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FEATURE ARTICLES

The Barloworld case - a wake-up call for businesses 6
The workplace accident that changed my life 10
Iran's Bandar Abbas Port chemical explosion: *safety concerns* 16
Pain never sleeps 18
The benefits of reusable sanitary pads in the hygiene of women in the workplace 20
Power dynamics within organisational safety culture 28



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Are you a compliance or competent safety practitioner? 22
COCs for electricity, gas, and environmental compliance:
Essential requirements for South African businesses 24



CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

The construction manager competency dilemma in the built environment 26



OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE

President's message: 32
National council feedback 32
From the Professional Certification Committee (PCC) 36



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Mental health: the emerging workplace risk 16



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Noise-Ban to showcase advanced custom-made hearing protection at A-OSH 2025 12



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Editor's Comment

HEARING PROTECTION

Noise induced hearing loss is permanent, but it is also preventable. National Speech-Language-Hearing month celebrated during May is an important reminder to raise awareness about hearing loss prevention and the importance of properly fitted hearing protection, especially in high risk areas. Although preventable, it is all too frequently ignored with workers only using hearing protection when reminded or requested. Their attitude "my hearing is not hurting me, so why bother" may result in an early onset of hearing loss. Protecting a worker's hearing is not about just checking a box - it's about ensuring they can safely continue hearing, and that hearing loss in old age is not caused by hearing damage sustained on the job. In its article H.A.S.S. emphasises that part of the solution is implementing a tailored hearing protection programme in the workplace.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH DAY 2025

In his article, Mziwakhe Nhlapo tackles this important issue that is celebrated annually on May 28, and that continues to plague women at work. He highlights the importance of good menstrual hygiene management while providing a solution.

CHEMICAL STORAGE

Dr Bill Pomfret discusses the safety concerns behind Iran's Bandar Abbas Port chemical explosion that rocked the port of Shahid Rajaee during April. A committee investigating the explosion blamed a failure to observe safety principles. Dr Pomfret agrees. During a site visit several years previously, he had observed the hazardous conditions, noting the perilous storage of chemicals and presence of rusting drums. Pointing out the danger to the officials, he didn't get the response he had hoped for.

MENTAL HEALTH

Ehi Iden in his article bemoans that while emerging workplace risks continue to be important topic of conversations, mental health and wellbeing of workers is seldom given due significance. He highlights some of the reasons behind mental illness which include new job roles, personal problems, workloads and accidents to name a few. He debates that managers and supervisors are not always properly trained to understand and manage people, processes, conflicts and emotions. He concludes that "People Management" should be a mandatory skill for all managers and supervisors.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

To highlight the dangers of relying on a blanket zero-tolerance approach to substances in the workplace, Rhys Evans cites the Enever v Barloworld case. Enever, an employee of Barloworld was dismissed after testing positive for cannabis, although she was never impaired at work, only using it in her private time. The court ruled in her favour, holding Barloworld accountable for relying on an outdated and overly broad drug testing policy that unfairly penalised an employee, costing the company a substantial payout.

INJURED ON-THE-JOB

In this issue, we introduce you to Partington Mtatabikwa who was severely injured on the job and has since become a passionate safety advocate and motivational speaker.



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Iran's Bandar Abbas Port chemical explosion: safety concerns



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

Dr Bill is a passionate advocate for safety training.

Iran's authorities declared three days of mourning after a 'chemical blast' at Bandar Abbas port in southern Iran on Saturday, 26th April 2025. The explosion killed dozens of people and injured thousands. As is often the case, there has been a lot of confusion among the Iranian authorities as to what happened.

The Shahid Rajaee port dock, southwest of Bandar Abbas—a large facility for container shipments—was the location of the explosion.

BLAME GAME

As heavy smoke billowed for days, countless theories about its cause were speculated by social media and mainstream TV. Many authorities on the other hand blamed a failure to observe safety procedures.

Eyewitness accounts and surveillance videos show a small fire beginning among containers, with several workers moving away from the scene before the huge explosion.

According to state-affiliated outlet Mehr News, a committee investigating the explosion released a statement saying that, prior to the blast there had been a "failure to observe safety principles.

"Determining the definitive cause of this incident requires a complete and comprehensive investigation of its various aspects, which, due to expert requirements, requires technical and laboratory processes," the statement continued.

The statement also referred to "discrepancies" in

statements given to the committee, but did not elaborate on what these might be or their source.

CNN reported that hundreds of tons of a critical chemical for fuelling Iran's ballistic missile programme had arrived at the port in February. Another shipment is reported to have arrived in March.

MY PREVIOUS OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After my visit to Iran some years previously, I was shocked at what I observed as regards their chemical storage, including large warehouses filled with a whole mix of chemicals, and many of the drums had started to rust.

I pointed out the danger, but was dismayed at the attitudes of executives. They still had a culture of blaming each group. When I suggested upgrades to their safety management system, they argued that they would consider my recommendations for future upgrades.

After the explosion, Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni announced that authorities "have been made aware of some shortcomings at the port.

"Safety precautions and passive defenses were not implemented or taken seriously at the port," he was cited as saying by semi-official Tasnim news, adding that the fire is under control "but there are certain containers that just need to burn off, but they are controlled and monitored.

"Some people have been summoned as part of the

investigation", he confirmed.

The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency quoted an official as saying the explosion was likely set off by containers of chemicals, but did not identify the chemicals. The agency said that the Customs Administration of Iran blamed a "stockpile of hazardous goods and chemical materials stored in the port area".

Iran's national oil company said the explosion at the port was "not related to refineries, fuel tanks, or oil pipelines in the area".

Iranian officials denied that any military material was held at the port. The spokesman for the national security and foreign policy committee of the Iranian parliament, Ebrahim Rezaei, said in a post on X that according to initial reports the explosion had "nothing to do with Iran's defence sector."

According to state media, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrived in Bandar Abbas soon afterwards to investigate the situation and oversee relief efforts.

"We have to find out why it happened," Pezeshkian said at a meeting with officials aired by Iranian state television. The region's governor, Mohammad Ashouri, declared three days of mourning.

REPORTS OF CHEMICAL FUEL 'FOR MISSILES'

The blast came at a time of high tensions in the Middle East and ongoing talks between Iran and the United States over Tehran's nuclear



Charred merchandise and containers lie at the site of the deadly port explosion

programme. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that no senior figure in Iran suggested the blast was an attack.

Videos and images from the scene, some of which have been geolocated, show orange-brown smoke rising from part of the port where containers were stacked. Such a colour would suggest a chemical such as sodium or ammonia was involved.

A private maritime risk consultancy, believing that the intense fires seen spreading between containers before the explosion were a result of "improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for use in Iranian ballistic missiles".

The firm said it believed the affected containers had contained solid fuel destined for ballistic missiles and was aware that an Iran-flagged ship "discharged a shipment of sodium perchlorate rocket fuel at the port in March 2025."

The New York Times reported that a person speaking on condition of anonymity with ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had said that what exploded was sodium perchlorate, a major ingredient in solid fuel for missiles.

CNN in its report was not able to confirm what was being stored in the area at the time of the explosion but did state that it is unclear why such chemicals would be kept at the port for so long.

Other experts suggested more mundane chemicals might explain the huge blast.

MY CONCLUSION

I believe that this bears the hallmarks of an ammonium nitrate explosion. Ammonium nitrate is a commodity chemical that is widely used as a fertiliser and as an industrial explosive, but it is well known that poor storage can significantly raise the risk of an explosion in the event of a fire.

Material ignites and burns fiercely less than a minute later followed seconds later by the devastating detonation. It is the supersonic pressure wave from that that would have shattered windows.

After reviewing videos from the scene, I believe reports of sodium perchlorate could provide an explanation for how the explosion started, as perchlorates are used in materials like rocket propellant and fireworks.

Remember, it is difficult for ammonium nitrate to detonate on its own without other chemicals having been part of a chain reaction.

Many in Iran blamed the authorities for incompetence and worse asking: "How could so much inflammable material apparently be left on the port without due care and attention, or in compliance with any international standard.

That is a question that the Iranian regime will need to address.



The Barloworld case - a wake-up call for businesses



Rhys Evans, Managing Director of ALCO-Safe

South Africa's drug laws are changing, and with the recent Cannabis for Private Purposes Act, businesses need to make sure their drug testing policies are fit for purpose—both legally and for workplace safety. Ignoring these changes can expose companies to significant legal risks and undermine employee relations, as highlighted by Enever v Barloworld Equipment South Africa.

Bernadette Enever's dismissal for private cannabis use, subsequently ruled unfair by the Labour Appeal Court, serves as a warning for employers to urgently revisit and adapt their substance policies to reflect the current legal realities with an emphasis on demonstrable on-duty impairment.

This isn't just about ticking a legal box; it's about ensuring policies are relevant, defensible, and respectful of employee rights in this new era.

THE BARLOWORLD CASE

The landmark case of Enever v Barloworld Equipment South Africa illustrates the dangers of relying on a blanket zero-tolerance approach to substances in the workplace.

Bernadette Enever, an employee of Barloworld, faced dismissal after testing positive for cannabis, which she openly admitted to using in her private time. Despite a long and unblemished 15-year work record and the concession that she was never impaired at work nor held a safety-critical position, Barloworld's zero-tolerance policy led to her termination.

However, the Labour Appeal Court (LAC) delivered a decisive ruling in Enever's favour, deeming her dismissal automatically unfair. The court's judgement brought attention to a critical principle—a positive cannabis test alone, particularly when the employee admits to private use and shows no signs of on-duty impairment, is insufficient grounds for disciplinary action. The LAC

emphasised the need for concrete evidence demonstrating actual impairment on duty to justify such measures.

