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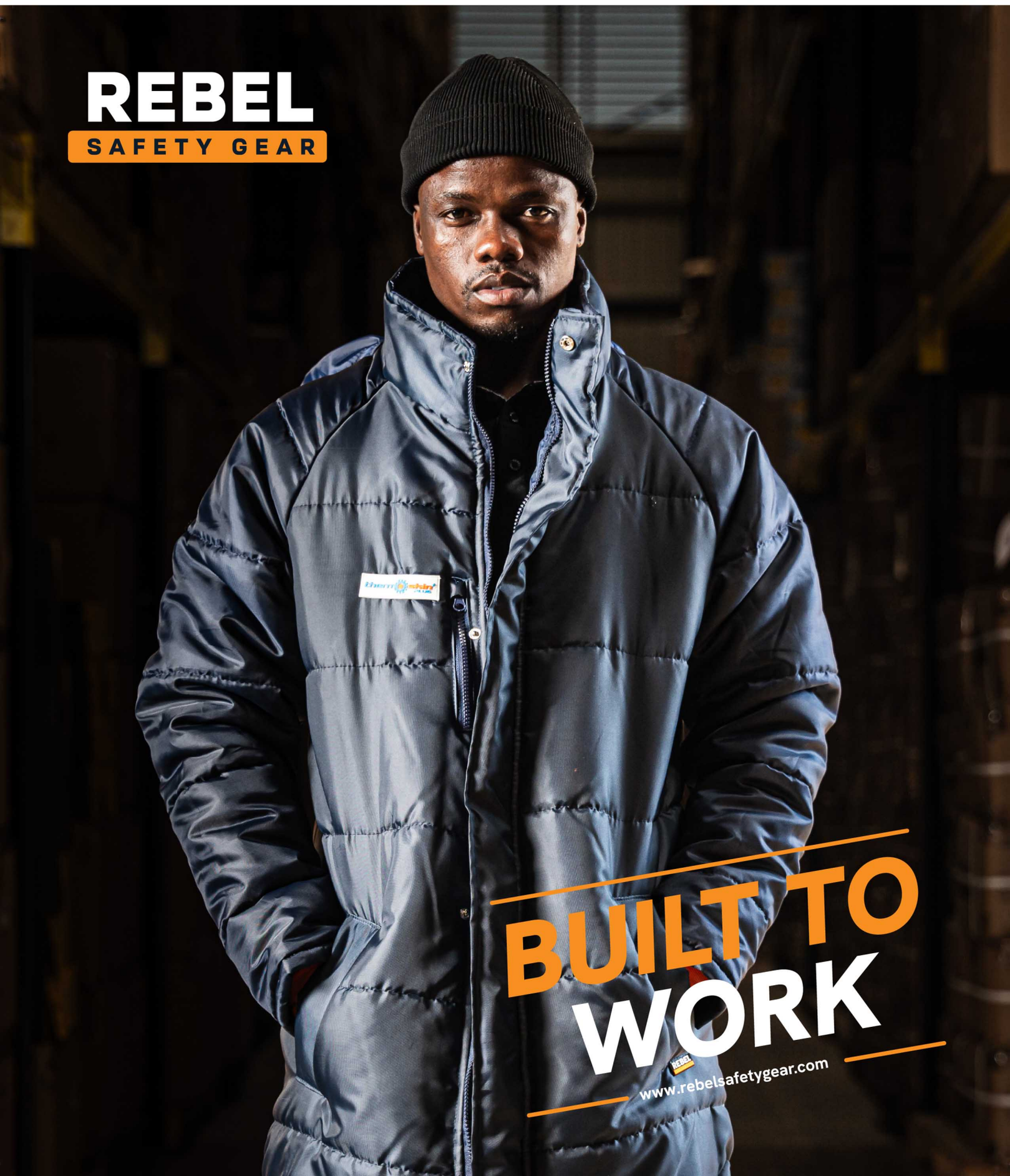

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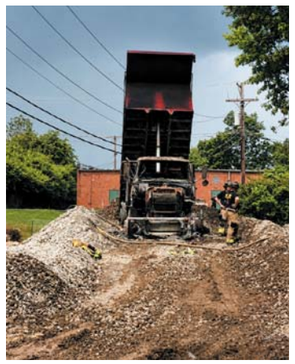
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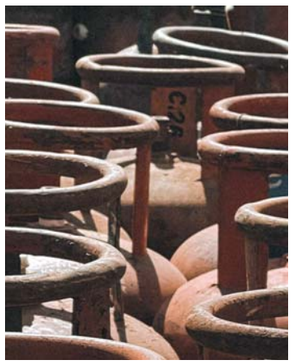
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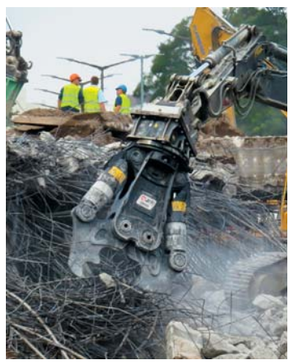
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Editor's Comment

DOES A LIFE HAVE A PRICE?

