procedures, lift logs and seasonal safety considerations.

These resources are distributed regularly to industry members, helping keep safety conversations active long after formal training has been completed.

The Institute also works closely with recognised Professional Development Partners to ensure training remains relevant, current and aligned with both industry requirements and national competency frameworks.

WHY WE NEED PROFESSIONALISATION

Internationally, infrastructure development continues to accelerate.

From renewable energy projects and telecommunications expansion to large-scale construction and industrial maintenance, more people than ever are working at height.

WITH THIS GROWTH COMES GREATER RESPONSIBILITY.

Professionalisation offers a sustainable solution by ensuring workers are properly trained, employers have access to competent personnel and clients can identify organisations committed to recognised standards.

Rather than viewing safety as a compliance exercise, professionalisation positions competence as a long-term investment that improves productivity, quality, reputation and, ultimately, saves lives.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Institute's vision extends beyond South Africa.

Its objective is to be recognised throughout Southern Africa and internationally as the leading authority for safe and effective work at height.

By working collaboratively with regulators, employers, professional practitioners and industry associations, IWH continues to promote consistent standards, lifelong learning and ethical practice throughout the sector.

As the work-at-height industry continues to evolve, one principle remains constant:

Safety begins with competence, is strengthened by professionalism and is sustained through collaboration.

For organisations seeking industry leadership and practitioners committed to excellence, the Institute for Work at Height continues to provide the framework that helps transform compliance into professionalism—and professionalism into safer workplaces.



Indoor air quality monitoring: *protecting people, processes, and productivity in South Africa*



Peter-John Jacobs, MPH, ROH, FSAIOH is currently employed as the Managing Director of Sedulitas as an occupational health consultancy, based in Potchefstroom and Richards Bay, South Africa

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is becoming an increasingly important topic across South Africa as industries place greater focus on occupational safety, environmental controls, and operational reliability.

While air quality concerns were once mainly associated with mining, heavy industry, or health-care environments, businesses across multiple sectors are beginning to recognise that the quality of the air inside a facility can directly affect employee health, product integrity, productivity, and profitability.

As IAQ standards become stricter and awareness grows around airborne exposure risks, many organisations are turning towards routine environmental monitoring programmes to better understand the conditions within their facilities.

These programmes are designed not only to identify hazards when problems arise, but also to prevent contamination events before they lead to operational disruptions, employee illness, product loss, or costly remediation efforts.

The Physical Agents Regulations, 2024 (promulgated on 6 March 2025, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993) establish strict mandates for managing IAQ. Employers must eliminate hazardous airborne risks at the source or control them at specified levels.

Airborne contamination has a wide range of sources. Some contaminants are visible, while many are microscopic and remain unnoticed until symptoms, complaints, or product failures begin to appear.

Common airborne concerns include dusts, mould spores, pollens, combustion particles, volatile compounds, and airborne micro-organisms such as bacterial and fungal contaminants. In industrial and controlled environments, even relatively small increases in airborne particulate levels can lead to negative consequences and outcomes.

One of the most widely used tools in environmental monitoring is airborne particle counting. Particle counters are used to measure the concentration and size of particles suspended in the air. This allows organisations to establish baseline environmental conditions and detect changes that may indicate failing filtration systems, poor house-keeping practices, process contamination, or ventilation deficiencies.

Particles are constantly generated through normal activity. Employees moving through a workspace, opening packaging materials, operating machinery, or transferring powders can all contribute to elevated particulate levels.



Figure 1: GrayWolf PC-3016A six-channel particle meter

Source: GrayWolf Sensing Solutions

Outdoor pollution and seasonal environmental conditions may also affect IAQ, particularly in facilities with low air turnover rates or inadequate filtration systems.

In manufacturing and industrial settings, excessive airborne particles can impact both worker safety and operational performance. Fine particulate matter may contribute to respiratory irritation, long-term exposure concerns, reduced worker comfort, and increased absenteeism.

At the same time, particles can contaminate products, interfere with sensitive equipment, and compromise quality-controlled processes.

Healthcare environments face even greater challenges when it comes to airborne contamination control. Hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies, and sterile compounding areas rely heavily on environmental controls to protect patients, staff, and critical procedures.

Airborne particles and microbial contaminants can contribute to hospital-acquired infections, sterile product contamination, and procedural complications that require treatment at the expense of the facility, because environmental conditions were not carefully managed.

For this reason, many healthcare and pharmaceutical facilities implement ongoing environmental monitoring programmes that include both particle measurement and microbial air sampling.



Figure 2: ActiveCount 100 automated microbial detection system

Source: Lighthouse Instruments

These programmes help validate the effectiveness of filtration systems, pressure relationships, cleaning procedures, and ventilation performance, while supporting compliance with increasingly strict regulatory standards.

Microbial and pathogen sampling has become another major component of IAQ monitoring. While particles themselves can present hazards, biological contaminants often create additional health, safety, and operational risks. Air sampling technologies can help identify the presence of airborne mould spores, bacteria, yeasts, and other biological materials that may otherwise remain undetected.

This type of monitoring serves several important purposes. In some facilities, routine microbial sampling is performed proactively to identify contamination trends before they become serious problems. In other cases, air sampling is used as a diagnostic or remediation tool following water intrusion, visible mould growth, employee complaints, or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system failures.

Following a moisture event or building leak, microbial contamination may develop in concealed building materials, HVAC components, and occupied spaces before visible mould growth becomes apparent.

An IAQ investigation, combining particulate monitoring, ventilation assessment, humidity measurement, airflow evaluation, and targeted contaminant testing can identify abnormal airborne conditions, determine the extent and migration pathways of the issue, support root-cause analysis, and verify that remediation activities have effectively restored acceptable indoor environmental conditions.

Industrial operations also benefit significantly from routine air quality monitoring. Manufacturing facilities frequently generate airborne contaminants through cutting, grinding, packaging, combustion, powder handling, and material transfer processes. Without effective monitoring and ventilation



Figure 3: GrayWolf AdvancedSense™ XM Environmental Test Meter displaying environmental monitoring parameters

Source: GrayWolf Sensing Solutions

controls, these airborne hazards can accumulate over time and negatively affect both employees and equipment.

Many organisations are now using environmental monitoring data to establish exposure-control strategies within their facilities. Depending on airborne contaminant levels, certain workspaces may require respiratory protection, restricted occupancy periods, or additional engineering controls to maintain safe working conditions. Rather than relying solely on assumptions, periodic inspections, and waiting for employees to report conditions and ailments to regulatory bodies or post about them on social media, companies are increasingly using real-time data to make informed decisions regarding workplace safety and operational controls.

The results of an environmental monitoring programme can include better regulatory compliance, better productivity, and brand protection.

While mainstream industries often answer to regulators when it comes to air quality for process control and employee safety, even South Africa's emerging legal cannabis industry has begun to face many of the same environmental challenges seen in other controlled agricultural and processing environments.

Although still developing from a regulatory and occupational safety perspective, cannabis cultivation

and processing facilities are becoming more aware of issues involving mould spores, humidity control, airborne plant material, and contamination risks that may affect both workers and product quality.



The emerging legal cannabis industry faces the same environmental challenges seen in other controlled agricultural and processing environments Image: CDCSA

As the industry matures, IAQ monitoring will likely become an increasingly important part of environmental control programmes within these facilities. The three-tiered monitoring approach, looking at IAQ in terms of gases, is summarised in Table 1.

Tier 1 is continuous IAQ screening (baseline and early warning) with the purpose of identifying deterioration in IAQ conditions before they become a health, productivity, or compliance issue, using fixed or portable IAQ monitors and parameters such as ventilation indicators (CO₂), combustion gases (CO), thermal comfort (temperature and relative humidity), particulates (PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, ultrafine particles), and total volatile organic compound (TVOC) indicators.

Tier 2 is a targeted IAQ contaminant assessment, used to determine the exact pollutant causing the IAQ problem, and is triggered by occurrences such as persistent complaints, elevated Tier 1 readings, renovations or new furniture, odours, increased absenteeism, and seasonal deterioration.

Tier 3 is advanced IAQ investigation and control verification used for complex problems, litigation, occupational hygiene investigations, and/or high-risk environments. This includes advanced monitoring, using real-time sensor networks, laboratory analyses, and building diagnostics such as HVAC assessment and computational fluid dynamics modelling.

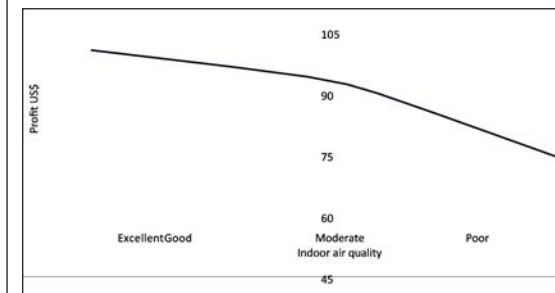


Figure 4: The relationship between declining indoor air quality (IAQ) and reduced profitability is illustrated by increased absenteeism and reduced productivity Source: www.ambius.co.za/blog/poor-indoor-air-affects-productivity

Beyond worker health, IAQ is directly connected to operational profit-ability (Figure 1). Contaminated products, failed quality tests, product rework, remediation projects, production downtime, and workers' compensation claims can create significant financial burdens for businesses.

A single contamination event may result in product recalls, yield loss, damaged inventory, or extended operational shutdowns that far exceed the cost of implementing preventative monitoring measures.

Because of this, many organisations are shifting away from purely reactive approaches towards preventive environmental monitoring strategies.

Historically, companies often waited for complaints, visible contamination, or equipment failures before investigating IAQ issues.