The court went on to point out that because cannabis metabolites can remain detectable in the body long after the psychoactive effects have worn off, traditional urine tests are unreliable indicators of current impairment.

Based on its finding, the LAC ordered Barloworld Equipment South Africa to compensate Ms. Enever with 24 months' remuneration, which amounted to a substantial payout, reported to be over R1 million.

In short, the court's order held Barloworld accountable for relying on an outdated and overly broad drug testing policy that unfairly penalised an employee for legal, private cannabis use without any evidence of on-duty impairment.

TIME TO UPDATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

As a result of this case, there is now an urgent need for companies across South Africa to revisit their workplace drug testing policies.

Relying on outdated protocols not only exposes businesses to potential legal challenges and costly compensation payouts, as experienced by Barloworld, but also infringes upon employees' rights to privacy and dignity.

A policy that punishes employees for legal, private conduct unrelated to their work performance is not only unfair but also potentially discriminatory.

This decision makes it clear that a strict zero-tolerance approach is no longer legally acceptable because it fails to differentiate between private, responsible use and workplace impairment.

Furthermore, given that the court pointed out that traditional urine testing is insufficient to prove impairment, it is necessary for organisations to rethink their testing procedures at the same time as

their policies. Here, investing in advanced drug testing technologies is a necessity for businesses committed to maintaining a safe and legally compliant work environment.

Modern testing equipment has made significant strides, and mobile testing systems enable accurate, on-site assessments of current impairment with sophisticated technology that can detect a broad spectrum of substances in oral fluid. These instruments can provide results that correlate more closely with recent use and actual impairment, typically within a 2-6-hour window for cannabis. This allows employers to differentiate between recent consumption that could impact workplace safety, and residual traces from off-duty use.

BALANCING WORKPLACE SAFETY WITH EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

By investing in advanced testing technology and proactively updating their drug policies, businesses can take a smarter, legally sound route.

This forward-thinking approach brings key advantages:

- **reduced legal trouble** by aligning drug policies with the Enever ruling and fairness/privacy laws;
- **increased safety at work** by concentrating on tests that show actual impairment rather than only showing past use;
- **more productive teams** through fair and clear policies coupled with respectful testing, which reduces employee worry and resentment.

However, quietly updating workplace policies and purchasing new equipment is not enough. Education and awareness play a vital role in ensuring employees understand updated drug policies.

Clear communication from employers on the rationale behind the policy, the testing methods that will be employed, and the consequences of on-duty impairment is critical. In order to gain acceptance and compliance from the workforce, it is important to address misconceptions and provide accurate information.

Employees need to understand that whilst private cannabis use is decriminalised, being impaired at work remains unacceptable and can lead to disciplinary action.

It is also advisable to provide clarity on the detection windows of different testing methods to help employees understand the implications of their off-duty conduct.

MOVING BEYOND ZERO TOLERANCE TO MODERNISE DRUG TESTING

The Enever v Barloworld Equipment South Africa ruling serves as an important turning point in how South African employers address workplace drug testing.

It is clear that outdated, zero-tolerance policies are no longer adequate. For businesses to operate effectively and ethically, a proactive stance must be taken. This means updating policies, considering advanced impairment testing technologies and prioritising employee understanding and buy-in.

By embracing this approach, companies will not only protect themselves legally and ensure a safer workplace but also build a more equitable and respectful culture that benefits everyone and contributes to a more productive and harmonious work environment.

It's high time for every organisation to reflect on its current drug testing policy and consider the necessary changes.

ARE YOU MEETING ALL OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES?



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The workplace accident that changed my life

The 4th of June is not just another day on the calendar for me. It marks the moment my life took a sharp and unexpected turn when I lost an arm and a leg ... not in a warzone, not in a far-off place, but at my place of work.

I showed up that day like every other day, expecting to finish my shift and go home, never imagining that the accident that day would cost me so much - physically, emotionally and mentally.

Here I stand-not broken but rebuilt as an ambassador of safety: To remind every employer: Safety isn't a checkbox. It's a lifeline. To remind every worker: You matter. Speak up. Stay aware. To remind every survivor: You are more than your scars. You are strength in motion.

Over fifteen years later, I still feel the weight of that day, but I carry it with courage and conviction. In this article I will share my journey in the hope that everyone will avoid what I went through. Don't let silence cost another limb or a life.

I was trained as an engineer and working at a mine in the Northern Cape, South Africa in a role I was passionate about. But, thirty minutes into my shift there was an explosion. I sustained third degree burns to over 60% of my body and spent the following 12 months in hospital recovering from my injuries. When I was finally discharged, my right arm had been amputated below the elbow and my left leg had been amputated above the knee due to a serious infection. The year I spent in hospital was like a "long night that never sees the day", to paraphrase William Shakespeare.

When I was discharged, I had two options, either give up or restart my life. I chose to restart my life.

During my 12 months of pain and suffering in the hospital, there was one incident that acted as my beacon of hope. A fellow patient who was quadriplegic after being shot in the spine, sat in his wheelchair and cracked jokes. Despite his condition—which was far worse than mine—he filled the room with laughter. He couldn't do much for himself. He needed assistance to eat, to go to the bathroom and to move around. Yet he was happy. This man who had lost all independence planted a seed of hope in me. I stopped complaining and developed an attitude of gratitude. I decided "If he can be happy, why shouldn't I be happy?"

After my discharge I struggled to walk and perform some tasks. I went through a gruelling rehabilitation. I learned the importance of exercise and practice, and slowly I made progress. In time I became better at everything. I learned that in life, everything is achievable if we are persistent and patient.

One day as I sat in my church after a rigorous walk to get there, I reflected on my past experiences and the circumstances surrounding my accident. I realised I had to take some accountability for what had happened and searched for ways to turn my negative situation into a positive. I heard my inner voice saying "Partington, this is not about you, it's about others. You can make the best out of this". From that day on I decided my purpose was to go around the world spreading the safety gospel, encouraging workers to take personal ownership of their safety.



Partington Oswald
Mtatabikwa

I had already gained a range of useful insights from working as a mechanical engineering technician in a range of sectors including manufacturing, power-generation and mining. I had a good knowledge of technical and process principles, and I understood the impact that attitudes and culture can have in the workplace.

Many people go through life thinking "It will never happen to me". My accident is testimony that it can! By helping to remove this complacent attitude, I can help ensure individuals work more safely.

After that, I started delivering motivational safety talks. I now spread awareness. I share my experiences and encourage other workers to learn from the mistakes I made. Wherever I go, I am humbled to see people's mindsets shift as they begin to take personal ownership of their safety.

Safety is a personal investment. By looking after your safety, you will be able to continue doing those things you enjoy. By speaking with passion and inspiration, I have changed hearts and minds and am proud to say that I have made a difference in the safety environment.¤

Part 2: July/August African OS&H "My views on OSH"



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Ms Bulelwa Huna
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Presentation title: *A new
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Presentation title: *SAPEMA:
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David Selepe
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Presentation title: *Misuse of
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Mental health: the emerging workplace risk



Ehi Iden
an Occupational Health
and Safety Management
Consultant in Africa,
President of OSHAfrica

There have been growing conversations on emerging workplace risks, listing many indicators which I am sure we all agree with. But, the most significant element often omitted in these conversations is the negative impact in workplaces as regards the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND NEW JOB ROLES

We need to clearly re-think workplace management systems and the models we use when promoting and assigning workers to new roles.

Some employees may be hurting. Some may have been involved in an accident, while some may even have witnessed the death of a colleague while on the job.

For these reasons, several employees are fast resigning not because of their workload but because of the behaviours of the people they work under.

Many managers and supervisors are being promoted beyond their capacity to manage people, processes, conflicts, emotions and other such situations within the workplace. Many of these managers may initially have been employed because of the technical competencies they possess such as technical service managers, chief engineers, facility managers etc. They may then have grown through the ranks over the years to become managers with numerous employees under their supervision. This is often where the problem begins.

Whereas they have managed tools and equipment without any issues, they now have to manage people. Have organisations prepared them for such roles? Have organisations offered training to these employees at the point of their promotion? These considerations are especially critical for those moving from managing the technical side of the business to managing people.

DISCOVERING ROOT CAUSES

Workplace toxicity is easily discussed but we hardly investigate their root causes.



OSHAfrica

The lack of support, assertive behaviours, excessive control, dictatorial tendencies, bullying and workplace harassment have become all too common in workplaces.

In some cases, those who should uphold decent workplace standards are the perpetrators that prey on the emotions of employees. There is no doubt that will lead to a deterioration in the mental health among workers.

The need to re-think these processes is crucial because fear and intimidation are beginning to appear to be acceptable workplace governance culture. This urgently needs to stop.

Another important issue to keep in mind is that the employee whose mental health and wellbeing we are suffering today, may be a leader in tomorrow's workplaces. And by failing to correct the existing negative behaviours today, the person who is mentally harmed may look to prey on someone in the future.

EMPLOYEE VOICES

We need to keep on speaking up about this. We need to make our voices heard. We need to see how we can elevate the voices of employees so that they speak out when they find themselves in such situations. Employees need to feel confident that they can report workplace hostility and emotional maltreatment without negative consequences.

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Management systems need to design or assign training for each person when they are promoted to assume new offices, mostly on "People Management". These must be mandatory skills for managers and supervisors.