Through three fatal work-related case-studies, Neil Franklin illustrates the tragic consequences of inadequate protection. He shows how safety equipment costing between R250 and R1000 could have made the difference between life and death.

ZERO HARM

When Fabian Buckley first arrived at a project and saw the prominent 'ZERO HARM' banner, he felt reassured about the company's commitment to safety. But after spending time on the site, he found that reality on the ground told a different story. In his article, he underscores the need for organisations to move beyond compliance-driven safety to a culture of genuine understanding, where safe behaviour becomes an integral part of everyday work.

ZAMBIA SUGAR INCREASES ITS SAFETY BUDGET

By showing its commitment to safety, Zambia Sugar has made a visible impact, not only to its workers, but to its contractors and the surrounding communities as well. With over 7,000 employees, Zambia Sugar has implemented many initiatives and programmes aimed at promoting safety in the workplace and beyond. One such initiative is their Safety Week. When Mark Kaunda joined the awards ceremony of their Safety Week celebrations held during May this year, he was impressed by what he witnessed. He found that instead of celebrating and rewarding workers for achieving low Lost Time Injury, Zambia Sugar rewards prevention. As examples: an employee was rewarded for stopping work when believing the situation to be unsafe. Another worker was awarded for consistently wearing cyclist PPE when reporting for work. A School Safety Club was awarded for its contributions to safety.

BRIDGE COLLAPSES AND DETERIORATING INFRASTRUCTURE

The spate of bridge collapses has raised concerns about the state of deteriorating infrastructure on South Africa's transport network. In his article, Tibor Szana questions whether enough is being done to prevent the next disaster. He tells us that the warning signs are there: Deteriorating infrastructure, ageing structures, poor-to-no maintenance. He fears that it may take another collapse with tragic injuries or fatalities, before action is taken.

HEALTH RISKS OF FORMALDEHYDE

Formaldehyde is a widely used industrial chemical that can pose serious health risks when workers are exposed to high concentrations in areas with inadequate ventilation. Exposure can lead to symptoms ranging from eye and respiratory irritation, to severe breathing difficulties. Han Wenqi points to the need for proper hazard controls and protective measures to be put in place.

DANGERS OF LPG SITES NEAR RESIDENTIAL AREAS

In countries like Nigeria, residential developments frequently grow around existing LPG facilities, while in other cases, LPG plants are introduced into already congested environments. The result is a dangerous overlap between energy demand and public safety exposure. Providence Akpa raises the issue, not whether LPG plants are near people, but whether the systems in place to protect those people are truly working.

Compliance is not safety:

Why your zero harm poster is lying to you

Fabian Buckley
Idip Nebosh

I once walked onto a project where the first thing I saw was a massive "ZERO HARM" banner stretched across the fence at the site entrance.

A really "beautiful" sign. Professionally printed, as most of them are. The banner probably cost more than the site's monthly barricading budget (please excuse my facetiousness).

A while later, I found:

- multiple open excavations with no proper edge protection;
- a supervisor signing risk assessments and permits that he clearly had not even read; and
- workers using damaged electrical leads held together with insulation tape and some optimism.

But technically, the site was "compliant". This is the biggest problem with modern safety culture. Somewhere along the line, many organisations stop focusing on actual risk and become obsessed with looking safe.

One of the most common slogans we hear in the industry is: "A clean site is a safe site." To some extent, that is true, especially regarding slip and trip hazards. But we cannot create the façade of a safe site while critical risks remain unmanaged.

We have created what I call "Safety Theatre": perfectly organised SHE files, colour-coded statistics, endless signatures, "polished" audit scores, incident investigations that reveal only half-truths, and motivational slogans hanging from every fence and wall.

Meanwhile, the real risks quietly sit in the field, waiting for someone to make one mistake.

I remember another project where management proudly celebrated "10 Million LTI-Free Hours" on a site where employees didn't report minor incidents because nobody wanted to ruin the numbers.

That tells me far more about the site culture than any audit ever could. Because real safety is not about protecting statistics or preserving how the project appears to head office or the client. It is about genuinely protecting and caring for people.