Today, more businesses recognise the value of identifying environmental trends early, before they develop into larger operational or health-related problems.

Routine monitoring allows facilities to better understand how their environments behave over time. Seasonal changes, occupancy levels, process

Table 1. Three-tier indoor air quality management model summary

Tier	Objective	Frequency	Tools
Tier 1: Screening	Detect deterioration	Continuous	IAQ sensors
Tier 2: Diagnosis	Identify contaminants	Periodic/event driven	Sampling + laboratory analysis
Tier 3: Investigation	Prove cause and control	As required	Advanced monitoring, HVAC testing, modelling

HVAC: heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, IAQ: indoor air quality

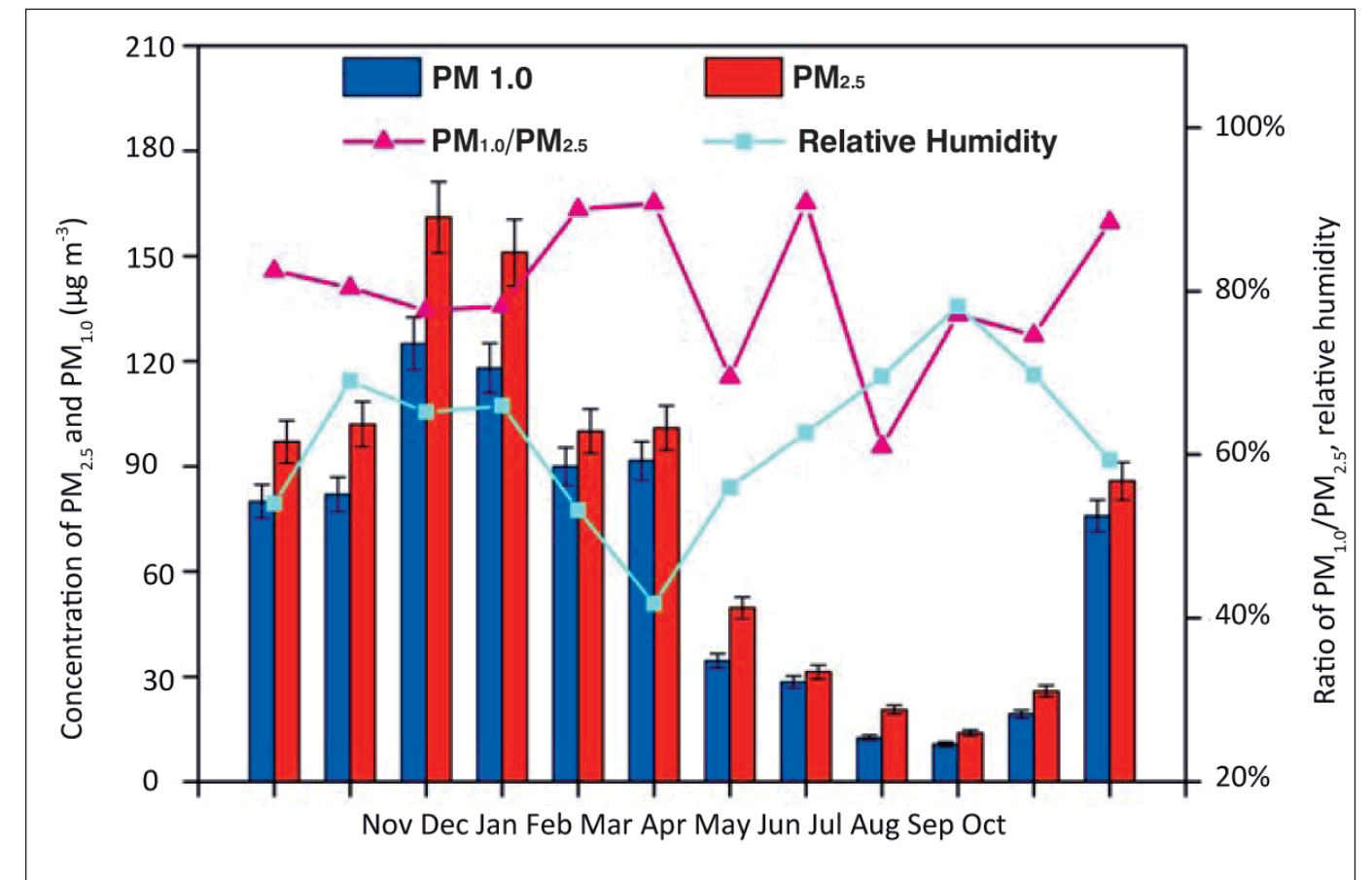


Figure 5: Seasonal variation in indoor air quality (IAQ), particularly how pollutant levels (PM_{2.5}, PM_{1.0}, VOCs, CO₂) often increase during colder seasons due to reduced ventilation and increased indoor activity. Source: Wang K, Wang W, Li L, et al. *Scientific Reports* volume 10, Article number: 8160 (2020)

adjustments, and maintenance issues can all influence airborne contamination levels (Figure 2).

By continuously collecting environmental data, organisations can make informed decisions regarding filtration systems, ventilation upgrades, cleaning practices, process controls, and employee protection measures.

Indoor air quality monitoring is no longer viewed simply as a maintenance concern. It is increasingly becoming a critical component of workplace safety, quality assurance, risk management, and operational efficiency.

Whether protecting healthcare environments, industrial manufacturing processes, controlled agricultural facilities, or commercial workspaces, environmental monitoring provides organisations with the information needed to create safer and more reliable indoor environments.

In a study in the USA, Milton et al. (2000) showed that office workers exposed to lower ventilation rates had a 53% increased risk of short-term sick

leave compared to workers in better-ventilated environments.¹ Areas with indoor environmental quality complaints showed a similar increased risk (52%).

As South Africa continues to strengthen occupational safety expectations and indoor environmental standards, businesses that invest in proactive air quality monitoring programmes today will be better positioned to protect their employees, preserve product quality, minimise operational disruptions, and reduce long-term financial risk.

REFERENCE

1. Milton DK, Glencross PM, Walters MD. Risk of sick leave associated with outdoor air supply rate, humidification, and occupant complaints. *Indoor Air*. 2000; 10(4):212-221. doi: 10.1034/j.1600-0668.2000.010004212.x.

SAIOH News

The Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) remains committed to serving its members and advancing the occupational hygiene profession.

As part of this commitment, the Institute regularly shares updates and highlights key developments with its community.

SAIOH thrives on the active participation and ethical contributions of its members, whose engagement continues to shape and strengthen the field. The Institute therefore welcomes and encourages feedback on the topics presented in this publication, as part of its ongoing effort to support dialogue and collective progress.

SAIOH President's Message



Prof. Cas Badenhorst:
SAIOH president,
e-mail:
president@saioh.co.za

Fellow members and colleagues,

As we move through another busy quarter, I'm pleased to share just how much momentum the revised SAIOH 2026 Strategic Plan continues to build. While there is still work ahead, we are already seeing real progress that will strengthen our governance, our member services, our communications and our long-term sustainability as an Institute.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN OUR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Improving turnaround times for our members has been a key priority, and I'm glad to report that the Professional Certification Committee (PCC) has been strengthened with the appointment of two part-time examiners, Dr Hennie van der Westhuizen and Mr Deon Jansen van Vuuren, who began their roles on 1 June 2026.

Their addition gives valuable extra capacity to our Chief Examiner and will help speed up certification assessments.

We've also welcomed Ms Tracy Mphapuli into the role of PCC Support Officer. Tracy is no stranger to SAIOH, she has been part of our team for many years, and her institutional knowledge will strengthen administrative support, improve communication with applicants and members, and help create a smoother, more responsive certification process.

A NEW VOICE FOR SAIOH COMMUNICATIONS

I'm delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Kaamini Reddy as our new Communications and Digital Media Manager, effective 3 August 2026.

Kaamini will lead the development of an integrated communications, marketing and digital media strategy to grow the Institute's visibility, reputation and reach. Her portfolio will include strengthening our brand and visual identity, managing member communications, overseeing our website and digital presence, coordinating marketing campaigns, and supporting stakeholder engagement.

One of her first major projects will be a full redevelopment of the SAIOH website, and I'd like to thank the Western Cape Branch for their earlier support in this space, and we look forward to working with them further.

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

I'm pleased to welcome Mr André van Rooyen, who has formally accepted the position of SAIOH Vice President following his election.

André's extensive experience in professional certification, governance and occupational hygiene will be a real asset to our strategic leadership.

With André stepping into this role, Ms Naadiya Mundy, who continues as our Immediate Past President, has taken up the position of PCC Vice Chair, helping ensure continuity and strong governance within the Committee.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Work continues steadily on reviewing, updating and implementing our Quality Management System (QMS).

A great deal of effort has gone into aligning the QMS with our Memorandum of Incorporation, governance framework, committee structures and operational processes, including reviewing policies, procedures, role descriptions and quality controls. This remains a strategic priority, and we remain committed to completing this work before the end of 2026. Once finalised, it will give us a stronger governance foundation, greater operational efficiency, and clearer responsibilities across the Institute.

INVESTING IN OUR BRANCHES

To keep building on our Strategic Plan, we held a SAIOH Branch Workshop on 31 July 2026, bringing together the national office and our branches to review structures, identify opportunities and strengthen collaboration.

I look forward to seeing how the outcomes of this workshop will be shaping how we grow member engagement and service delivery across the country.

GOVERNANCE AND WHAT'S AHEAD

We continue to strengthen our governance through revised Council role descriptions and committee responsibilities, and preparations are well underway for our 2026 Annual General Meeting, where I look forward to sharing more on our strategic progress, financials and governance initiatives. Planning for Council elections for the 2027/2028 term and stakeholder engagement is also progressing well.