Employees harmed in workplaces are people's children, fathers, mothers, husbands and wives. Every negative impact from the work environment affects their loved ones as well.



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"Modern luxury is to think clearly, sleep deeply, move slowly and live quietly in a world designed to prevent all four". Just Welsh

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Sleep is a basic need, it is as important to our health and well-being as air, food and water. When we sleep well, we wake up feeling refreshed, alert and ready for our daily activities. When we don't, every part of our lives can suffer, including our jobs, relationships, productivity, health and safety (and that of those around us). Occasional sleep issues can also negatively impact our daily lives, causing stress and decreasing productivity.

Good sleeping habits with between seven and nine hours of sleep a night is recommended.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING SLEEP

Sleep is cardinal to the body's homeostasis, important for the regulation of a range of systems, such as the cardiovascular system, endocrine system, metabolism, body temperature, cell expression, and the immune system. While asleep, the brain eliminates waste products and enables muscles, bones, joints and organs to repair.

Poor sleep is associated with illnesses such as dementia, alzheimers, diabetes, cancer and rheumatic conditions.

Lack of sleep and stress are closely related in patients with chronic pain. It has been found that approximately one in every two patients with chronic pain suffer severe sleep disturbances, most often insomnia. However, following a better night of sleep, those patients with chronic pain will spontaneously engage in more physical activity. Insomnia is associated with an accelerated aging of the immune system.

There is a close link between sleep and inflammation hence the occurrence of many inflammatory conditions associated with lack of sleep. A good night of sleep will have positive anti-inflammatory effects, while a lack of sleep or interrupted sleep triggers an inflammatory response.



<https://www.corporatewellness-centre.com>

Regular physical activity with an exercise routine will not only offer anti-inflammatory benefits but will also improve sleep quality.

To help alleviate sleep disorders, you should also consider stress management or relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness-based meditation, breathing exercises, or Jacobson's muscle relaxation—a method of inducing relaxation by systematically tensing and then relaxing specific muscle groups.

PROMOTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

The following is recommended in order to have a good night's sleep:

- Reduce caffeine in the afternoons and evenings.
- Reduce alcohol consumption.
- Establish a bed time routine.
- Keep your bedroom as a sleep sanctuary only for sleep. Your window coverings should be darkened and kept cool.
- Leave the bedroom temporarily if you are unable to sleep.
- Your cat naps should be no more than twenty minutes and should not be after 5pm
- Try and follow a sleep schedule—go to sleep and wake up at the same time
- Avoid going to bed unless you feel sleepy.
- Avoid screen use e.g. computer cell phone and TV for at least two hours before going to sleep. Your cell phone should be placed in another room.

TIPS TO HELP RELAXATION

- Deep breathing, yoga etc and a regular exercise routine help relaxation.
- Exercise regularly preferably early mornings.
- Avoid exercising late in the day as it can disrupt sleep.
- Deep breathing yoga and tai chi gong will help you stay relaxed.
- Time your meals meticulously—eat your breakfast on waking.

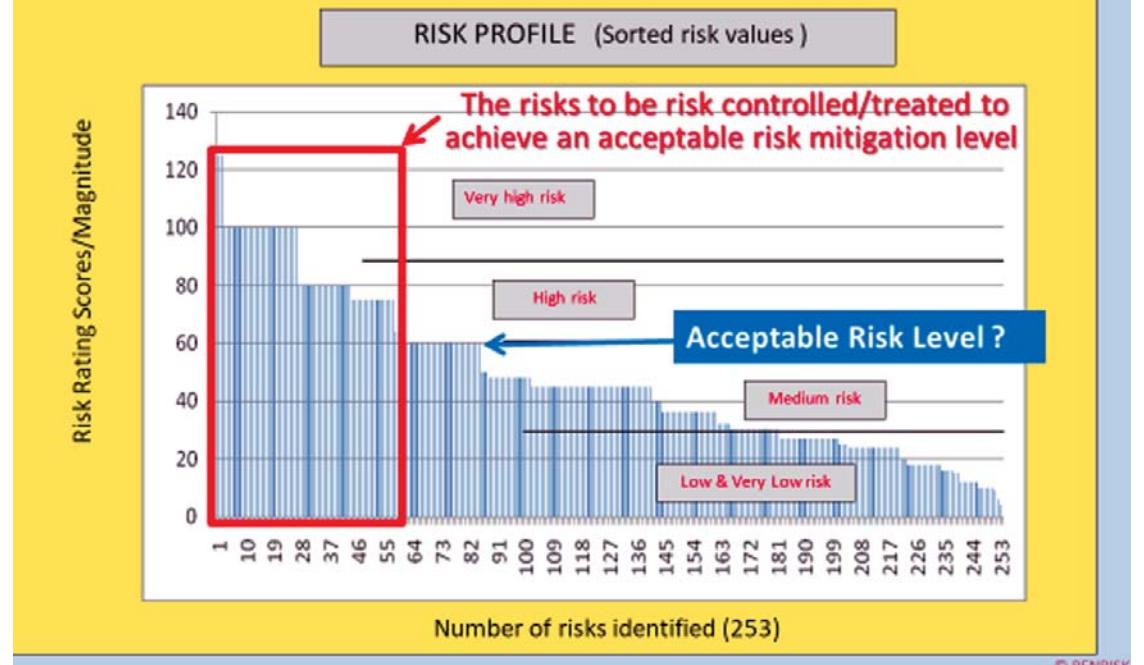
CONCLUSION

Sleep is important for maintaining mental wellbeing and good decision making, enabling us to better manage pain and stress.

Regular routine, exercise and regular sleep habits will help keep you healthy so that you can enjoy a successful life.

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Our Pr.CHSA has consulted in Occupational Health & Safety Management field for some 40 years and 24 years from Benrisk Consulting.

Our Pr.CHSA is usually involved from project inception, through design stage to performing the project Baseline Risk Assessment (Construction Regulation 5(1.a) , its Risk Profile & develop the Client's site-specific Health & Safety Specification (Construction Regulation 5(1.b) for the project, assess and approve the compliance of the Contractors' Health & Safety Plans & Files, monitor the construction work & perform the Monthly Contractor Compliance Audits for the Client.

Benrisk Consulting is based in Johannesburg, but the Pr.CHSA work has been performed in various of the Provinces of South Africa (Western Cape, Gauteng, KZN, OFS, Limpopo & Mpumalanga).

Our Pr.CHSA is not only SACPCMP professionally registered but is also professionally registered with SAIOSH, Institute of Risk Management SA (IRMSA), & the Institute for Work at Heights (IWH), while being BSC degreed and worked as an Engineering Geologist in the past.



Mobile +27 (0)83 325 4182 or Email benrisk@mweb.co.za

Reusable sanitary pads in the workplace and communities: benefits and hygiene



Mziwakhe Nhlupo is an accomplished SHEQ specialist with over 23 years of experience in occupational health, safety, environmental, quality management and compensation over all industries. He is adept at leading national forums, advising government departments and representing stakeholders at global platforms on SHEQ.



Menstrual hygiene is a fundamental aspect of women's health, dignity, and well-being. Across workplaces, schools, and communities, access to proper sanitary products is essential for enabling full participation in daily life.

In poverty-stricken areas, lack of access to affordable menstrual hygiene products such as sanitary pads often leads to missed opportunities, health risks, and reduced quality of life. When disposable pads are unaffordable and unavailable, women are often forced to use unhygienic alternatives like rags or leaves.

Many women in labour-intensive jobs (e.g. mining, agriculture, factories) lack access to clean toilets and sanitary products. Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to infections, discomfort, and decreased productivity.

WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Women working in physically demanding environments, such as the mining sector, face unique challenges during their menstrual periods. They often work long shifts without proper sanitation facilities.

Without access to reliable menstrual hygiene products, they may experience discomfort, reduced productivity, and even absenteeism.

Providing sanitary pads—especially reusable options—ensures that female employees can manage their menstruation hygienically and with dignity.

Benefits of reusable sanitary pads in the workplace include:

Cost-effective – Lasts up to 2-3 years, reducing monthly expenses.

Eco-friendly – Reduces waste compared to disposable pads.

Comfortable and absorbent – Designed for active movement, ideal for physically demanding jobs.

Environmentally friendly – Reduction in plastic and chemical pollution on land and in our oceans

SCHOOLGIRL CHILD IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

For schoolgirls, menstruation without access to hygiene products often leads to absenteeism and poor academic performance:

Missing school – Many girls miss school during their periods due to lack of sanitary pads. In many parts of southern Africa, girls miss an average of seven school days per month due to inadequate



menstrual support, which can equate to three months of lost learning annually.

Stigma and shame – This can lead to dropouts or poor academic performance.

Unhygienic alternatives (rags, newspapers) cause infections.

Benefits of reusable sanitary pads for school girls include:

Long-term affordability – Families save money instead of buying disposables monthly.

Dignity and confidence – Girls attend school without fear of leaks or odour.

Sustainable – Reduces environmental waste in schools.

WOMEN IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

In poverty-stricken communities, many women resort to unsafe alternatives such as old cloths or even newspaper, risking infection and discomfort.

Reliable access to menstrual hygiene products empowers women to participate fully in community life, seek employment, and maintain personal health.

Benefits of reusable sanitary pads for women in disadvantaged communities:

Reusable and low-cost – A menstrual solution that can last up to three years.

Hygienic and safe – A better option when cleaned properly.

Eco friendly – Reduced environmental impact compared to single-use disposable products.

CONCLUSION

In collaboration with Body Strength, we at MMAT SHEC offer reusable sanitary pads in a bucket at a cost. The bucket has six reusable sanitary pads, that last a period of three years.