And the truth is this:

- A signed document — including a permit — does not stop gravity.
- A completed checklist does not isolate energy.
- A beautifully worded risk assessment does not prevent an injury, nor does a Zero Harm poster prevent an excavation collapse.

What does?

- Effective controls do.
- Competent supervision does.
- Proper planning does.
- Leadership does.
- Proper communication between all departments does.

Compliance matters, but it should be the foundation—not the finish line. A company can be legally compliant but operationally unsafe. I have seen it too many times over the last 22 years in construction and other high-risk industries.

Real safety leadership is uncomfortable at times. It means asking hard questions:

- Do workers actually understand the task?
- Are we rushing because of production pressure and unrealistic schedules?
- Are supervisors overloaded?
- Are people scared to speak up?

If workers fear management more than the hazard itself, your culture already has cracks in it.

So, the next time you walk past a giant "ZERO HARM" banner, ask yourself one simple question: "Are we managing risk, or are we merely managing appearances?" There is a massive difference.

Rather get the raw, unfiltered truth from workers and supervisors at the coalface than convince ourselves we are "safe" when, in reality, we are one poor decision away from a fatality.

So, focus on genuine culture-changing initiatives and hard controls that actually prevent Significant Injuries and Fatalities (SIFs), such as the following:

- High-Potential Risk Control (HPRC)

A proactive framework designed to prevent severe injuries, fatalities, and catastrophic system failures by identifying and managing critical risks before they result in serious consequences.

- Human and Organisational Performance (HOP)

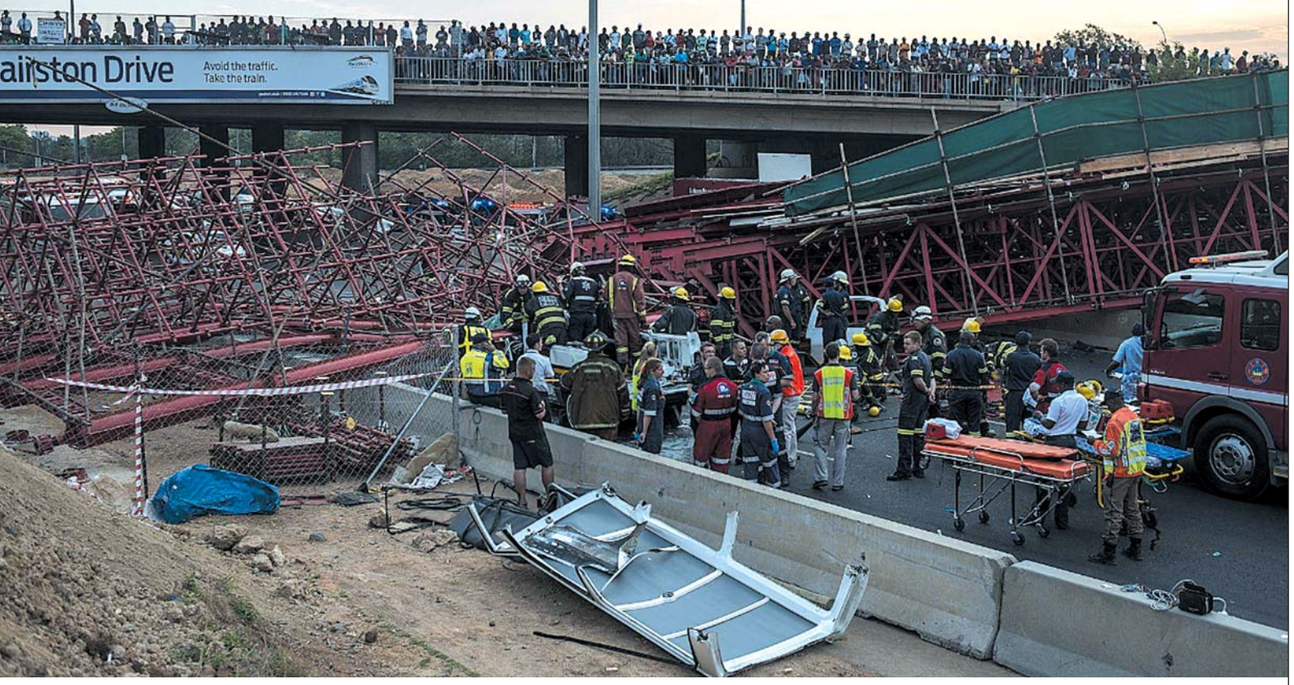
A safety and operational philosophy that recognises human error is inevitable. Rather than blaming individuals for mistakes, HOP focuses on designing resilient systems and processes that anticipate errors, learn from normal work conditions, and empower employees to work safely despite occasional human mistakes.