OUR ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Planning for the 2026 SAIOH Annual Scientific Conference is going exceptionally well, and I know many of you are looking forward to it. Expect local keynote speakers, technical presentations, Professional Development Courses (PDCs), research and poster sessions, great networking, and of course our annual SAIOH Awards.

Keep an eye on our website and communication channels - more details on speakers, registration, sponsorship and the full programme will be released in the coming weeks.

IN CLOSING

It has been a season of real progress for SAIOH, in governance, certification, communications, member engagement and conference planning, and 2026 is shaping up to be a defining year for our Institute.

None of this would be possible without you. I want to thank our volunteers, committee members, Council members and staff for your continued dedication. Together, we are building a stronger, more sustainable Institute — one that keeps advancing the occupational hygiene profession across Southern Africa.

SAIOH National Council Feedback

Cas Badenhorst: SAIOH president, e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

Claudina Nogueira: SAIOH general manager, e-mail: claudina@saioh.co.za

SAIOH Management Update: 26 May – 31 July 2026

Governance and Operational Engagements

Engagements worth noting include the following:

- A SAIOH Administrators' meeting was held on 17 June 2026.
- A SAIOH PCC Executive Committee meeting was held on 19 June 2026.
- A SAIOH National Council meeting was held on 26 June 2026.
- On 1 July 2026, SAIOH members representing Management and the PCC attended the quarterly meeting of the Professional Bodies Forum, convened by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- An ad hoc meeting pertaining to SAIOH Ethics was held on 8 July 2026.
- The SAIOH Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum (OHSF) convened a meeting on 9 July 2026.
- The Occupational Hygiene Approved Inspection Authority (OHAIA) Association convened an online training session on 24 July 2026. The discussion related to components of the Physical Agents Regulations 2024, including illumination and vibration. The next training session is scheduled for 14 August 2026.
- SAIOH received an Amazon award from the International Occupational Hygiene Association

(IOHA) for the development and delivery of a four-part webinar series on health risk assessment for African workplaces, and a complementary African 'Occupational Hygiene Resource Pack' consisting of at least eight tools / templates / checklists and supporting resources.

Amazon has provided financial donations to international professional development entities like IOHA and related groups like the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) to support global occupational health training and microgrants.

- On 23 July 2026, SAIOH launched a call for nominations from its members for the following three National Council portfolios for 2027/2028, viz. Branches, Technical, and Marketing and Communication. Nominations closed on 7 August 2026.
- SAIOH welcomes the appointment of Ms Contance Kekana (Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources) as President of the Mine Ventilation Society of South Africa (MVSSA), and looks forward to strengthening the collaboration between the two entities in pursuit of shared objectives in occupational hygiene.
- SAIOH extends warm congratulations to Mr





André van Rooyen, formerly the PCC Vice Chair, who was elected as the Institute's Vice President at the end of June.

- Members of the SAIOH Management Board conducted interviews in June and July 2026 with

SAIOH Branch Activities

The Western Cape Branch held an online meeting on 19 June 2026.

On 30 July 2026, the Zululand Discussion Group hosted a comprehensive meeting that covered an overview of the Physical Agents Regulations (2024), followed by partner presentations from AMS Haden and Torsa Global.

On the same day, the Botswana Branch held an online meeting featuring an in-depth session on the



shortlisted candidates for the post of Communications and Digital Media Manager. An official appointment has been made, and SAIOH looks forward to welcoming Ms Kaamini Reddy in this new role on 3 August 2026.

Communications, Marketing and Training – Local and International

PLEASE NOTE: If any of the following links do not work, copy them and paste into your browser

SAIOH publishes its newsletter and President's page in two electronic media formats, namely the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* (OHSa) journal, and the *African Occupational Safety and Health* (A-OS&H) magazine. These publications are issued every two to three months, with the most recent issues published in June and May 2026, respectively.

As the issues are published online, the links are shared with SAIOH members via the Mailchimp system and posted on the SAIOH website.

Several e-mail notifications on occupational hygiene and health webinars, conferences and short courses, SAIOH Branch meetings, and vacancies for occupational hygiene practitioners, were distributed during the reporting period, including:

- A North-West University Short Learning Programme on Legal Knowledge for Occupational Hygiene, aligned with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

This course equips participants with an understanding of workplace compliance, safety regulations, and key occupational hygiene requirements. The start date is 31 August 2026, and the course duration is two weeks. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mv5sc7nt>

- The Beryllium Health and Safety Committee

(BHSC) Fall Meeting, which will take place on 27-28 October 2026, and will be jointly hosted by General Atomics and the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) in San Diego, California. More information on the meeting and registration can be accessed at: <https://tinyurl.com/4xyze2fm>

- The latest edition of the OHTA Newsletter 'Global Link' was published in June 2026 and includes the announcement of a new offering – the OHTA 1002 Specialist Course on Occupational Hygiene in the Pharmaceutical Industry. The latest edition can be accessed at: <https://tinyurl.com/pe47rezk>

The OHTA also shared an update on Heat Stress Management Resources on 23 June 2026 <https://tinyurl.com/3hx7szhd>

- The Ergonomics Society of South Africa (ESSA) hosted a webinar on 11 June 2026 titled 'Beyond the Physical, Cognitive and Organisational Domain', where Matita Tshabalala from Nelson Mandela University presented 'The importance of organisational change management in the adoption of human factors and ergonomics'.

- The latest policy brief from the Public Health Bulletin of South Africa (PHBSA) examines the role of artificial intelligence in addressing key challenges in public health emergency

management in resource-constrained settings, with a focus on its applicability to strengthening health system performance in South Africa.

More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yst4ybuu>

- An invitation to the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) Western Cape Chapter Meeting on 23 June 2026, where SAIOH member Mr Jaco van Rensburg presented an update on the Noise and Physical Agents Regulations.

SAIOH 2026 Annual Scientific Conference



This year's conference will be hosted by SAIOH in collaboration with the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), in celebration of the latter's 70th anniversary, and is themed 'Building Stronger Partnerships for Healthier Workplaces'.

The SAIOH Conference Organising Committee held a breakfast meeting on 22 June 2026 at the conference venue, Thaba Eco Hotel, and did a tour of the conference and accommodation facilities. The Committee met again on 17 July 2026, online, to progress planning and the development of the conference programme.

The abstract submission process is now closed. The deadline for submission of abstracts for peer review for oral or poster presentations was extended by ten days to 20 July 2026.

- IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE:**
- Notification of abstract acceptance: 25 August 2026
 - Accepted presenter registration deadline to confirm attendance: 4 September 2026
 - Deadline for regular registration for conference and/or PDCs: 4 September 2026
 - Deadline for the submission of the PowerPoint oral presentation for review and uploading to the system: 18 September 2026
- Registration is now open for the conference and the associated PDCs. The following PDCs are confirmed:

PDC Date, Time and Format	PDC Title and Presenters
PDC – 01 Monday, 28 September 2026 10:00 – 14:30 (In person attendance only)	Site Visit to the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) Presenters: NIOH staff members
PDC – 02 Monday, 28 September 2026 15:00 – 17:00 (Virtual attendance only, free session)	Interactive session 'All-Things-PCC' Presenters: SAIOH PCC members
PDC - 03 (full day) Tuesday, 29 September 2026 08:30 – 16:00 (In person and virtual attendance)	Beyond posture and chair design: The influence of psychosocial factors on work health, wellbeing and performance Presenter: Dr Miriam Mattison, (Rhodes University and the Ergonomics Society of South Africa, ESSA)
PDC – 04 (morning only) 08:30 – 12:00 (In person and virtual attendance)	Beyond the dust: Understanding silica exposure, modern silicosis and worker outcomes Presenters: Dr Vanessa Govender (Masakhane Health and University of the Witwatersrand) and Dr Nico Claassen (University of Pretoria)
PDC – 05 (afternoon only) 13:00 – 16:00 (In person and virtual attendance)	Ethics in action: Real-world challenges for occupational hygiene professionals Presenters: Prof Johan du Plessis and colleagues (North-West University, NWU)



From the Professional Certification Committee (PCC)

Lee Doolan: SAIOH PCC administrator, e-mail: lee@saioh.co.za
Claudina Nogueira: SAIOH general manager, e-mail: claudina@saioh.co.za
Ivan Niranjana: PCC chairperson, e-mail: ivann@dut.ac.za

Quarter 2 Assessment Cycle

The PCC successfully conducted the Q2 2026 written assessments on 12 June, with 63 candidates participating nationally. A summary of results for the certification assessments that took place from February to June 2026 is provided in Table 1.

The Skills Set Development Team continues to refine and strengthen the assessment process, meeting bi-monthly to enhance oral assessment scenarios and guidelines.

Committee Meetings and Strategic Engagements

The PCC Executive Committee convened its second online meeting of the year on 19 June 2026, addressing a wide range of strategic matters including CPD compliance, assessment papers and reviews, moderation processes, technical papers, ethics, engagements with the IOHA and its National Accreditation Recognition Committee (NARC), and liaison with the Department of Employment and Labour.

The SAIOH Position Paper: ‘Welding fume exposure assessment for OHS Act compliance purposes’, prepared by the Technical Committee, was published in the OHS journal (<https://tinyurl.com/mryds9m4>).

A separate PCC meeting on 30 May 2026 focused on the appointment of an assistant administrator and the review of applications received.

During the Gauteng Branch meeting held on 15 May 2026, Kate Smart provided members with a practical

overview of the CPD upload process.