We also educate underprivileged, marginalised menstruating girls and women about menstrual health and hygiene to ensure their wellbeing, restoring dignity and reducing the risk of ailments due to unsanitary menstrual practices.

Contact email: mziwakhe@mmatenterprise.co.za / Nhlupo.mziwakhe@gmail.com



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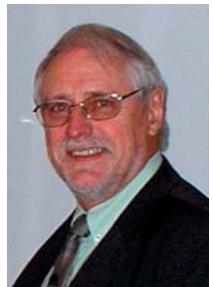
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Are you a compliance or competent safety practitioner?



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

As a Pr.CHSA and a SHE & Risk Management Consultant I interface with safety practitioners in all sectors of industries and businesses. Their compliance or competency regularly crosses my mind.

I encounter the compliance safety officer (practitioner) often playing the gatekeeper role. They have the attitude that you don't get onto my site or into my mine unless you pass all my checks and balances. Simply put, this means the risk assessments and safe working practice etc, documents must be done their way (*P.S. this is often required, so the gatekeeper can understand it because he/she doesn't know/understand any other method/s*), while the SANS/ISO 310010:2010 Risk Assessment Techniques Standard describes some 32 risk assessment technique methods. Is a previously accredited 2-week training course on OHS really adequate to develop a person into a safety officer?

I had the experience of a compliance safety officer refusing a contractor site access as the risk assessment was not in their format, even though their format was not prescribed in the their construction work H&S Specification. However, the risk assessment provided was in a format which was then public domain published in 2006, and now also as a 2022 2nd edition, which meet both the ISO adopted SANS 31000:2018 and SANS 31010:2010 Risk Management and Risk Assessment standards requirements.

Well, I was called out to the site to explain and demonstrate that the contractor's provided risk assessment was both superior in format and content in comparison to the contractor's client's risk assessment format, before their site access was permitted.

What is interesting, is that the SANS 31000:2018 Risk Management

Process, shown in figure 1 is not included in the published SANS/ISO 45001 Health & Safety Management standard nor in the ISO/SANS 140001 Environmental & ISO/SANS 9000 Quality Management Standards.

So the question is, if one is not using the Risk Management Process, how are most H&S practitioners performing their risk assessments and then mitigating their identified risks?

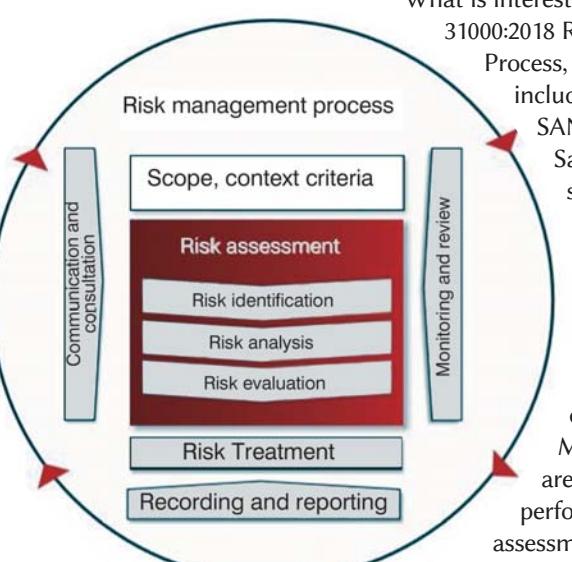


Figure 1

The competent safety practitioner is the one I find who has an attitude and appetite for constant knowledge and skills upgrading to ensure effective functioning in the wide ranging field of occupational safety and health. The competent safety practitioner knows and has the ability to perform as the advisor to the site's management on OHS issues and trends impacting the safety management programme and its effectiveness. They are willing to have their knowledge and skills assessed to monitor their competence and professionalism, understanding that it is the saving of lives that is at stake in the work they do.

This competency assessment is what the SACPCMP is designated to perform to achieve a level of registration competency, in terms of the 2014 Construction Regulations requirements.

The Institute of Risk Management SA (IRMSA) also has professional registration assessments.

Consider yourself in terms of this statement:

**"Safety is not an intellectual exercise to keep us (safety practitioners) in work.
It is a matter of life & death.
It is the sum of our contribution to Safety Management that determines whether the people we work with live or die."**
Brian Appleton, Technical Assistant to the public inquiry on the Piper Alpha disaster, 1988.

To extend this thinking further, INSHPO (International Network of Safety & Health Professional Organisations) has introduced the term "Capability" to add to their "Competence" term in their 2017 Occupational Health & Safety Professional Capability Framework document. (www.inshpo.org) (Note: South Africa is not an INSHPO member)

"Competence" has been defined as the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skills to new situations and environments, consistently applying knowledge and skills to a standard of performance required in the workplace.

In comparison, "capability" is:

The applied theoretical knowledge that underpins practice in occupations and professions and also the industry-specific knowledge and skills that transcend particular workplaces and the tacit knowledge of the workplace.

"Capability" is about confidence and adaptability as well as the development and effective use of knowledge and skills in complex and changing circumstances, including those that may not have been previously experienced.

Something for us, OHS practitioners to think about and achieve?

RISK ASSESSMENTS:

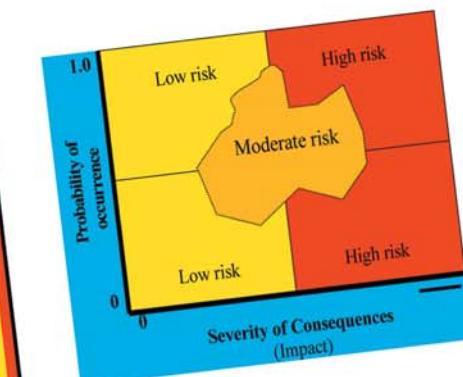
A Guide to Understanding the Basics

Risk Assessments are a "Do" requirement within the SANS/ISO 9001 Quality, 14000 Environmental & 45001 Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Management Systems standards and in the Risk Management System standard (SANS/ISO 31000).

The aim of this booklet is to facilitate the development of an understanding of the Risk Assessment basics and the Risk Assessment Process, with the outcome of enabling a novice or a professional, to perform a basic to baseline risk assessment with confidence.



Risk Assessments:
Guide to Understanding the Basics



Second Edition

Author:
Leighton Bennett



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COCs for electricity, gas, and environmental compliance: Essential requirements for South African businesses



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

Operating a business in South Africa means ensuring your premises comply with mandatory safety and environmental standards.

Without valid Certificates of Compliance (COCs) for electricity, gas, and environmental systems, your business faces significant legal and operational risks.

This guide explains what COCs are, their legal requirements, who will request them, and why compliance is essential for business operations.

WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE (COC)?

A COC is a mandatory legal document confirming that specific installations or systems meet South African safety and environmental standards.

These certificates are issued by registered professionals and serve as proof of regulatory compliance.

THREE CRITICAL COCS

Electrical COC – Confirms electrical installations meet safety specifications and regulatory standards.

Gas COC – Verifies gas appliances and piping systems comply with pressure and safety regulations.

Environmental Compliance Certificate – Demonstrates compliance with environmental laws covering waste management, water systems, air quality, and hazardous materials handling.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Mandatory compliance

COCs are legally required under South African law. Operating without valid certificates constitutes a breach of regulatory requirements and exposes businesses to enforcement action.

Risk mitigation

These certificates demonstrate due diligence in safety and environmental management. They provide essential protection during regulatory inspections, insurance claims, and legal proceedings.

Safety file requirements

Businesses maintaining safety files must include current COCs. This applies across industries including mining, manufacturing, logistics, and hospitality sectors.

Enforcement consequences

Non-compliance can result in fines, operational shutdowns, insurance claim denials, civil liability, and potential criminal charges.

REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND INSPECTIONS

Multiple authorities may request COC

documentation. These include:

- Department of Employment and Labour inspectors
- Environmental management officers
- Insurance assessors and adjusters
- Health and safety auditors
- Clients and contracting parties
- Financial institutions and investors
- Municipal authorities

Failure to produce valid COCs during inspections constitutes non-compliance and creates liability exposure.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Electrical Installation Regulations (Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993)

Regulation 2(1): Prohibits the use of electrical installations without valid COCs.

Regulation 7: Requires COCs to be issued exclusively by registered electricians and maintained in business records.

Pressure Equipment Regulations (PER) – Gas Installations

Regulation 17: Mandates that registered gas practitioners perform all gas installation work and issue COCs following installation or major maintenance.

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA)

Requires businesses to prevent pollution, manage waste appropriately, and minimise environmental impact.

Specific activities, including emissions, effluent discharge, and hazardous materials storage, require Environmental Authorisations and compliance certificates.

Environmental inspections may be conducted without prior notice.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Environmental compliance extends beyond traditional "green" initiatives to encompass legal obligations.

Facilities must demonstrate compliance in:

- Waste management and storage (hazardous and general waste streams)
- Water management and sewage systems
- Emissions control (dust, gas, and fume management)
- Building ventilation, lighting, and HVAC compliance

- Energy efficiency and environmental impact reduction.

Facilities operating diesel generators, storing chemicals, or producing emissions require comprehensive documentation demonstrating regulatory compliance.

COC RENEWAL AND UPDATE REQUIREMENTS

COCs must be renewed or updated in the following circumstances:

- Following repairs, upgrades, or modifications to installations
- Upon change of property ownership

- When requested by insurers or clients
- For gas installations, annual renewal is typically required by insurers and safety auditors.