- Safety Coaching

A behavioural approach to workplace health and safety that focuses on open communication, active listening, and continuous improvement rather than punitive rule enforcement.

CONCLUSION

By shifting the focus from rigid compliance to genuine understanding, organisations can cultivate a culture where safe behaviour becomes habitual and intrinsic — not something performed only when an auditor or client is watching.



A bridge too far

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

Global 365 Health and Safety (Pty) Ltd

We need to bridge the gaps before the gap is breached

This article is an opinion piece given the spate of catastrophic collapses over the past few months. For several years now our construction sector has been under siege, and continues to be so. The warning signs of further collapses are clearly visible: deteriorating infrastructure, ageing structures, poor to no maintenance. And let's not leave out the impact of crime.

So, in case I forgot about the dire situation of our construction sector and infrastructure, a couple of days ago I get a WhatsApp of an article in the local community newspaper which talks about "*Concerns grow over the deteriorating M39 bridge near Kempton Park. Growing concerns over the deteriorating condition of the M39 bridge have sparked calls for immediate repairs and safety assessments.*" (Kempton Express, 19 May 2026, Braden-Lee Mokoena).

I am left wondering whether or not anything will be done before the bridge collapses. Hopefully when, and if it does, nobody will be killed or injured during such a catastrophic event.

Assuming that such situations are reported in our national newspapers, I question whether anything is ever done about them? It may seem like I'm a negative person, a prophet of doom, always looking for the negative. Not so. I'm one of the more positive people you will encounter in your lifetime. But, I am also very pragmatic. I believe that nothing is going to get better by chance or by burying your head in the proverbial sand.

I would argue that we have become accustomed and therefore immune to negative and catastrophic events. Soon we forget, and move on. The slogans of "Never again" and "heads will roll" are all but forgotten, only to be revisited when it suits those who are most affected. And by that I do not mean the families of those affected. One needs to know who runs to these catastrophic events to understand the situation.

So let's take a step back to one particular newspaper warning that was evident for all to see. On the 24th October 2024, *The Citizen* published a front page article with the heading: "4 in 5 Jo'burg bridges unsafe". The article was written by Jabulile Mbatha. The pictures published with the article served to drive the point that Jabulile was trying to make—that this matter is very, very serious.

He interviewed the head of Infrastructure Planning at the Johannesburg Road Agency (JRA). The JRA said at the time, "its biggest challenge for failing to maintain the bridges is because of limited funds, as per allocation per financial year". There was only R89.5 million allocated for bridges. And it must be remembered that some of that money would have to be allocated towards other infrastructure projects as well.

It is worrying that such a small amount of money is being allocated towards bridges in general. The bridges may collapse before they are rehabilitated. Is this the same scenario in the Ekurhuleni Metro? What then is the situation in other municipalities and metros around the country?

The JRA commented that it is important to contextualise a bridge rehabilitation process which "starts at the investigation and design stages of the project, associated consulting fees, and licence application fees (water use licence and other environmental authorisations).

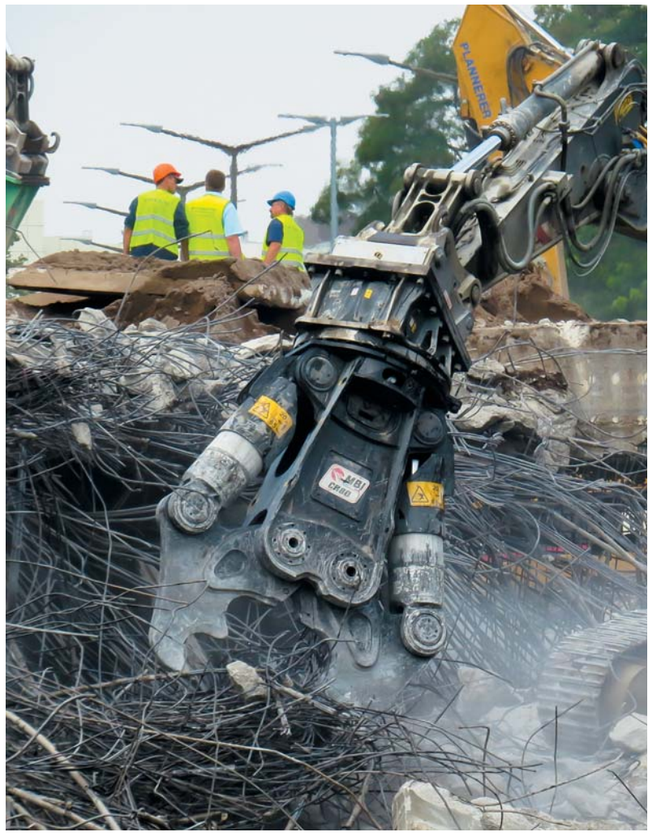
These processes can take months" he said. The implementation of the project can only be undertaken when the budget is available in that year."