The PCC Assessment Team met on 3 July 2026 to discuss the role of the Chief Examiner and the integration of two newly appointed Assistant Chief Examiners, further strengthening the assessment framework.

The SAIOH OHSF convened on 8 July 2026 to review SAQA’s Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) requirements and assess their alignment with SAIOH’s qualification criteria. The OHSF met again on 9 July 2026 to advance discussions on the development of short courses for members, tertiary curriculum approval processes, and the requirements and deliverables of international professional associations.

Additionally, SAIOH and the PCC participated in SAQA’s Professional Body Forum on 1 July 2026, reinforcing SAIOH’s commitment to professional standards.

Strengthening the PCC

As part of our commitment to our members, several important appointments have been made within the PCC:

- Ms Naadiya Mundy has been appointed PCC Vice Chair. Her expertise and dedication will be instrumental in advancing PCC initiatives.
- Ms Tracy Mphahuli has been appointed PCC Support Officer, working alongside Ms Rebecca Doolan, PCC Assessment Officer. This strengthened

support structure will improve administrative efficiency and response times.

- Mr Deon Jansen van Vuuren and Dr Hennie van der Westhuizen have been appointed Assistant Examiners, supporting Chief Examiner Dr Goitsewang Keretse across application intake, assessment setting, administration of written and oral assessments, moderation, and complaint management.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to Mr André van Rooyen for his valuable contribution to the PCC, and congratulate him on his new appointment as SAIOH Vice President.

Table 1. SAIOH PCC certification assessment results as of June 2026

Certification Categories	WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS				ORAL ASSESSMENTS			
	Assessed n	Passed n	Failed n	Pass rate %	Assessed n	Passed n	Failed n	Pass rate %
OH Assistant	85	77	8	90.6	0	-	-	-
OH Technologist	47	29	18	61.7	19	8	11	42.1
Occ. Hygienist	24	1	23	4.2	4	2	2	50.0
TOTAL	156	107	49	68.6	23	10	13	43.5

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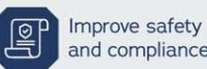


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Responsiveness is key in Occupational Safety & Health



Rani Naidoo
Respiratory Specialist
Dromex

WHY THERE IS NO MARGIN FOR ERROR OR INERTIA

In Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), responsiveness is not a soft skill or a nice-to-have attribute—it is a critical operational requirement.

Hazards do not wait for approval cycles, indecision, or convenience. Conditions can change in seconds, and when they do, delayed action or complacency can mean the difference between a safe outcome and a serious incident.

In OSH, there is no margin for error and no room for inertia.

THE REALITY OF DYNAMIC RISK

Workplaces are dynamic environments. Equipment degrades, tasks evolve, human behaviour varies, and external factors—weather, supply changes, staffing levels—can shift risk profiles instantly.

A hazard that was controlled yesterday may re-emerge today. Responsive organisations recognise this reality and treat safety as a “living system”, not a static checklist.

When early warning signs are ignored—near misses, small leaks, minor complaints, procedural shortcuts—risk compounds quietly.

History has shown repeatedly that major incidents are rarely sudden; they are usually preceded by signals that were missed, dismissed, or delayed.

WHY SPEED MATTERS IN SAFETY?

Time is the most unforgiving variable in risk management. A delayed response to a gas leak, a failing guard, an exposure event, or unsafe behaviour allows hazards to escalate. In many high-risk environments—manufacturing, construction, mining, chemical handling—escalation is exponential, not linear.

An immediate and proportionate response:

- prevents hazard migration,
- avoids exposure,
- reinforces safe behaviour, and
- preserves trust in safety systems.

Conversely, slow reaction creates uncertainty, normalises deviation, and erodes confidence in leadership commitment to safety.

INERTIA: THE SILENT THREAT

Inertia in OSH often disguises itself as routine, experience, or “the way we’ve always done it”.

It appears when:

- hazards are tolerated because “nothing has happened yet”,

- improvements are delayed due to cost or inconvenience,
- unsafe practices are overlooked to maintain productivity, or
- reports are filed but not followed up.

This mindset is dangerous. Past success is not evidence of future safety. The absence of incidents does not mean the absence of risk. Only that chance has not yet turned against us.

HUMAN FACTORS DEMAND IMMEDIATE ACTION

People are adaptive by nature. When systems allow unsafe conditions to persist, workers will adapt around them—often in ways that increase risk. If PPE is unavailable, damaged, or uncomfortable, it will be modified or avoided. If procedures are impractical, shortcuts will emerge.

Responsive OSH recognises these realities and acts quickly to remove barriers to safe behaviour.

Responsiveness also shows workers that reporting hazards matters. When employees see swift action after raising concerns, reporting increases. When reports disappear into silence, so does engagement.

THE COST OF DELAY

Every delayed safety decision carries hidden costs:

- increased injury severity,
- longer recovery times,
- legal and regulatory exposure,
- reputational damage, and
- loss of workforce trust.

These costs far exceed the effort required to intervene early. Preventative action is not only ethically correct—it is operationally and financially sound.

LEADERSHIP SETS THE PACE

Responsiveness in OSH is driven from the top. Leaders shape how quickly risks are addressed through:

- decision-making speed,
- allocation of resources,
- clarity of accountability, and
- visible presence in safety matters.

When leadership responds decisively to hazards, safety becomes a value rather than a slogan. When leadership hesitates, the entire system slows down.

BUILDING A RESPONSIVE SAFETY CULTURE

A responsive OSH culture is intentional. It is built through:

- Clear escalation pathways: Everyone knows when and how to stop work.
- Empowered workers: Authority to act on hazards without fear.
- Rapid feedback loops: Reports lead to visible action.
- Training for recognition: Workers and supervisors are trained to spot early warning signs.
- Continuous review: Controls are actively re-evaluated, not assumed effective forever.

Responsiveness thrives where accountability is clear and action is expected, not negotiated.

CONCLUSION: ZERO DELAY, ZERO COMPLACENCY

Occupational safety and health does not tolerate hesitation. Hazards do not pause while decisions are debated, and risks do not diminish through optimism.

The most effective safety systems are those that react decisively, learn continuously, and act without delay.

In OSH, responsiveness saves lives, prevents injury, and protects organisations. There is no margin for error, and absolutely no space for inertia.

Act early. Act decisively. Act everytime.

A PRACTITIONER'S JOURNEY

Aiming for zero harm



Creating a zero-harm environment is not only possible, but also crucial for every workplace.

Achieving zero-harm is about nurturing a safety culture where accidents and incidents are systematically reduced and risks are managed effectively. It's about making sure every employee goes home in the same condition they arrived.

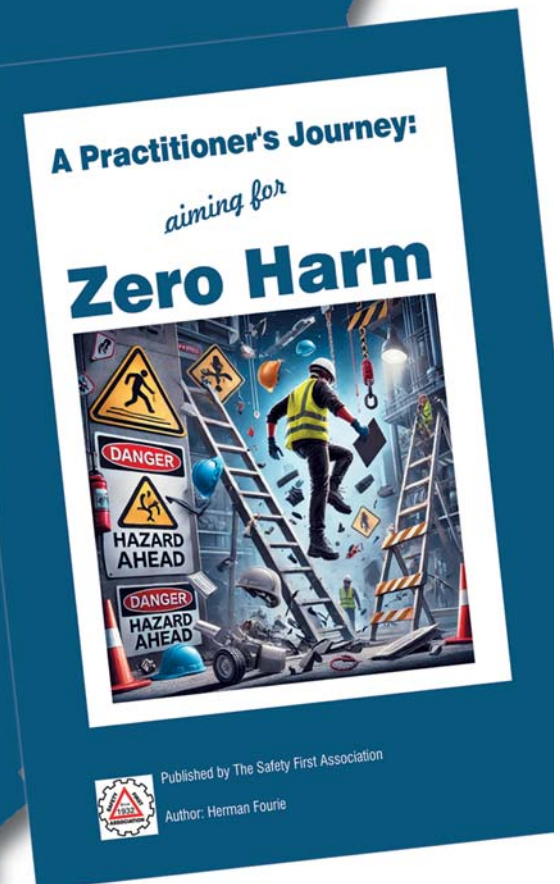
But the road to zero-harm is riddled with challenges. This book offers practical tools and guides you how to navigate the complexities to success.

Published by the Safety First Association

Telephone/WhatsApp: +27 83 266 6662

Email: debbie@safety1st.co.za

www.safety1st.co.za/publications



Work permit near-miss - lessons learned?



By Willie Engelbrecht,
SACPCMP CHSO

Unsafe acts and work practice non-compliances occur when the construction manager does not adhere to the conditions and requirements of an issued work permit for the project. Consequently the non-compliance discussion highlights the importance of issuing a work permit before high-risk work begins and why strict compliance with the permit conditions is essential.

The discussion below is intended for safety management, safety agents, and lecturers who are responsible for promoting safe work practices, legal compliance, and effective risk control in the workplace.

WORK PERMIT PURPOSE

A work permit is a formal authorisation system used to control hazardous activities such as hot work, confined space entry, excavation work, lifting operations, electrical isolation, and work at height. It ensures that the task has been properly assessed, to ensure that the hazards have been identified, and that the necessary control measures are in place before work starts.

A permit is not just paperwork: it is a critical safety barrier that protects workers, supervisors, and the organisation.

When a work permit is ignored, incomplete, or not followed correctly, the risk of serious injury, fatality, property damage, legal action, and operational disruption increases significantly. For this reason, all persons involved in the permit process must understand their responsibilities and ensure that the permit system is applied correctly at all times.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

In many workplaces, incidents occur because high-risk work begins without proper authorisation, or because the conditions stated on the permit are not followed. This may happen when supervisors rush the job, workers do not understand the permit requirements, or management fails to enforce the system.