CONCLUSION

COCs represent fundamental business requirements for legal operation, safety management, and insurance coverage.

Businesses must maintain current certificates, ensure proper filing in safety documentation, and avoid falsification of compliance records.

Proper COC management protects against regulatory enforcement, supports insurance claims, and demonstrates professional business operations.

A PRACTITIONER'S JOURNEY

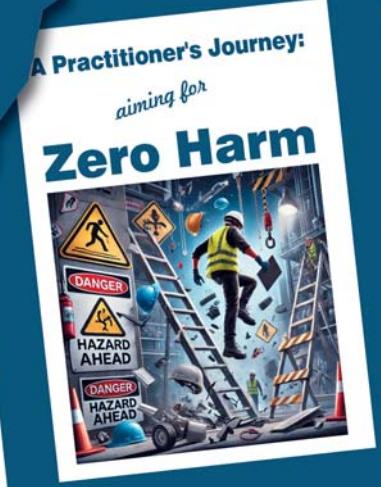
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The construction manager competency dilemma in the built environment



Yaseen Francis,
Director ACHASM



Simamnkele Ngxesha

THE DILEMMA

Creating a team of competent personnel is the bedrock for undertaking any successful project. In South Africa, there currently is ambiguity regarding a construction manager's competency—one of the most critical team members.

The selection of the construction manager is based on experience of the proposed scope of work, understanding the project risk profile, sufficient technical expertise, an ability to interpret and apply technical drawings, and thorough knowledge of understanding of construction contracts—such as FIDIC, NEC, and JBCC. These factors directly impact risk, quality, cost, safety, and scheduling. Hence, there is a need for structured functionality and utility for the project, and clear guidance regarding competent requirements from external industry stakeholders.

Project stakeholders fail to outline and define competency and functionality requirements upfront in the tender documentation and health and safety specifications. This oversight can result in contractual and performance disputes, ultimately impacting all project parameters, including safety, cost, time, and quality.

This article guides clients, contractors, and construction and project management professionals with a guideline for determining competency.

DEFINING COMPETENCE & FUNCTIONALITY

The Construction Regulations 2014 have defined competency as: "Competent person" means a person:

- a) *has in respect of the work or task to be performed the required knowledge, training, and experience, and where applicable, qualification specific to that work or task; and*
- b) *is familiar with the Act and the applicable regulations made under the Act*. To achieve this, see Figure 1 for what is required to be demonstrated.

RECOGNISING EXPERIENCE-BASED COMPETENCY

Many construction managers attained their skills, knowledge, and training through on-the-job training and have successfully and pragmatically completed multiple projects for many years. However, they do not possess the required tertiary qualifications to fully meet the definition of competency as outlined in Construction Regulation 1 under definitions.

To bridge this gap, the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP), a regulatory body under

the Act 48 of 2000, Recognition of Prior Learning Route (RPL), acknowledges individuals who have attained the necessary on-the-job experience and provides a registration pathway to meet this definition.

PROPOSED SOLUTION FOR NEW ENTRANTS

While experience is a significant factor in determining competency, new entrants must meet the tertiary educational requirements outlined by the SACPCMP registration criteria.

Construction managers should consider a career path in construction or project management toward professional registration, as this registration will address the current educational needs in the industry.

The SACPCMP criteria for the Professional Construction Manager (Pr.CM) outlines a list of accredited institutions and the accepted qualifications, such as Bachelor of Science: Construction Studies, Bachelor of Science (Hons) Construction Management, and Master of Science: Project Management in Construction, as well as the required experience in the scope of services to support registration.

DUE DILIGENCE IN TENDER INCLUSION

To ensure ambiguity surrounding the construction management competency is addressed while simultaneously managing legal and regulatory risk, clients must ensure that the construction manager competency requirements are clearly outlined in tender and contractual documentation, such as the health and safety specifications, which should depict the level of experience required in projects of a similar nature, prerequisite qualifications, professional registration requirements, and additional or targeted training.

This upfront inclusion allows the tendering contractor to plan and deploy resources aligned with the clients' requirements, which correlates with the project risk profiles and is not solely reliant on blanket competency requirements.

The client and the appointed professional must assess and adjudicate the construction manager's competencies based on the functionality requirements outlined in the tender documents relative to the risk profile and project scope, as this exercise demonstrates due diligence in the selection of the construction manager and aids in a proactive risk management approach.

CONCLUSION

The built environment industry, particularly the construction project, construction project

management, and health and safety sector, needs a paradigm shift toward an all-inclusive competency-based approach, supported by the professionalisation of key roles such as the construction manager. This role is important yet underrated in the planning, execution, and overall management of construction activities and health and safety, which can be addressed through functionality and competency models based on the project risk profile and overall complexity.

Disclaimer: The article has been written merely as a guideline to address current dilemmas and ambiguity surrounding the construction manager role, opinion pieces based on experience covering the construction manager's role, and opinions based on experience.

SOURCES

- sacpcmp.org.za
- www.labour.gov.za

Figure 1: Competency Table

Component	Explanation	Evidence	Limitations
Knowledge	Theoretical understanding and application of construction management and engineering principles or frameworks, standards and best practices of a particular task or activity. Familiar of SANS 10400 (National Building Regulations)	Demonstrated through continuous professional development training and project CV.	
Training	Formal and informal training is supported by practical and theoretical understanding such as strength of materials applied forces, structures, material quality and programming.	Training in addition to tertiary qualifications, such as an accredited course on construction planning and scheduling (Microsoft Projects or Candy) or construction contract law.	
Experience	Practical experience and successful completion and track record having managed projects as a construction manager.	Demonstrated projects CV which depict the role as a construction manager for the same or similar scope of the proposed work, project description outlining the scope of work, project value, duration of the project, % of involvement and client references of which allows for verification.	
Qualifications		Tertiary qualification in the Built Environment in relation to the scope of work. A minimum of a Diploma in Construction Management, Civil, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering SAQA level 6 or higher such as a BSc in Construction Management, Civil, Mechanical or Electrical Engineering SAQA level 7.	The required qualification must be suited to the scope of work, for example, a construction manager with a civil qualification does not necessarily imply that he/she is competency to manage an electrical power generation project i.e. A powerline and substation construction.
Familiarity with the legislation	An in-depth understanding of the OHS Act of 1993 and the Construction Regulations 2014 as well as the intuition and ability to apply the regulations relative to a scope of work. He/she also needs to understand the responsibility and liability associated with an applicable regulation and being appointed as an 8.1.	Accredited Legal liability training and training on OHS Act of 1993 and Construction regulations to demonstrate proficiency.	



Power dynamics within organisational safety culture



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

Safety culture refers to the shared attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions towards safety held by organisational groups, with it being assumed that safety culture is both a product and also a key driver of risk-related practices.

The initial concept came to prominence in the aftermath of the Chernobyl and Challenger accidents, and is utilised to characterise the measurement of psychological and behavioural characteristics (contributory factors, effectiveness of implementation of risk control measures) of organisations that can lead to, or prevent accidents.

At such juncture, safety culture measurement, often conducted through employee surveys, is an integral part of organisational risk management in many industries and is correlated to changes in organisational policy, decision-making and practice.

Perceptions of safety culture are measured because they are assumed to reflect organisational processes and policies on safety, and to predict safety-related behaviours. Examples include, adhering to safety rules, raising safety concerns to management, and reporting safety incidents.

Yet, the extent to which perceptions of safety culture are predictive of accidents is unclear, with some studies indicating safety culture perceptions predict workplace injuries.

Other research shows employee survey responses taken prior to organisational accidents do not always align with factors attributed with causing the accident (e.g. pressure from superiors to not report safety non-compliances, deviations or issues).

Nonetheless, it is generally assumed that where beliefs and activities in relation to safety are shared and positive, safety culture are considered 'strong', a reduced likelihood of safety mishaps is indicated. Conversely, fragmented and negative perceptions indicate a 'weak' safety culture, and increased susceptibility to accidents.

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework for cross-cultural psychology, developed to show the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members, and how these values relate to behaviour, using a structure derived from factor analysis.

Hofstede developed his original model as a result of using factor analysis to examine the results of a worldwide survey of employee values by IBM between 1967 and 1973. It has since been refined.

The original theory proposed four dimensions along which cultural values could be analysed: individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance; power distance (strength of social hierarchy) and masculinity-femininity (task-orientation versus person-orientation).

Hofstede based his research on national cultural preferences rather than individual cultural preferences. He included six key aspects of national culture country comparison scales, including: the power distance index (PDI), individualism vs. collectivism (IDV), masculinity versus femininity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), long term orientation versus short term normative orientation (LTO), and indulgence versus restraint (IVR). PDI describes the degree to which authority is accepted and followed.

IDV measures the extent to which people look out for each other as a team, or look out for themselves as an individual. MAS represents specific values that a society values. UAI describes the extent to which nations avoid the unknown. LTO expresses how societies either prioritise traditions or seek for the modern in their dealings with the present and the future. IVR index is a comparison between a country's willingness to wait for long-term benefits by holding off on instant gratification, or preferences to no restraints on enjoying life at the present.

Recent safety research indicates that perceptions of safety culture also reflect the structural and contextual features of an organisation, and not just institutional activities and policies on safety. More specifically, employee perceptions of safety culture are shaped by employee position within an organisation hierarchy (e.g. status), and the societal context within which an organisation is based (e.g. whether it is normal to challenge authority), with the role of power distance being central to both. In particular, employees lower in the organisational hierarchy (i.e. with less power) often perceive activities core to safety culture (e.g. raising concerns, reporting errors) as less easy to engage in when compared to those further up the hierarchy (e.g. top and middle management).