Well ... thank you for that bit of wisdom!! Basically he was saying that it is never going to be done.

Let's look at what the article touches on to understand the dilemma. There are twelve bridges deemed to be in a "very poor" condition. What exactly does "very poor" mean? Apparently, according to the JRA, it means that "an asset is in imminent danger of structural failure and requires substantial renewal or upgrading with less than ten percent of expected useful life remaining". The bridges in question are in "Roodepoort, Randburg, Lyndhurst, Buccleuch, Florida, Grobler Park, Ruimsig and different parts of Soweto."

The sum of R89,5 million comes nowhere close to addressing the challenge. Considering that the matter has not been addressed over the past twenty to thirty years, nothing is likely to change in the near future, or at any other time until the bridge collapses. Presumably, they will then find the money to replace the bridge.

So should we be concerned? Can we afford it? What are all the stakeholders, partners doing to address the matter? We have Construction Regulations that place an onus on the owner of these structures to ensure that they are inspected periodically by a competent person, in order to render the structure safe for continued use, and to ensure that the structure is maintained in such a manner that it remains safe for continued use.



According to the legislation, records of the inspection and maintenance must be kept by the owner, and must be made available to an inspector when requested.

One must question if the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) has engaged the municipalities and metros on this matter, remembering that national newspapers have previously published these stories, over and above the catastrophic collapses that have been reported on in the various media platforms.

There appears to be blatant non-compliance that may lead to injuries and deaths. The Department therefore has an obligation in terms of the law to act in the best interest of the members of the public, and the law itself.

Several years ago the Department of Employment and Labour signed several Sector Accords, with one specifically for the Construction Sector. Effectively, the Accord was signed between the DEL and its partners/stakeholders i.e. relevant unions and formal businesses. The Sector Accord directly stipulates on the document, through an overview, what issues will be addressed to impact the sector. The details would have been worked on after the signing event.

In a situation where everyone knows how dire the situation is, everyone that is affected has a critical role to play—i.e. the Department of Employment and Labour, Department of Public Work and Infrastructure and all its relevant SOEs (Council for the Built Environment; Construction Industry Development Board; Engineering Council of South Africa; SACPCMP, etc) and other national government Departments that are directly affected.

The non-statutory bodies and the relevant unions also have an active role to play to prevent catastrophic events from happening.

The Provincial Government Departments and the Local Authorities need to rise up now and be effective, and not only after the fact, when the structures start collapsing. Suddenly then they will want to be "proactive".

It should also be asked what role the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety (ACOHS) is playing in reducing the number of catastrophic incidents. Now would be the right time for ACOHS to rise up and indicate how they are impacting workplaces in the way they are advising the Minister, given the clear roles they have as indicated in OHSA.

Someone, somewhere needs to answer the question: How many must fall before it is enough, or, is it a case of who must be injured or killed before something gets done???

How much would it have cost to save the life that was lost?

Neil Franklin is the Owner and Principal Consultant at Franklin Consulting. He has 35 years' experience across various sectors in EHS strategy development, process safety, occupational safety, behaviour based safety, risk and critical control management.
Neil has worked in 14 different countries and has dedicated a vast portion of his career to the investigation of serious and major industrial incidents. Neil holds a B-Tech degree in Safety Management.

A very sad, but actual question I've heard uttered when fatal work-related incidents are being discussed is "How much is a human life worth?"

To understand the many causes of these tragic events, I've investigated over 25 fatal incidents through my career, either as the lead investigator, as an investigation team member, or as the facilitator of the root cause analysis process.

There never will be a single cause of any event. But in my experience, there is often a single moment, a single event in a sequence, or a single object, which if used, would have prevented the incident from being fatal.

In this article, I briefly discuss three actual cases, and highlight the single object, which was available and that could have been used. But at a critical moment in the task it wasn't used, resulting in fatal consequences.

Instead of trying to attribute a value to the human life which was lost—this could never be done—I will indicate the relative cost of the item, which could have saved the life.

Names of organisations and individuals have been withheld out of respect and for obvious legal reasons. They have however all shared this information, and more at length, in their respective organisations.