Such typical failures include:

- Work starting without an approved permit.
- Hazards not being identified before the task begins.
- Control measures not being implemented.
- Workers not being briefed on permit conditions.
- Inadequate supervision during the task.
- Permit conditions being ignored once work is underway.
- Failure to stop work when conditions change.
- Lack of communication between management, safety agents, and workers.

These failures can lead to uncontrolled exposure to danger and serious consequences for everyone involved.

To learn from such incidents here are some discussion questions and professional answers:

Question 1: What is the purpose of a work permit?

Answer: A work permit is a formal document that authorises specific high-risk work to be carried out under controlled conditions. Its purpose is to ensure that hazards are identified, risks are assessed, and safety precautions and measures are implemented before the task begins. It also confirms that responsible persons have reviewed and approved the work.

Question 2: Why is the issuance of a work permit important for safety management?

Answer: For safety management, the work permit system is an essential control measure that helps prevent incidents. It provides structure, accountability, and legal compliance. Safety management must ensure that permits are issued only after a proper risk assessment, that the correct controls are in place, and that work does not proceed until all permit conditions have been met.

Question 3: What is the role of safety practitioner/agents in the permit process?

Answer: Safety practitioners/agents play a key role in monitoring compliance, advising management, and ensuring that permit conditions are understood and followed. They help identify hazards, verify control measures, and support safe work practices.

Safety practitioners/agents must also report unsafe conditions and stop work when permit requirements are not being followed.

Question 4: What are the responsibilities of supervisors and managers when issuing a work permit?

Answer: Supervisors and managers must ensure that the work is properly planned, that the hazards are assessed, and that the permit is completed accurately. They must confirm that workers are competent, that equipment is safe, and that all required precautions are in place. They are also responsible for ensuring that the permit is communicated to everyone involved in the task.

Question 5: What is the responsibility of the site manager/supervision under work permit conditions?

Answer: The site manager/supervision carry the legal responsibility to ensure that the work permit requirements are implemented and maintained during the permit to work period. This involves

ensuring the permit job task workers are informed about the hazards, exposures, risks and the health and safety measures to be applied before and during performing the work permit job tasks. Where any safe work non-compliance is observed, the permit work job task must be halted until the work procedure is manager/supervisor intervention corrected with the working employees.

Question 6: Why is it important for lecturers and trainers to teach work permit compliance?

Answer: Lecturers and trainers are responsible for informing workers, hoping to develop competent workers and supervisors who understand the purpose of the permit system.

Training ensures that learners know how to recognise hazards, follow procedures, and appreciate the legal and practical importance of compliance, as well as that supervision interventions should be anticipated when non-compliances occur. Without proper education, workers may treat the permit as a formality instead of a life-saving control measure.

Question 7: Why must workers understand the conditions of the permit before starting work?

Answer: Workers must understand the permit conditions because they are the people exposed to the hazards and risks while performing the permit work tasks. If they do not know what controls are required, they may unknowingly place themselves and others at risk. A permit is only effective when the workers carrying out the task understand and follow its requirements.

Question 8: What can happen if a work permit is not complied with?

Answer: If a work permit is not complied with, the task may be carried out without the necessary safety measures and controls implemented. This can result in serious injury, fatality, fire, explosion, fall risk, collapse, electrocution, exposure to hazardous substances, or other dangerous incidents. Non-compliance also exposes the organisation to legal, financial, and disciplinary consequences.

Question 9: What are the legal implications of failing to follow the permit system?

Answer: Failure to follow the permit system may result in a breach of occupational health and safety legislation, company procedures, workman's compensation and client requirements. Depending on the severity of the incident, responsible persons may face disciplinary action, fines, prosecution, civil claims, or criminal liability. Management may also be held accountable for negligence if they failed to enforce their safety management systems.

Question 10: What are the operational consequences of permit non-compliance?

Answer: Operational consequences may include work stoppages, project delays, equipment damage, loss of productivity, increased costs, incident investigation inquiries and damage to the organisation's reputation. In serious cases, the client or regulator may suspend the work until compliance is restored and corrective action has been taken.

Question 11: How should a permit be controlled once it has been issued?

Answer: Once issued, the permit must be controlled carefully. It should be displayed or kept available at the worksite, reviewed by all relevant persons, and monitored throughout the task. If conditions change, the permit must be reassessed, updated, or cancelled if necessary. Work must stop immediately if the permit conditions can no longer be met.

Question 12: Why is communication important in the permit process?

Answer: Communication ensures that everyone involved understands the hazards, the control measures, and the limits of the authorised work. Poor communication can lead to confusion, unsafe actions, and permit violations. Worker practical communication is usually a requirement under work permit conditions, like between the observer and the confined space worker. Effective communication between management, safety agents, supervisors, and workers is essential for safe and compliant work execution.

Question 13: What is the most important lesson about work permits?

Answer: The most important lesson is that a work permit is a safety control, not a routine administrative form. It exists to prevent incidents and protect lives. If the permit is not issued correctly or not followed properly, the protection it provides is lost, and the risk of harm increases dramatically.

Question 14: What should be done when unsafe conditions are identified after the permit has been issued?

Answer: If unsafe conditions are identified after the permit has been issued, work must stop immediately. The situation must be reported to the responsible supervisor or safety representative, and the permit must be reviewed before work continues. No one should continue working under conditions that are no longer safe or compliant.

Question 15: How can management promote better compliance with the permit system?

Answer: Management can promote compliance by providing training, enforcing procedures, conducting inspections, supporting safety agents,

Is your professionalism tested?



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I saw this quote online “is your professionalism tested when others lose theirs?” It made me wonder if are we upholding professionalism within our work activities. My observations are suggesting NO!

As a H&S professional I am constantly seeing OHS documents, like HIRAs being copy and paste in H&S files without being reviewed for site specific applicability, job-task activity relevance. In some cases, the original source logo not even being removed from the copied document. This means my professionalism is being tested because the H&S person has lost their OHS discipline integrity, as I am required to approve and sign-off documents on behalf on the project client.

The use of AI to develop OHS documents, may be fast for the OHS person. But AI use without the necessary professional assessment as to the AI generated document’s accuracy, with respect to the Job-task requirements, our SA OHS legislation requirements and relevance to the project specification requirements are often ignored or missing. Again my, and our professionalism is tested or is needed to be applied in a professional way!

A while back, I requested a Safe Working Procedure for working on a roof, from an AI source. The response was basically OK but none of our Regulation’s requirements were provided such as, the medical, work at heights training, weather considerations, etc. Such aspects had to be added to an acceptable SWP for professional approval.

Are OHS and other people staying within their profession’s ethical and code of conduct requirements? Again NO, as professional registration certificates now have to include the following endorsement across the certificate face to avoid illegal and fraudulent use—“this certificate is issued for proof of registration only and may not be legally used for any other purpose”.

Professional discipline registrations carry legal liability responsibilities, which people fraudulently try to use without the certificate holder being aware of their certificate’s fraudulent use.

Many professional discipline bodies require professional registration level membership to be awarded through a professional body’s discipline knowledge assessment process.

Here again OHS staff within companies often oversee construction work at their company sites without being legally construction work professionally registered (CR 8(5 & 6)), while the contractor safety staff must be construction work professionally registered. Now testing professional double standards?

Many issued OHS training course certificates are presented and training certificates issued by training providers who are not officially accredited by bodies to present such training courses, although the certificates issued display the “copy and past” logos of the various bodies to appear as genuine training providers.

As an OHS professional, you should request copies of the training course provider’s ‘Course Accreditation’ documentation before attending their training courses.

I did not accept all the work at heights training certificates at a construction site. After interviewing a certificate holder, I found no safety harnesses were donned/worn during the training course by the certificate holders. But the certificates displayed all the recognisable body’s logos. Also, there was no training service provider contact information to verify the certificates.

Be warned, your professionalism is being tested, daily, when many others have lost theirs, in our OHS and in many other professions!



and leading by example. They must create a safety culture where workers are encouraged to stop unsafe work and where permit compliance is treated as a non-negotiable requirement.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this discussion, participants should understand:

1. The purpose and importance of the work permit system.
2. The responsibilities of safety management in issuing and controlling permits.
3. The role of safety agents in monitoring compliance and preventing unsafe work.
4. The importance of training and awareness for lecturers and learners.
5. The need for workers to understand and follow permit conditions.
6. The legal, operational, and human consequences of non-compliance.

7. The importance of stopping work when conditions change or become unsafe.
8. The fact that a permit is a life-saving control measure, not a formality.

CONCLUSION

The issuing of a work permit is one of the most important steps in controlling high-risk work. Safety management, safety practitioners/agents, and lecturers all have a responsibility to ensure that the permit system is understood, applied correctly, and enforced consistently.

When permit conditions are followed, risks are reduced and lives are protected. When they are ignored, the consequences can be severe, including injury, death, legal action, financial loss, and damage to the organisation’s reputation.

Compliance with the work permit system is therefore essential for safe, responsible, and professional work practices.

Why are workers blamed for accidents caused by management failures?



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One of the most common patterns I have observed across construction, infrastructure, and industrial projects is how quickly workers are blamed whenever workplace accidents occur, while the deeper management failures that created the conditions for those incidents are ignored.

From practical experience managing safety across high-risk operations, many incidents attributed to “worker negligence” actually originate from decisions made long before work begins on site.