Furthermore, in societies where there is a high power gradient between those with and without authority (i.e. with it not being normal to challenge those in high status roles), perceptions of safety culture tend to be less positive.

Many times, we examine how organisational hierarchy (organisational role) and societal values (national culture) relate to power distance which affect perceptions of safety culture.

Foreseeable challenges would examine and parse out the multi-faceted influence of power upon perceptions of safety culture.

In particular, the industry-wide requirement for a completely safe and reliable system, almost identical work practices internationally, standardisation of organisational roles, and nationally-bounded nature of mandatory requirements are greatly needed.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

Psychological study of safety culture has identified various dimensions of safety-related values and practices important for managing risk. These include such dimensions as management commitment to safety (prioritisation of safety), collaborating for safety (group attitudes and activities for safety management), incident reporting (extent to which respondents believe it safe to report safety incidents), communication (whether staff are informed about safety-related issues), colleague commitment to safety (beliefs about the reliability of colleagues' safety-related behaviour), and safety support (availability of resources and information for safety management).

These dimensions can be assessed variously, but the most common methodology is a survey of employee perceptions of safety culture. These are seen as important because they reflect how employees perceive and evaluate organisational policies, practices, priorities, and values on safety. Critically, employee perceptions of safety culture are assumed to influence safety behaviours (e.g. incident reporting), which compounds the culture (e.g. normalising a behaviour).

In order to develop a positive and shared safety culture, I suggest that organisations achieve consensus and harmony. This draws on my personal observation that culture is socially constructed, and thus will not necessarily manifest the same, nor have the same effect in different components or levels of an organisation. For example, different perspectives on organisational culture emerge due to the demarcation of organisational roles, conflicts over resources, and the exercise of power.

THE ROLE OF POWER

Pertaining to the aspect of safety culture, employee perceptions of organisational policies, practices, and values for safety are likely to be shaped by the role of employees, their position within the organisational hierarchy (i.e. where individuals have higher or lower implied power based on their hierarchy position), and the broader social environment in which they are operating. In particular, power appears relevant. Power has been defined variously by psychology researchers, where many researchers describe power in terms of resource control. Others consider power in terms of relational influence. In either resource control or relational influence, these are explicit theories of power with explicit measures.

I consider power more implicitly in two forms: firstly, that inferred from an individual's position within a hierarchy, and secondly, the concept of 'power distance'. In particular, the concept of 'power distance' appears important, and is an underlying feature of many safety culture research

studies. Rationale being, the practices that underpin a strong culture often involve an aspect of power, including challenging power (e.g. speaking-up to stop an unsafe act by a colleague), manoeuvring around power (e.g. anonymously reporting incidents involving those in authority), or communicating with those in power.

PITFALLS IN ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Often such behaviours are expected to be enacted by frontline employees who are positioned lower in organisational hierarchies.

Accident investigation processes that analyse industrial accidents often evade the areas which identify problems in power-related practices (e.g. communication and speaking-up between employees of different status) as a causal factor in mishaps. For example, in terms of aviation accidents where first officers have been unable to challenge the behaviour of captains. Or with medical errors where nurses speaking-up to senior clinicians might have averted patient harm. Another example is with process safety failures where front-line technical staff have felt unable to raise safety problems with management due to fear of reprisals. Furthermore, within literature of safety, it has been repeatedly indicated that acts related to power distance are integral to effective safety management, and are emblematic of a safe culture.

I would suggest that the assumed relationship with safety practices (e.g. speaking-up), the influence of power distance upon perceptions of safety culture remains relatively under-explored.

Although a small body of researchers have examined how perceptions of safety culture are shaped by the status of organisational roles and societal tendencies for challenging authority, there has also been relatively little formal conceptualisation or empirical examination of how these different factors interact to shape perceptions of safety culture. For example, in healthcare, it is shown that nurses are more likely than clinicians to report finding it difficult to speak up on problems with patient care. These divergent perceptions are understood in terms of their differing roles and authority status.

Psychological researches of safety culture show that senior staff tend to view safety measures and risk more positively than junior staff. Perceptions of safety management vary according to whether one is in a managerial, supervisory, or operational role, and that managers have more positive perceptions of safety culture than frontline and support staff. On top of that, cognitive dissonance is formed when safety culture is poorest, when manager and worker perceptions diverge with group differences potentially leading to organisational conflict, increased risk, and degraded safety performance.

This area requires improvements that eradicate safety decision-making, legal compliance issues and

INSPECTIONS BY DEL INSPECTORS

closer agreement between managers and workers over safety responsibility.

In terms of explaining why those in different hierarchy positions perceive safety culture differently, various factors can be identified. For example, employees in positions of differing organisational hierarchy will likely differ in terms of knowledge and experience in the organisation, with frontline staff having access to first-hand safety information and management holding an organisation-wide view on safety. Indeed, an individual's role and position within a hierarchy shapes how they construe and communicate about events.

Those higher-up in hierarchies use more abstract and positive language, compared to those lower in the hierarchy using more concrete and negative language (Magee et al., 2010).

Furthermore, there are many safety practices that involve social risks (e.g. speaking up), which may lead those in less powerful positions (i.e. placed lower in the organisational hierarchy) to view such practices as more challenging. For example, engaging in voice acts is easier for those in senior rather than junior roles, and where there is a large authority gradient between superiors and subordinates, communication between superiors and subordinates becomes asymmetrical due to the differences in status, with the stream of information flowing top-down rather than bottom-up.

When viewpoints on safety differ in such a way, and are not communicated due to hierarchical boundaries, divergences in perceptions of safety culture may emerge. For example, if frontline staff are given less opportunity to speak up and challenge superiors, they may feel less engaged with incident reporting.

Where subordinates believe that management's communication on safety issues is too abstract, it may be perceived as insufficient. Furthermore, if subordinates feel that their superiors do not listen to their safety concerns, then they will perceive management to have less commitment to safety. Indeed, interventions to improve safety-related practices often focus on reducing power distances between senior and junior staff in order to improve communication processes. For example, training leaders to encourage junior team members to speak-up, using resources to increase collaboration in inter-disciplinary teams, and ensuring leader inclusiveness (defined as words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions) in order to improve psychological safety and engagement.

Thus, my observation is that hierarchical position (and power entwined within that position) is associated with more or less positive perceptions of safety culture.

We suppose that in the current research setting, those in more higher hierarchical positions

(managers) will perceive safety culture more positively because they are less threatened by engaging in safety practices (e.g. reporting). And by virtue of their position in the organisational hierarchy, they will have more information on organisational efforts to improve safety, but less knowledge about the specific challenges being faced by staff.

However, those positioned lower in the hierarchy (air traffic controllers, engineering staff, administrative staff) will perceive safety culture less positively due to the challenges of engaging in safety practices (e.g. speaking-up), alongside greater awareness of the specific safety challenges being experienced 'on-the-ground' (and the absence of management action).

The psychological research of safety culture has shown that societal values for power distance can shape perceptions of safety culture for organisations operating in different geographical regions.

At a societal level, the notion of power distance is conceptualised as a dimension of culture that can vary between nations. Specifically, studies of national culture have isolated several dimensions by which national culture vary.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS: POWER DISTANCES

Hofstede and colleagues have famously spent several years documenting cultural dimensions, of which power distance is one.

National power distance specifically refers to how national, cultural and educational institutions shape shared values and behaviour with respect to the way nation-members think of and approach hierarchies and power in interpersonal contexts.

National power distance is about nation-members expectations regarding the symmetry of relations, and is measured by Hofstede's Power Distance Index, where high scores reflect greater distance between superiors and subordinates and greater acceptance of hierarchy, whereas low scores reflect less distance and less acceptance of hierarchy.

In terms of theorising safety culture, national variations in power distance appear important. Nations are a key unit of shared experience due to their educational and cultural institutions that shape the values of its members. Thus, national values for large power distances may influence perceptions of safety culture through shaping the willingness of those in less powerful positions to challenge authority and correct errors made by superiors. In this way, the likelihood that junior staff will admit mistakes that have potential social or career-related consequences, and create asymmetrical communication between management and subordinates is reduced.

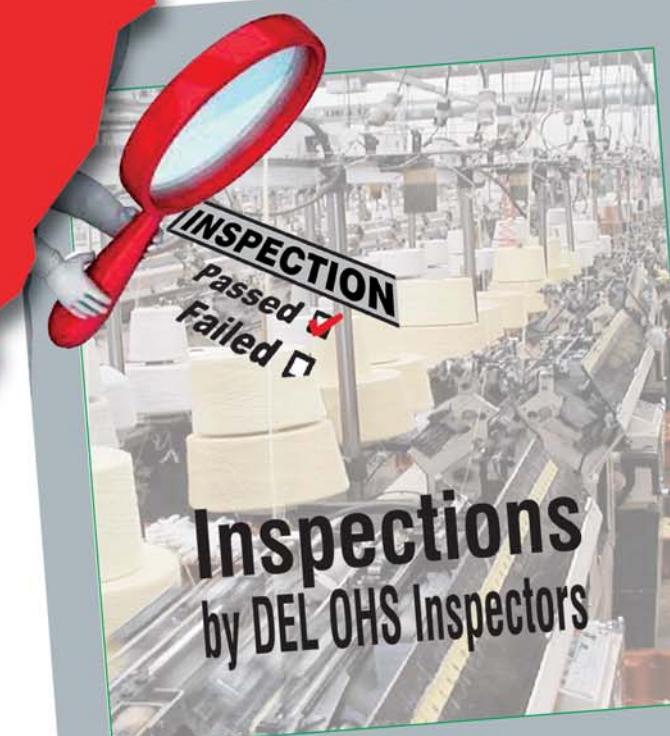
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Author: Tibor Szana
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SAIOH President's Message

Karen du Preez: SAIOH President, e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

The Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) remains steadfast in its dedication to its members and the ongoing advancement of the occupational hygiene profession.