CASE STUDY 1

Vehicle stop block

Price: +/- R1000

An employee was part of a group of mechanics undertaking scheduled work on the wheels of a heavy-duty stationary vehicle in a workshop. The vehicle needed to be raised and lowered as the workers moved from wheel to wheel in a certain sequence. Importantly, for the work to be done, the vehicle's engine had to be idling, and the park-brake disengaged. To ensure the vehicle remained stationary, stop blocks were placed at different points during the task. These had to be moved in the same sequence.

As the work was being concluded at the final wheel, one of the workers crawled under the vehicle to retrieve a hydraulic jack that was being used to raise the front axle. By then the stop blocks had all been removed, including critically the one item which would have kept this vehicle stationary. As he released the jack, the vehicle rolled forward causing him to be fatally injured.

CASE STUDY 2

Padlock

Price: +/- R250

An electrician was performing maintenance on a 220v flame-proof electrical lighting circuit. The task required him to replace a three-way junction box mounted on a steel plate, on a steel platform, from where he was doing the work. The specific junction box was part of a large network of cables and lights, and the distribution board (DB) which contained the relevant circuit breakers supplying this network—including the circuit he was working on—was close by.

For the junction box to be replaced, he needed to pull the existing cables through the respective ports (glands) of the new box. He had disconnected the cables earlier and taped up each wire (core) with insulation tape.

Evidence found at the scene showed that he was using a pair of uninsulated water pump pliers to grab the individual wires of the cables, to pull them through the glands to the inside of the box. Further investigation of the scene revealed that the DB board was not locked out, and all circuit breakers were on, meaning the circuit he was working on was live.

As he attempted to pull through one of the cables, his pliers came into contact with an exposed core, and with his other hand holding onto the steel platform, he created a path for electricity to flow, which was fatal (even at 220v).

CASE STUDY 3

Fall arrest harness

Price: +/- R500

A team of contract workers was undertaking roof repairs. A fall protection plan had been developed: anchor points and a lifeline had been put in place and fall arrest harnesses issued to each worker who were all competent in their use.

The roof was made up largely of corrugated sheeting, with polycarbonate skylights in certain places.

The work required a lot of movement, such as walking across the roof and carrying small buckets of sealant.

At one point, one of the employees stepped onto, or possibly slipped/tripped and landed on a skylight which gave way. He fell a distance of approximately 10m to the ground below, sustaining fatal injuries.

At the time of his fall, he was wearing his harness, but it was not attached to the lifeline.

CONCLUSION

As you read this article, there are probably hundreds if not thousands of tasks being performed where these very items are supposed to be used. Hopefully compliance at your company is high, but as an ex-colleague of mine used to say, "hope is not a strategy".

The only way to know the actual level of compliance to these life-saving rules or behaviours is to go out and see for yourself, and not to wait for the phone call that nobody wants to receive—reporting a tragic incident.

Although the case studies discussed in this article are tragic, we should use them as a lesson in how to improve prevention. It would be a sin for us, who are aware of these matters, not to use the opportunity to learn and improve in our own areas.

I strongly encourage you to take these three cases, discuss them (don't just email the article), and allow employees to share their experiences on whether they are able to comply with these rules or not. If not, discuss what has to be done to improve the situation. Sharing and conversations COST nothing—and most importantly, lives can be saved.

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Daily alcohol testing enhances last-mile driver safety

Rhys Evans, Managing Director of ALCO-Safe

ALCO-Safe has partnered with a major national delivery network to introduce compulsory daily alcohol screening across its extensive network.

More than 15,000 drivers, mostly motorcycle couriers, undergo testing before starting their last-mile deliveries.

This delivery network operates as the in-house logistics provider for several major South African e-commerce platforms, managing last-mile delivery and pickup services across the country.

Operating through franchised hubs and supported by advanced technology and strict operational standards, the model is committed to reliable, seamless deliveries.

AND EFFICIENT APPROACH TO DRIVER SAFETY

To ensure a non-invasive and respectful testing process, breathalysers are conveniently installed at entry points of each hub, and integrated with biometric turnstiles where drivers clock in before each delivery.

Each driver simply blows into the device, which provides instant feedback via visible green or red indicator lights. This quick and straightforward process takes only seconds, allowing drivers to start their shifts without delay.

"We designed the system to be as seamless and respectful as possible, minimising disruption while maximising safety," explains Rhys Evans, Managing Director at ALCO-Safe.

"Drivers are tested daily in a way that is fair and professional. It is about support, not punishment."