UNJUSTIFIED BLAME

I have seen situations where workers were accused of unsafe behaviour even though project timelines were unrealistic, supervision was inadequate, equipment was poorly maintained, and operational pressure encouraged shortcuts.

In several cases, workers were expected to deliver tasks under conditions where productivity was prioritised above safe execution. Yet after incidents occurred, investigations focused almost entirely on the actions of the individuals involved rather than the management systems that shaped those actions.

This remains one of the biggest weaknesses in workplace safety management across many developing economies, including Nigeria.

Organisations often treat safety failures as behavioural problems while ignoring planning deficiencies, weak contractor management, inadequate training systems, and leadership decisions that silently increase operational risk.

By the time an incident occurs, the unsafe environment has usually been created through poor resource allocation, unrealistic deadlines, ineffective communication, or weak operational oversight.

DANGERS OF MANAGEMENT NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

What makes this more dangerous is that blaming workers alone prevents organisations from identifying the real systemic causes of incidents.

As a result, the same failures continue repeating themselves, despite new policies, toolbox meetings, and disciplinary actions.

In reality, workers operate within systems designed and controlled by management. If those systems are weak, incidents become more likely regardless of individual behaviour.

From experience, organisations that achieve stronger safety performance are usually those where leadership understands that workplace safety cannot be separated from planning, supervision, contractor coordination, resource allocation, and executive decision-making.

Twenty three years in HSE

Have we become more competent, or just better qualified?



Fabian Buckley IDIP
NEBOSH
HSSE Director of WIBCS
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Point

It is now 23 years since I first stepped into the Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) profession.

When I look back over those years—the projects I've been privileged to work on, the countries I've travelled to, the incredible people I've met, and the lessons I've learned—I can't help but feel a little nostalgic.

But it also leaves me asking a difficult question: *Where is our profession really heading?*

When I started in HSE, I didn't have mentors. Most of my managers were more like policemen than coaches. They were there to catch mistakes, not necessarily to develop people. Looking back now, I genuinely wish I'd had mentors who were willing to invest their time, share their knowledge, and help others grow.

Thankfully, today there are many professionals who do exactly that. The challenge is that I don't always see the same hunger to learn from the next generation that many of us had.

A good friend of mine—whose name also happens to be Fabian—reminded me recently of the days when we'd walk around construction sites carrying USB flash drives, asking anyone who was willing to share HSE documents.

Those documents were like gold:

- We didn't just collect them.
- We studied them.
- We questioned them.
- We rewrote them.
- We compared them.
- We tried to understand why they were written the way they were.

That's how we learned. Truth be told, I actually started with floppy disks back at Murray & Roberts.

Yes... I'm definitely showing my age now! But it was a different era.

We were hungry.

- Every risk assessment...
- Every procedure...
- Every safety file...
- Every audit report...
- Every document was another opportunity to improve ourselves.

Today I often see something very different.

- "Can someone send me a risk assessment?"
- "Does anyone have a safety file?"
- "Please share your procedure."
- "Can someone send me a template?"

There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking for help. The problem starts when all we want is the finished product.

We've developed a culture of:

- "I need..."
- "Please send..."
- "Does anyone have..."

Instead of saying:

- "Can you teach me?"
- "Can you coach me?"
- "Can you show me how?"
- "Teach me how to write a quality risk assessment."
- "Teach me how to compile a safety file."
- "Teach me how to conduct a legal compliance audit."
- "Teach me how to think critically."

Because that's what separates someone who manages documents from someone who truly understands health and safety.

Our profession has changed tremendously over the past two decades:

- Technology has advanced.
 - Legislation has improved.
 - Management systems have matured.
- The tools available today are incredible.

And now we have Artificial Intelligence. I genuinely believe AI is one of the greatest tools ever introduced into our profession:

- I use it almost every day.
- It saves time.
- It improves productivity.
- It challenges my thinking.

But here's the part we cannot forget...AI should never replace knowledge. It should accelerate learning—not become a substitute for learning.

If AI writes your risk assessment:

- Do you understand why those controls were selected?

If AI develops your procedure:

- Could you confidently defend every section during an investigation?

If AI creates your legal register:

Do you actually know which legislation applies to your workplace?

The tool isn't the problem. The lack of understanding is.

Another trend I've noticed over the years is our obsession with collecting letters after our names.

- CSP.
- CMIOSH.
- FIOSH.
- Pr.CHSM.
- Pr.CHSO.

The list continues to grow.

Professional registration matters. But:

- Qualifications matter.
- Continuous learning matters.

I've spent years studying myself, and I encourage everyone to keep learning. But qualifications alone do not prove competence.

In my experience, competence is demonstrated where it matters most...In the field.

- Can you conduct a meaningful audit?
- Can you critically review a contractor's safety file?
- Can you develop a quality baseline risk assessment?
- Can you investigate a serious incident and identify the real root causes?
- Can you influence senior leadership?
- Can you coach supervisors?
- Can you build trust with the workforce?
- Can you improve safety culture?

Those are the things that define an HSE professional.

Sometimes I look at what many universities teach, or what some professional bodies continue to promote, and I have to ask whether we're focusing on what really matters.

Too often, we're producing people who know how to pass assessments but struggle to perform in complex operational environments.

I also believe it's time for some honest conversations.

Here in South Africa, Government, industry, and the SACPCMP should continually evaluate whether our current pathways are producing competent professionals—or simply registered professionals. Those are not always the same thing.

I've met individuals with excellent qualifications who struggle with the practical side of the job. Ask them to:

- Review a contractor's safety file.
- Conduct a legal compliance audit.
- Develop a baseline risk assessment.
- Facilitate a complex incident investigation.

Very often, the gaps become obvious. I don't entirely blame those individuals. Many are products of a system that places greater emphasis on passing examinations than developing practical competence.

Some of the people designing competency frame-

works have spent very little time working in high-risk operational environments.

That raises another important question. How do we define competence if we've never truly lived the work ourselves?

And before anyone thinks this is only a South African issue, it isn't. I've interviewed candidates from all over the world. They have outstanding CVs, numerous international qualifications and multiple professional registrations. Yet after only a few technical questions, it becomes clear that many don't understand the fundamentals of HSE.

Even more concerning is hearing of people paying others to complete assignments or examinations on their behalf to obtain qualifications such as the NEBOSH International General Certificate.

That should concern every employer, every institution and every HSE professional. Qualifications obtained without competence don't protect people. Genuine competence does.

If we're serious about improving health, safety and environmental performance, then we need to stop chasing papers and start building people again.

We need experienced professionals who are willing to mentor the next generation.

We need educational institutions that genuinely listen to industry and constantly move with the times.

We need competency frameworks built around practical ability—not just examinations and cramming for exams.

And above all... we need to bring back the passion for learning.

The HSE profession doesn't need more certificates. It needs:

- More craftsmen.
- More mentors.
- More critical thinkers.
- More leaders.

Because if we don't improve the way we develop HSE professionals today, the consequences won't simply be poor paperwork. The consequences will be measured in injuries and in fatalities—in lives that are changed forever.

FINAL THOUGHT

Twenty-three years in this profession has taught me one thing above everything else: People don't go home safely because someone has a certificate on the wall. They go home safely because competent people make good decisions when it matters most.

I'd genuinely love to hear your thoughts.

After everything you've seen in this profession...let me know, have we made HSE stronger, or have we simply made it easier to look qualified?

Why should ACOHS matter to you, or should it?



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Over the years, I have always been intrigued by the errors that creep into the development of legislation. Similarly, I have been piqued by the idea that because the Regulator is the one that developed the Regulations, it is the only one that understands what appears in the legislation despite all the processes involving stakeholders and members of the public in general, depending to some extent the degree to which staff in the Directorates in the National Office have involved you, the public.

The article captures my own personal experiences of my time as Chief Inspector for Occupational Health and Safety. I will get you to think about the process, and question certain aspects of it instead of just being lead by your nose, as if it's a process that you do not have a right to engage and be heard.

There is one reminder that is always key for me, go back to the legislation and see what it says. Do not accept what I am telling you. You are more than welcome to disagree with me and of course you're entitled to your opinion. Great, at least that's out of the way!

NOMINATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF ACOHS

The Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) has just finalised the process of obtaining nominations for members of the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety (ACOHS), and has requested the Minister of DEL to consider the nominations. And, if he or she is satisfied with the nominations, to go ahead and sign their letters of appointment. These letters of appointment will be sent back to the Chief Inspector OHS (CI). The CI can then hold meetings of the ACOHS again.

However, there are procedural matters that must be put in place before the ACOHS can once again start operating fully, unless of course, the previous ACOHS members are all the same as the previous group. In this case they could carry on, as they already understand what is required of them. Invariably there is a change, unlike during the past several decades where members seemed to stay on for many years.

MAKING OF REGULATIONS

Let's go deeper into this whole issue. Section 43 of OHSA allows the Minister of Employment and Labour (DEL) to make Regulations. In fact, Section 43(1) guides the Minister in terms of the type of Regulations he may make.

He cannot irrationally decide he is going to make Regulations that do not have any bearing whatsoever on occupational health and safety.

Further to this of course, in the interest of inclusivity, the Minister shall not make any Regulation unless he has consulted with the

Council (ACOHS) and he cannot make any Regulation affecting the State unless he/she has consulted with his/her colleagues in Finance and the Minister of Health.

I have no doubt that most of the safety professionals operating in the various sectors in South Africa are aware that the Minister may incorporate health and safety Standards or part(s) of any Standard (like SANS 10400) into the Regulations by way of a notice in a Government Gazette. But, again, the Minister may not do so unless he has consulted with the Council (ACOHS). If there is no consultation with ACOHS according to the OHSA, then the Minister may not incorporate the Standard or part of a Standard.