In pursuit of this commitment, we regularly provide updates and share key developments with our community.

SAIOH flourishes through the active participation and ethical contributions of its members, whose engagement continues to shape the field.

To further strengthen our collective efforts, we welcome and encourage feedback on the topics covered in this edition of the Journal.

The legacy of SAIOH



SAIOH is a professional body recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), with approximately 1 000 members.

The management team and Council members that serve SAIOH volunteer their time and expertise to contribute to the vision and mission of SAIOH.

What motivates someone with a demanding day job to take up a position that places another claim on their already limited time? The answer is "legacy", which can be defined as the long-lasting impact of specific past events or actions.

The actions and commitment of past and present leaders of SAIOH have contributed to the growth of SAIOH and paved the way for incoming members to excel.

Standing at the beginning of my tenure as SAIOH President, I acknowledge these past actions and

contributions. I know the road has been travelled by great names in occupational hygiene, and following in their footsteps is a privilege and an honour.

My commitment to SAIOH members is to build on the great example set by past presidents who served the occupational hygiene profession and SAIOH's best interests with passion and dedication.

Together with the Council and management team, my focus will be on identifying and implementing projects that align with SAIOH's strategic objectives to enable our members to practice sound and ethical occupational hygiene to ensure safer and healthier workplaces.

My invitation to our members is to utilise the opportunities that SAIOH provides to grow professionally and excel as occupational hygiene professionals in southern Africa and beyond.

National council feedback

Karen du Preez: SAIOH president, e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH general manager, e-mail: deon.jvuuren@gmail.com

Karen du Preez, our newly appointed SAIOH President, and Prof. Cas Badenhorst, our new Vice-President, have seamlessly transitioned into their roles, with Cas also assuming the responsibilities of SAIOH Treasurer.

During the past 3 months, SAIOH Management actively engaged in several key meetings.

The SAIOH Strategic Session and the first Council meeting were held in a hybrid format (both in-person and on-line) on 26 and 27 February 2025 at the SAIOH Offices in the Spaces Office Park, Broadacres. A total of 12 Council members participated in these sessions.

On 16 April 2025, the second Management Board meeting was conducted on-line.

- Impromptu Zoom and MS Teams sessions were held with the conference organising and planning committee to ensure smooth co-ordination for the SAIOH 2025 annual scientific conference.



to review the new DEL OHAIA report formats, etc. Currently, 57 OH AIAs are accredited, with six new applicants.

- The SAIOH Admin team held a staff meeting on 19 March 2025, attended on-line by seven

participants. The next meeting is set for 28 May 2025.

These engagements reflect SAIOH's ongoing commitment to industry collaboration and professional advancement.

Strategic plan

The SAIOH strategic five-year plan is led by Jaco Pieterse, guiding its direction and implementation. Matters arising, key targets, and progress evaluations are reviewed regularly during the monthly SAIOH Management Board meetings and the quarterly Council sessions.

Ethics

The legal review of the SAIOH Ethics Policy and Procedures has been successfully completed by NGO Law. A draft of the document has been distributed to SAIOH management for review, with a dedicated meeting scheduled for 5 May to finalise this critical framework.

This remains a priority initiative to facilitate the commencement of the Ethics Committee's work, as the ethics plan is an integral component of SAIOH's strategic objectives (#3).

The requirement for all SAIOH-certified members to complete an acceptable occupational hygiene

ethics training course has been fully implemented and remains mandatory.

SAIOH has partnered with North-West University (NWU) to develop a dedicated Ethics course, specifically tailored to Ethics in Occupational Hygiene. Several online meetings have already been conducted to finalise the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). On 22 April, a draft MoU was presented and is now awaiting review by the Management Board for final approval.

SAIOH Branch activities and other engagements

SAIOH continues with active engagement across its branches, with a series of successful meetings and workshops held in recent months.

- On 26 February 2025, following the Strategic Session, SAIOH Council Co-ordinator Yvette Greeff organised a productive hybrid branch workshop, attended by 12 participants.
- The Gauteng branch convened its first meeting on 7 March 2025, drawing an exceptional attendance of over 165 participants on-line exceeding the capacity of SAIOH's Zoom platform and causing technical difficulties. Notable presentations included Jeff Moredock's insightful discussion on ISO 23875, alongside a PCC certification system and CPD overview presented by Lee Doolan and Deon Jansen van Vuuren.
- The Gauteng branch hosted its second meeting and workshop on 9 May 2025, an in-person event at Dräger in Midrand. Dräger significantly contributed to the event's success by sponsoring attendance gifts, raffle prizes, name tags, venue arrangements, and a well-curated lunch.

The programme featured three impactful presentations, and three specialised 15-minute workshops focused on respiratory protection, gas inhalation, filter efficiency assessments, breathing resistance evaluations, and workplace gas measurement systems.

Despite strong registrations, attendance fell short, with only 31 of the 76 registered members participating.

- The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Branch conducted a highly engaging online meeting on 12 March 2025, attended by 128 participants.

Presentations covered thought-provoking topics, including:

- Strategies for Occupational Health Practitioners (OHPs) in assessing workplace health hazards.
- Implementation of Hazardous Chemical Agents (HCA) programmes.
- Medical surveillance protocols for HCAs.

The event featured a diverse panel of speakers, including SAIOH members and international experts, such as Harold Gaze, Paul Muchemi, Dr. Ivan Niranjani, Olinda Lannido, and Dr. Okullo R. Obako.

- The Western Cape Branch hosted a successful in-person meeting on 14 March 2025 at the Tygerberg Nature Reserve.

An insightful presentation was done by U-Mask a Personal Protection Equipment supplier.

The next Western Cape Branch meeting was scheduled to take place online on 23 May 2025. 135 persons attended.

There were two exceptional presentations:

- Ergonomic Risk Assessments as per the DEL Ergonomics Regulations, by Dale Kennedy (Ergomax);
- No-Ionising Radiation, sources, health risks and measurements, by Jaco Pieterse (Gijima OHES&L).
- The Northwest branch held a meeting and Jakes Jacobs (Sedulitas) did a presentation on electromagnetic fields.

Annual SAIOH scientific conference

The 2025 SAIOH Conference will be held on 20 – 23 October 2025 at the Raddison Blu Hotel, Umhlanga, Durban and will be hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal branch of SAIOH.

Theme: *Occupational Hygiene in Practice – Navigating New Workplace Challenges*



The first planning meeting for the SAIOH Conference took place in November 2024, during which the venue and theme were finalised, a dedicated webpage was created, and initial notifications, including calls for abstracts, were sent to all members and stakeholders.

Since then, the Conference Organising and Technical Committee has convened four times already in this quarter.

As in previous years, the conference will be hosted in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person attendance and on-line participation via live streaming.

The Conference Programme is being developed, thanks to Prof. Cas Badenhorst. It will commence

SAIOH remains committed to professional development within the occupational hygiene community through these branch-level initiatives. Unfortunately, the Central (Free State), Northern Cape, and Mpumalanga branches remain inactive.

on Monday 20 October 2025, at 13:30 with two consecutive four-hour Professional Development Courses (PDCs).

On Tuesday 21 October, four additional PDCs will be held, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, bringing the total to six specialised sessions.

The SAIOH Council meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of 21 October.

The official Conference will begin on 22 October 2025, featuring esteemed keynote speakers who have already been invited and accepted. The call for abstracts has been circulated multiple times to ensure broad participation. Unfortunately there's been a poor response to date.

On the afternoon of 22 October, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place, followed by the highly anticipated Gala Dinner in the evening.

The second official day of the Conference will be held on 23 October 2025.

New additions:

- A full-day workshop Advanced Cab Theory Workshop (ACTW) on Indoor Air Quality (IAQ, in enclosed environments) using the Simulator Cab is in development for Friday 24 October 2025, the day following the Conference. This workshop will be organised by Jeff Moredock of Sy-Klone.
- Discussions are underway for the 2026 SAIOH Conference.

As always, SAIOH remains committed to delivering an engaging and insightful 2025 conference experience.

International Occupational Hygiene Association Board, the National Accreditation Recognition Committee, and Occupational Hygiene Training Association feedback

The Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) continue to publish their newsletters, with links emailed to all SAIOH members and made available on the SAIOH website: www.saioh.co.za.

Additionally, members can access OHTA

resources via their website: <https://www.ohtatraining.org>

SAIOH's newly appointed representative on the IOHA Board, Corlia Peens, has actively participated in IOHA Board and NARC meetings in 2025, ensuring strong engagement and representation for SAIOH.



An OHTA Accredited Training Provider (ATP) feedback session was held on 18 February 2025. SAIOH's OHTA representative, Peter John Jacobs, provided valuable feedback.

- AIHA has introduced a mentorship programme at a rate of 25 USD per participant, with a special rate of 10 USD per student.
- Effective January 2025, OHTA exam fees will be set at 100 GBP or 125 USD per exam.
- A new pathway to the BGC CIH credential has been introduced for individuals holding the OHTA ICert qualification. Candidates must now

have a bachelor's degree, completed Occupational Hygiene courses, and a minimum of five years of full-time occupational hygiene experience to qualify for the CIH exam.