ALCO-Safe ensures accuracy and reliability through rigorous calibration schedules built into every device. The devices automatically signal when calibration is due. Until calibration is completed, they they lock out usage. This guarantees precise readings even in a fast-paced, high-volume environment.

MANAGING POSITIVE ALCOHOL TESTS

In the event of a positive alcohol test, a strict and confidential protocol is followed. The driver is escorted to a private area for a confirmation test using a secondary calibrated device, with printed documentation, which is witnessed and signed by trained personnel.

Should the second test confirm the initial result, the driver is suspended from duty for a mandatory period, typically five days. The delivery organisation offers drivers access to rehabilitation support.

Employees who acknowledge having an alcohol problem are provided with opportunities for treatment and recovery without the fear of losing their jobs. Ongoing monitoring continues after their return to ensure sustained compliance and safety.

"This approach balances accountability with compassion," says Evans. "It's not just about identifying risks; it's about supporting drivers through them."

SETTING AN INDUSTRY BENCHMARK FOR DELIVERY SAFETY

With a multitude of hubs nationwide—many operated by franchisees under uniform operational guidelines—the delivery company recognised the need for a scalable and effective testing programme.

Aligned with South Africa's Occupational Health and Safety Act and National Road Traffic Act, the initiative reinforces the organisation's role as a leader in safe and responsible last-mile logistics.

"This sets a powerful precedent for the entire e-commerce and logistics industry in South Africa.

"By prioritising safety, compliance, and driver wellbeing at scale, this model demonstrates how technology and compassion can lead the way towards a safer, more accountable future for last-mile delivery," Evans concludes.

Dump truck driver electrocuted after coming into contact with an overhead power line

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

In this article, I will review a case where the driver of a dump truck was electrocuted after a raised truck bed came into contact with an overhead power line.

The dump truck driver was electrocuted when he stepped off the vehicle's running board while the raised truck bed was in contact with a high voltage power line. The incident occurred on 20-acre parcel of land just outside Canada's capital Ottawa that had been purchased by a real estate development company with the intention of razing the area of all pre-existing structures, and constructing up to seventy seven single-family houses.

The townhouses on the land had recently been demolished, and the primary construction company subcontracted the victim to help clear the area of the debris. The victim's job was to transport large pieces of concrete debris to a rock crusher. After the rock was pulverised, the victim then took the load of smaller rock to a sink hole located near a tree where he raised the truck's bed to dump the gravel.

One afternoon, as the victim was raising the truck's bed, he slowly backed up to dump a load of large concrete debris into the rock crusher. As the bed of the truck extended to its full raised height of 7.4 metres above the ground, it touched overhead electrical lines carrying 7,200 volts. This caused electricity to travel through the vehicle. The back tyres caught fire and the victim honked the horn to attract his co-worker's attention.

The driver then attempted to exit the vehicle in order to escape the flames. But as he stepped onto the metal running board, his one hand held the exterior of the truck and his other foot touched the ground.

Due to being in contact with both the ground and the electrified dump truck, the victim became grounded, completed the circuit, and was immediately electrocuted. The victim's co-worker and employees from the primary construction company pulled him away and doused him with a fire extinguisher to put out the flames on his body. He sustained charred electrical burns as well as thermal burns caused by his blue jeans catching fire. The electrical current had entered and exited his feet and hands.

During the investigation, it was found that the power line exceeded the required clearance of 2 metres. from the original elevation, and that the raised elevation of the site caused by debris allowed the bed of the truck to reach the high voltage wires.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Occupational injuries and fatalities are often the result of one or more contributing factors or key events in a larger sequence of events that ultimately result in the injury or fatality. The investigators identified the following unrecognised hazards as key contributing factors in this incident:

- Lack of hazard awareness
- Exiting the vehicle while in contact with high voltage lines
- Fire
- Elevated terrain.

RECOMMENDATION #1

A hazard risk assessment must always be performed prior to beginning work to be aware of the hazards in the immediate work area.

Prior to commencing work, employers should perform a hazard analysis in order to determine what possible dangers are present and possible resolutions. A hazard analysis examines job tasks as a way to identify hazards before they occur. It focuses on the relationship between the worker, the task, the tools, and the work environment. After uncontrolled hazards are identified, steps must be taken to eliminate or reduce them to an acceptable risk level.