We are on a role now, we are gaining some steam on this important issue. Don't get lost!

SECTION 2 - ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ACOHS

In Section 2 of the OHSA, the Department may now go ahead and establish an ACOHS. The OHSA allows for it to happen and empowers the DEL to do so. ACOHS is a legal entity, is established in terms of the law, and has the force of law behind it. It has the right to exist and operate and as shown, to participate in certain issues which we have seen and shall still see later on.

Let me remind you, occupational health and safety does not only exist in the DEL but is also administered by various other government entities in South Africa viz.: Mines Health and Safety (DMRE); SAPS (bomb squad); National Nuclear Regulator (NNR); South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA); Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) and the Railway Safety Regulator (RSR), etc.

They too would need to be empowered to create legislation relevant to their environment and would need to have the resources to administer the legislation. So they will have an Act empowering them, and then they can create their own Regulations and Standards.

In relation to the ILO though, the DEL is seen as the lead Department when it comes to occupational health and safety matters, and the DEL is required to provide national reports in regard to occupational health and safety.

I have not delved into the roles of SANAS or even of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) that has several sub-Councils under it that play a critical role in the DEL OHS environment, even though they all fall under the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

Incidentally, when I was working on the new OSHA Bill and I had finalised it, I was instructed when doing a presentation at the Director General Forum, to discuss the changes in the new Bill with

a number of their Departments. I will pick up on this again in the not to distant future when the new OHSA comes out.

ACOHS STRUCTURE

Let's get back to the Council. The Council is made up of twenty members, but is not an arbitrary group even though it could be argued that it may need to be upgraded as it is archaic, and comes from a time before democratic change, and the direction that things have taken under the new Constitution.

Certain professional groups that should form part of the ACOHS have been excluded without much thought being given to the roles that these groupings play today. It could be argued that the old groupings are exclusionary and therefore do not cater for the need of all safety professionals.

You will also not find the informal sector represented on ACOHS despite them being the largest grouping and in a number of cases they are operating as organised groups. Why is it that we perpetuate these archaic structures and systems and still expect to see change?!

So ACOHS currently, under the OHSA 85 of 1993 still has the Chief Inspector as the Chairperson. But this may change going forward. Then, the Compensation Fund has a representative serving on it, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy has a representative and so too does the Department of Health.

There is also a person from the Office of the Chief Inspector serving on ACOHS as a nominated member. In this case I had the Director from the Directorate Health and Hygiene appointed to ACOHS because I wanted occupational health and hygiene to become the focus of ACOHS given that the two disciplines were treated as step-children for many decades and needed to move to a prominent position.

A number of the Regulations also became a focus for amendments or new Regulations, such as the Ergonomics Regulations.

Also, the unions were traditionally approached to provide nominations for six people to serve on ACOHS. And in the case of organised business, "traditionally", Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) was approached to provide the names of six representatives from within their membership. This was interesting for both organised labour and organised business in that in the latter years, these groups were no longer representing everyone. There was a splinter group such as SAFTU for organised labour that would want a seat on ACOHS. In the case of organised business, there was the Black Business Council that would rightly want a seat or more on the ACOHS.

But, the legislation was not moving fast enough to accommodate the changes in the health and safety broader landscape!

Something else for you to observe is: what sectors are represented on ACOHS in relation to the representatives sitting on ACOHS.

This was all okay until one day, an organisation approached DEL. They said that the OHSA in its current form allows them a seat on ACOHS in that the existing organised group does not represent their interests. Did the person have a point? You decide ... this presents a good discussion point. How far, if you were that organisation would you go to get a seat on ACOHS in order for your voice to be heard?

Then there must be a person who has knowledge of occupational safety matters, as well as a person who has knowledge of occupational medicine and who must come with a recommendation from the Minister of Health.

There must also be a representative on ACOHS who has knowledge of occupational hygiene. Except for the Chief Inspector, all the remainder representatives are appointed by the Minister.

PRIVILEGE OF SITTING ON ACOHS

Each ACOHS member should realise that it is an absolute honour to be invited to sit in ACOHS and to represent a particular group.

The first time I was invited to ACOHS I was a junior inspector and I was asked to do a presentation on my experience with consultants in the construction sector. For me, a junior, it was everything at the time. You see, there were real industry heavy weights sitting on ACOHS, and presenting to them was never going to be easy because they knew the importance of their positions and those they represented.

In Part 2 we will cover a very important part of ACOHS—the functions of the Council and its Technical Committees. This is where the wheels hit the tar and change is effected with implications not only for business but also for you, a member of the public. For example, think of your electrical installations.

Until then, don't just think safety, make sure you are safe and those around you too.

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”



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This famous quote is from the novel *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell. The line exposed the notion about people who all pretend to have the same power, but in reality, some have far more than others ... even though they are all the same.

This is the point where you check if you are reading the correct magazine. What does this topic have to do with safety management? Stick with me.

Not all controls are critical, but some definitely are – the question to ask yourself at this point is, are you able to distinguish the critical ones (those with more power) from all the others and have you got evidence to support that they are in place and effective?

This article aims to provide some brief insights, and a little on the process, to hopefully help you to ask or answer some important questions and set you on a path for your own Critical Control Management (CCM) process.

There are excellent documents and supporting tools out there. The gold standard in my opinion is the ICMM's Critical Control Management Good Practice Guide. The 2026 revision is a 78-page document. I'm not attempting to explain that process, but rather to provide some main steps that you can consider within your current risk management processes.

A comprehensive risk assessment is a foundational element for effective risk control and the prevention of incidents. I cannot recall from any of the 25 or so tragic fatal incident investigations that I've undertaken, one in which the risk assessments were not in place.

Both myself and the leadership were always left questioning how a specific event could have happened “with all this in place”. This is one of the illusions of course, the assumption that a colourful risk assessment means that we are in control of risk.

While all risks must be managed, the most serious ones are rightly prioritised. In pure safety management, this is usually fatality prevention. If you are in a role which is expected to give assurance on the effectiveness of the fatal prevention programme, then you can only do this when you can extract the detail relevant to fatal risks and their controls. This information is often buried in the spreadsheet, with all the other risks and a process is needed, to identify the top risks, Assess them to determine the Critical Controls, and most importantly have evidence-based information, to provide Assurance, that the controls are effective.

Collectively, I'll refer to this process as Critical Control Management (CCM), with a sub-process called Critical Control Verification (CCV).

THERE ARE SO MANY ANIMALS (RISK ASSESSMENTS AND CONTROLS)

Today's reality is that there are more types of assessments than ever. Whether it be the baseline risk assessment, various issue-based risk assessments, a hefty Major Hazard Installation (MHI) risk assessments, task risk assessments or old faithful SLAM or Take 5 for continuous risk assessment.

These and many more are typically accompanied by some process to be followed, and a matrix or image of some sort to enable a visual depiction of the outcomes. BowTie, Fishbone or Heatmaps are examples and all very useful.

Risk matrices can be as simple as a 3 x 3 (with three colours) or as complex as a 7 x 7 with as many colours as the rainbow, and probability and consequence ratings which require a mathematician in the room to assist. In my view, we invest way too much energy in trying to get risk ratings perfect and plotted on these matrices and images, and we fail in moving to more important steps in the risk management cycle, where we actually start improving risk control.

THE RISK MANAGEMENT CYCLE(S) AND DEMING

Risk management cycles also come in many forms, but they are all based on an 80-year-old model, that W. Edwards Deming popularised:

Plan → Do → Check → Act

Unfortunately though, we see too many organisations stuck in the Plan part. If you have listed all your hazards, risks and controls, and produced a matrix, you have not moved past the Plan phase.

The CCM / CCV process happens within the



same cycle (but it's a different animal), and if you don't push through with each step of the cycle, and do this consistently, the likelihood of occurrence of events increases.

CCM WITHIN THE RM CYCLE

Step 1 and 2 - Plan

When identifying the “top” or “material” events you need to prevent, you have to get the team into the “top corner” of the matrix, usually the spot for catastrophic incidents and those highly unlikely to occur.

I recommend you approach this from an Inherent risk perspective and remove all current views on the probability of them occurring. The easiest way to do this is to pick an outcome which is not acceptable (a severity threshold), and this would typically be a fatality.

True story – I once facilitated an assessment with one employee who was adamant that a paper cut could be fatal! With improper care of the wound gangrene can develop, spread and be fatal. It's medically possible but extremely unlikely that a paper cut will make your top events list.

A generic list of Top Risks / Material Events can easily be obtained, but this will not suffice for your individual CCM processes, as you need to get down to the detail of specific events, linked to specific hazards, often during very specific tasks or areas within your business.

Now the tricky part: *Identifying Controls and Critical Controls*. As opposed to other assessments which are often full of administrative controls, these should not make it onto your CCM list.

A Control is either an object or a human action, or a combination of both, AND it must be able to directly prevent or mitigate the events identified in Step 1.

The CCM control list should be full of Engineering Controls, automated and instrumented systems, which are able to detect when situations are developing, and which have built in activation measures. Passive devices should also be seen, which require no activation, like guards, walls and barriers. What you do not want to see on your

control list is items like “SOPs”, “Training”, “Proper design”, “BBS” etc. These are all important things, but they are not controls from a CCM definition perspective.

Now the hardest part – deciding what's critical (remember they are not all equal). Guidance tells us that this will be a small portion of the total controls, but I won't recommend a number, rather that you carefully consider which of the controls are crucial and, if the control was absent or it failed, the likelihood of the event occurring, and being fatal is significantly increased. Sticking with the example, if the employee fell from a significant height and the fall arrest system failed, the chances of fatality as we know, is high. This supports the classification that the fall arrest system is Critical.