Excellent news

OHTA has awarded the OHTA ICert qualification to several members, including Delvin Govender (SAIOH Member), Sinah Seake (Botswana), and Palesa Makepe (Lesotho), a significant achievement for Southern Africa and these SAIOH members!

SAIOH Technical Committee feedback

The SAIOH Technical Committee's research on welding fumes—specifically the measurement and analysis—has been spearheaded by Dr. Ivan Niranjan, SAIOH's Technical Portfolio Coordinator. A dedicated sub-committee, comprising members from SAIOH and the Occupational Hygiene Approved Inspection Authorities Association (OH AIA Ass.), has already convened to develop a comprehensive technical and position paper on this critical topic. The final position paper is expected to be completed in 2025.

A second technical committee has been actively working on the development of technical procedures and a SAIOH position paper on heat stress management. Key partnerships are underway with the CSIR and Dr. Johan Kielblock to ensure the necessary research is conducted. The completion deadline remains set for 2025. This initiative is twofold, first, to develop a technical paper, and

New SAIOH website

The SAIOH administration team, led by Naadiya (our Immediate Past President) and Kate (SAIOH Admin), is actively working on populating the new SAIOH website, ensuring it serves as a comprehensive resource for members.

We look forward to launching the new website

New SAIOH Publications and Engagements

SAIOH continues to keep its members informed through its newsletter and President's Page, published in two electronic media formats:

- Occupational Health Southern Africa (OHS) Journal
- African Occupational Safety and Health (A-OS&H) Magazine

These publications are issued every two to three months, with the most recent editions published in March and April 2025. Links to these publications are shared with all members via Mailchimp and

second, to enable SAIOH to provide well-founded proposals to enhance the promulgated Physical Agents Regulations (PAR), formerly known as the Environmental Regulations for Workplaces.

Additionally, Wessel van Wyk, the former technical coordinator, continues to contribute to the finalisation of a position paper on real-time monitoring. Once approved by the SAIOH PCC ExCo and the Technical Committee, this paper will be shared with all SAIOH members and stakeholders.

Under the leadership of Naadiya Mundy, SAIOH has launched a Technical Sub-Committee focused on developing procedures and guidelines to assist Occupational Hygiene Practitioners with Ergonomic Risk Assessments. The first meeting of this sub-committee was successfully held on 17 April 2025, marking the beginning of this important initiative.

soon, delivering an improved and streamlined platform for the SAIOH community.

The Quality Management System (QMS), including the PCC Assessment procedures, is already accessible on the SAIOH website, providing essential guidance and documentation.

made available on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za).

SAIOH already submitted their submissions to these two publications for their next issues.

In addition, the OHTA Global Link (March 2025) and IOHA Gems (Global Exposure Manager) (April 2025) newsletters have been posted on the SAIOH website and circulated to members via Mailchimp. Notably, Naadiya's OH Comix was featured in the January–March 2025 issue of Gems.



SAIOH Representation and Engagements

SAIOH actively participates in key industry meetings and discussions:

- The Occupational Health Southern Africa Journal's Editorial Board Meeting took place on 13 March 2025, attended in person by a SAIOH representative (Deon Jansen van Vuuren) with Prof. Johan du Plessis, who joined on-line.
- On 21 February 2025, Karen du Preez, Naadiya, and Deon Jansen van Vuuren attended the first

Occupational Hygiene Approved Inspection Authority Association (OH AIA Ass.) Meeting, which saw an on-line attendance of 31 participants.

- Jakes Jacobs represented SAIOH at the Department of Employment and Labour's (DEL) Iron and Steel Workshop, held in Klerksdorp from 26–28 February 2025.

Communication and Industry Updates

SAIOH maintains ongoing communication with its stakeholders through various channels, including:

- Dissemination of industry news, technical updates, legislative changes, new standards, job opportunities, and professional development courses.
- E-mails and notifications via Mailchimp.
- Phone calls and virtual meetings.

Webinars and Conferences

Several occupational hygiene and health webinars have been promoted through SAIOH communications in 2025, including events hosted by:

- International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA)
- American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)
- Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB)
- South African Occupational Medical Practitioners (SASOM)
- Ergonomics Society of South Africa (ESSA)
- South African Society of Occupational Health Nurses (SASOHN)
- Safety-First PPE Conference (which was postponed).

Recent on-line events and webinars hosted by stakeholders include:

- IOHA Eximious and-Ephor Occupational Hygiene Exposure symposia (20–26 March 2025)
- AIHA Connect Conference (17–21 May 2025)

Several of these events were attended by SAIOH management, members and staff, including the AIHA webinar, "Ensuring Workplace Health and Safety with Physiological Monitoring to Manage Heat Stress", held on 20 February 2025, and the WHWB Ergonomics Webinar.

SAIOH remains committed to ensuring members have access to the latest industry developments, training opportunities, and thought leadership in occupational hygiene.

From the Professional Certification Committee (PCC)

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

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

Ivan Nirajan: PCC chairperson, e-mail: ivann@dut.ac.za

The PCC ExCo held its first online meeting on 28 February 2025, followed by the PCC meeting on 28 March 2025.

- The sub-committee developing the Occupational Hygiene Skill Set for the self-assessment tool has made significant progress. The first draft was completed earlier this year and is currently being refined and reviewed before submission for PCC approval. The team, consisting of seven members, continues to meet every two weeks for

two-hour sessions. Work is also underway to develop oral question scenarios and review the PCC Oral Assessment guideline. Five (5) meetings have already taken place this quarter.

- The subcommittee has initiated online training sessions for PCC Assessors, with the first session held on 14 February 2025. The next training session is scheduled for 30 May 2025.
- A hybrid PCC Professional Development Course (PDC) will be offered at the 2025 SAIOH

Conference on the new Self-assessment Tool and Oral Assessment guidelines, accessible to all SAIOH members.

- Efforts continue to develop an electronic written assessment system on the MS Excel platform to replace the current LMS Electronic Assessment system and the proposed Moodle LMS (an open-source LMS). Alternatives are being explored, including leveraging MySAIOH's functionality, to resolve technical challenges and improve administration of the assessments by the PCC Admin team. Transitioning all

certification assessments to a multiple-choice format has proven to be more complex than initially anticipated, and work on this initiative is still in the planning stage.

- Due to system development challenges, written assessments in 2025 will continue in hard copy format until the new electronic system is finalised and implemented.
- The first quarter's written assessments were conducted on 28 February 2025, with Oral Assessments held between 28 March and 2 May 2025.

Certification assessments

A summary of results for the assessments that took place from end-February to May 2025 is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. SAIOH PCC certification assessment results as May 2025

Certification Categories	Written Assessments				Oral Assessments			
	Assessed n	Passed n	Failed n	Pass %	Assessed n	Passed n	Failed n	Pass %
OH Assistants	40	40	0	100	0	0	0	-
OH Technologists	17	16	1	94	20	14	6	70
Occ. Hygienists	18	11	7	61	14	9	5	64
TOTAL	75	67	8	89	34	23	11	85

Additional PCC Updates

- The updated Assessment Procedure/Guideline and Self-Assessment Tool are set to be officially launched at the SAIOH Conference as part of a Professional Development Course (PDC).
- As of January 2025, the PCC ExCo is composed of:
 - Dr. Ivan Nirajan – PCC Chair
 - Andre van Rooyen – PCC Vice Chair
 - Dr Goitsemang Keretetse – PCC Chief Examiner
 - Deon Jansen van Vuuren – SAIOH General Manager
 - Lee Doolan – PCC Administrator
 - Corlia Peens – SAIOH Representative at IOHA and the NAR Committee
 - Jaco van Rensburg and Andrew Dickson – PCC Examination Committee and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Review Panel

The PCC assessment dates for 2025 are in Table 2.

Table 2. SAIOH PCC assessment dates for 2025

Assessment Type	Deadline for applications	Deadline for assessment evaluations and payment	Assessment date
Written	12 January	14 February	14 March
Oral	-	-	week of 11 April
Written	25 April	30 May	27 June
Oral	-	-	week of 25 July
Written	1 August	5 September	3 October
Oral	-	-	week of 14 November

Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum

The OHSF continues to engage actively in OHTA Approved Training Provider forum meetings, participating in both 2024 and 2025 sessions.

The first OHSF meeting for 2025 took place on 6 March, and the second meeting on 22 May 2025. A key function of the OHSF is the evaluation of





occupational hygiene-related qualifications from tertiary institutions.

Progress is being made, with the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) occupational health qualification nearing approval.

Discussions with institutions in Botswana and Uganda are scheduled for early 2025, while engagements with UP, DUT, UJ, and UL is ongoing.

Tertiary institutions offering occupational hygiene qualifications are encouraged to contact the PCC Administrator (lee@saioh.co.za) for recognition application details.

Information on approved training providers and qualifications is available on the SAIOSH website (<https://www.saioh.co.za>), helping students and certification candidates identify suitable programmes aligned with SAIOSH and international

certification standards.

The OHSF was established to coordinate the recognition of occupational hygiene training materials, including asbestos courses, training providers, and institutions, while also overseeing assessment and examination systems where necessary.

To strengthen industry knowledge, the OHSF is looking at developing an in-house OH Legislation course for non-AIA members.

Additionally, Dr. Hennie van der Westhuizen has contributed to an initiative incorporating CPD questions based on OHSA journal articles, enhancing member engagement with the publication.

SAIOSH is ready to launch this initiative—thank you, Hennie.



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