Step 3 - Do

This is where we often see the momentum in the process lost, as the perception can exist that a great assessment has been done and everything else will follow. No improvement can take place without moving into the Do part. In this phase you want to ensure that all the controls firstly have an owner, and that they are implemented and confirmed as such.

Plenty of additional controls are usually recommended, which need to be prioritised of course. In this phase we are also deciding on how often a control must be checked and the parameters which will be used to determine if the control is functional and effective.

Step 4 - Check

The Check phase is where Verification happens against the parameters defined. A good indicator for me is to see where this verification is taking place and chances are good, if something is being checked in an office or on a screen, it's probably not a critical control, as the vast amount of these devices should be in the field. Checking must be done against very specific parameters.

If you have the ability to use smart devices, then the Controls and evidence can be photographed. The Verification step offers a great opportunity to talk to employees who are undertaking the tasks

Figure 1. A few items typically found in a Risk Assessment for Work at Heights, and how these would be classified in a CCM process



where these controls are applicable, to gauge their view on suitability and effectiveness, and seek suggestions on improvement.

I recall a fatal incident in which an operator fell from the top of a chemical tanker which had to be accessed using a mobile and portable ladder, which he had to fetch and push up to the tanker as per the SOP. The top of the ladder had a built-in platform which meant, he technically had a safe place to work from at height. But he didn't use it.

During the investigation, we asked another operator to do the task strictly according to the SOP. We quickly realised that the ladder was bulky, heavy and difficult to move across the plant floor. Added to that, after donning the required PPE, he literally could not climb the ladder. What was sad from this event was finding out that this problem had been in place for a long time.

In hindsight, if a CCM process was in place, there would have been a very good chance, that this task would have been checked and the problem identified.

Step 5 - Act

Action happens in two phase – firstly, on the identification of a missing or compromised control

during the checking. The immediate action needs to be defined according to some level of severity.

Back to the fall from heights example - If the fall arrest system's (Self-Retracting Lifeline) mandatory test (done by competent authority) is a month overdue, is the work stopped and trucks pile up? Yes, is the answer.

The second phase of action relates to the analysis of data from the CCM process. Large amounts of data and evidence will be collected and it's important for this to be analysed and reported on. This is an excellent source of Leading Indicators. If the data shows certain failures recurring, it points to other issues which need to be investigated and resolved.

SUMMARY

When people are first exposed to a CCM process, there is clear strife as it challenges lots of traditional thinking, particularly around the definition of a Control and what's Critical.

If done correctly, with the right facilitator, tools, information and team members, it will enable a very effective process to help with the effective prevention and mitigation of serious incidents.

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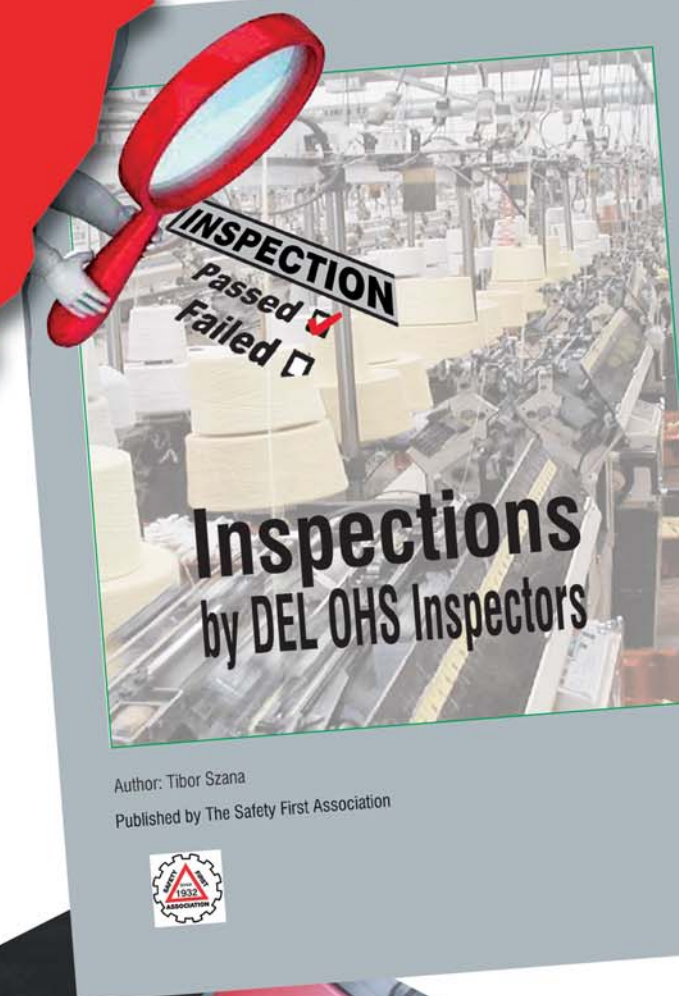
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terraPOD partners with KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union

Durban-based terraPOD has officially entered into a landmark sponsorship agreement with the KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union (KZN RU) to support the growth and development of women's amateur rugby across KZN.

Believed to be a first for the province, the partnership signals a powerful commitment to grassroots women's rugby and to the young athletes whose determination, discipline, and passion are shaping the future of the game.

As a proudly Durban-based, third-generation family-owned business built on resilience and respect for people who do the real work on the ground, Palm Footwear, proud creators of terraPOD safety gear saw in women's rugby something familiar — athletes who show up when conditions are tough, who dig deep when the odds are stacked against them, and who lead not only with strength, but with purpose. It is this admiration and respect that made the partnership a natural fit.

From dusty rural fields to community clubs across KwaZulu-Natal, countless young girls carry extraordinary talent, often with limited access to resources, exposure, and opportunity. Through this sponsorship, terraPOD and the KZN RU aim to help unlock that potential, creating pathways for young women to rise through the ranks of the sport, compete at the highest levels, and one day proudly wear the green and gold on the world stage.

"Some of the greatest champions are not found in stadiums; they are found on fields where few are watching, where commitment is forged in early mornings, through sincere service and unsung contribution. We believe in backing people who keep showing up, who carry themselves with humility, courage and determination.

"Women's rugby in KZN represents all of that and more, and it deserves the same investment and recognition as the broader game," said Rajeev Pattundeen, Chairman, Palm Footwear.

Rugby is a sport that demands endurance, trust, and the willingness to keep moving forward even after the hardest tackles. It asks athletes to play for something bigger than themselves -

to lift one another, stand their ground, and keep heart in the toughest moments.

Those same qualities have shaped generations of leadership within Palm, a 60 year old business, making this collaboration of its brand terraPOD much more than a sponsorship. It's a passionate commitment to building something meaningful from the ground up.

For the KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union, this partnership marks an important milestone in the continued development of the women's game and a significant investment in communities where rugby continues to transform lives.

Women's rugby in South Africa has seen growing momentum at national level, with grassroots support widely recognised as the critical foundation for sustainable growth. This partnership positions KZN at the forefront of that development.

"Today marks more than the announcement of a sponsorship — it marks a shared commitment to the future of women's rugby in KwaZulu-Natal.

"We are honoured to welcome terraPOD to the KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union family.

"As a proudly South African brand celebrating sixty years of excellence, terraPOD brings values of grit, resilience, and community upliftment that mirror the spirit of our women's game.

"This partnership is an investment in talent, opportunity, and the continued growth of rugby across our province. Together, we are building something far greater than a competition—we are shaping a legacy," said Graham MacKenzie, President, KZN Rugby Union.

This partnership celebrates more than sport.

- It celebrates the young girl who dares to dream.
- The athlete who trains long after others have gone home.
- The teammate who lifts others when they fall.
- The woman whose moment to fearlessly shine has arrived.

Together, terraPOD and the KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union are proud to be "Elevating Women's Rugby"



Rajeev Pattundeen . Chairman of Palm Footwear Manufacturers Pty Ltd, Lindelwa Gwala . Springboks women player



Directors, Rajeev and Kiran Pattundeen with some of the Sharks women team and KZN RU women's rugby committee

SAPEMA elevates fall protection through online training

by Nivie Atkinson

SAPEMA recently hosted an online training session on the *ABCs of Fall Protection*, facilitated by Wessel Oosthuizen.

The session provided members with a practical overview of the three essential elements of an effective fall protection system: **A**nchor, **B**ody Support and **C**onnection (**ABC**).

The training highlighted the importance of selecting the correct fall protection equipment for the specific task and work environment.

Participants gained a better understanding of how suitable anchor points: the correct choice of safety harness and the appropriate connecting device all contribute to reducing the risks associated with working at height.

The session concluded with an interactive discussion, allowing members to ask questions and share practical experiences.

SAPEMA extends its appreciation to Wessel Oosthuizen for facilitating the training and to all members who participated.

Through initiatives such as this, SAPEMA continues to support the sharing of technical knowledge, promote industry best practice and contribute to improving workplace safety across southern Africa.



Emergency responders push the limit at Dräger's challenge

The Dräger Fire Combat and Rescue Challenge is an annual high-intensity competition held at Dräger South Africa's head office in Woodmead Johannesburg.

This year's event was held from 24-25 July. The two-day challenge tests emergency services teams from across the region on physical fitness, strength, tactical rescue skills, and performance under pressure using advanced life saving safety gear.

The core focus is to test firefighter stamina through rigorous tactical obstacles, confined-space navigation in zero visibility and fitness challenges.

The event also showcases cutting-edge technology such as self-contained breathing apparatuses.