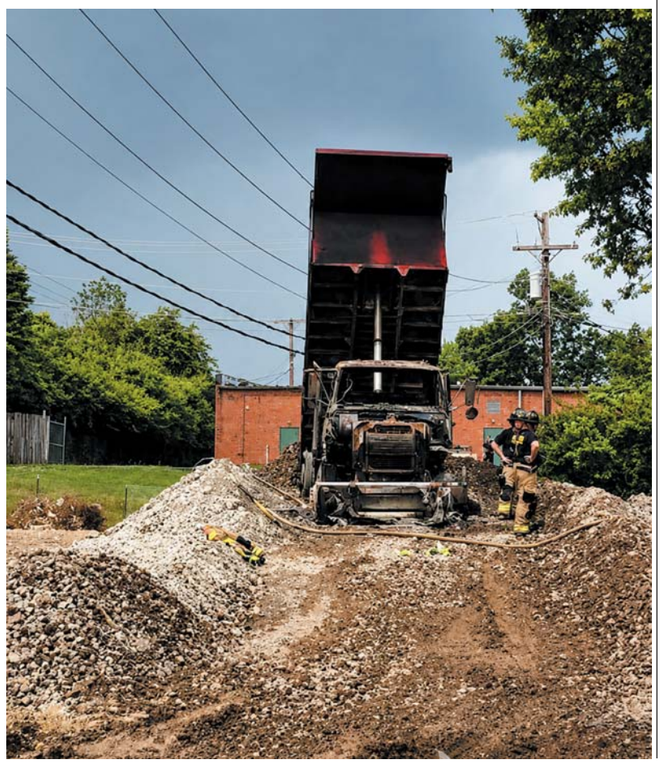
If a hazard analysis had been performed, it is likely that the overhead power lines would have been identified as a hazard due to the elevated terrain. Measures could have been taken to reduce the danger.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Due to the dump truck's design, the driver could not see what was directly behind or above the vehicle. In such a situation, drivers should have a spotter, especially when working around electrical lines. It was also found that the dump truck did not have a back-up alarm.

According to Ontario law, no employer shall use a vehicle where there is an obstructed view to the rear unless "The vehicle is backed up only when an observer signals that it is safe to do so."

Spotters should be a safe distance from the vehicle, and have a set of predetermined signals that can be communicated to the driver. The driver should stop immediately if he loses sight of the spotter. Had the victim used a spotter to help guide him while the dump truck was travelling in reverse, it is likely that the spotter would have observed the truck's bed getting close to the overhead power lines. He could have instructed the driver to stop before contact was made.



RECOMMENDATION #3

When high voltage lines are found on a site, it must be determined how many volts the overhead lines carry before the work even commences. In this way, plans can be implemented to ensure large equipment is kept a safe distance away. Most importantly, motor vehicles working on such a site should always maintain a safe working distance from the high voltage lines.

The law requires the utility owner / operator of the power lines to provide the requested voltage information within two working days of the employer's request. The overhead power line that the dump truck contacted was carrying 7.2 kilovolts (7,200 volts).

According to 'Table A – Minimum Clearance Distance' found in the Construction Regulations, the minimum safe distance the dump truck should have been from the power lines at that particular voltage was 3 metrres.

As a conductor of electricity gets close to a power line—especially those carrying high voltage—the electricity can 'jump', or arc, to the conductor. This happens when the voltage gradient (volts per meter) is sufficiently high, which can ionise gas molecules by ripping an outer electron off an atom and accelerating it. At higher voltages, electricity can arc further distances to the nearest conductor.

If the voltage information had been determined, and a plan put in place to keep large equipment a safe distance from the power lines, it is likely the dump truck would never have contacted the power lines.

RECOMMENDATION #4

When a vehicle contacts electrical power lines, best practice is for all passengers to remain in the vehicle and call 911. Due to the high voltage carried within power lines, electrical current can easily travel through the vehicle and into the ground below, electrifying a radius of up to 9 metres from the vehicle.

However, in this case, one of the dump truck's tyres caught fire, requiring the victim to exit the vehicle before the power could be disconnected.

In such situations where employees must exit a charged vehicle, it is recommended that they jump away from the truck as far as possible with both feet launching and then landing simultaneously.

They should then shuffle away—not lifting their feet to walk—until they are 9 metres from the vehicle. If a tingle is still felt in the body after 9 metres, they must continue shuffling further from the vehicle until the tingling is no longer felt.

Health risks posed in the aftermath of new construction:

Safety precautions of exposure to high concentrations of formaldehyde

Han Wenqi is an experienced workplace safety and health professional from Singapore, and an advocator 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.

Conducting a formaldehyde survey before any space occupation is a key essential. Formaldehyde is a pungent, colourless gas commonly emitted from new furniture, paint, and pressed wood. Formaldehyde is found in construction materials such as plywood adhesives. It has also been used in the sugar, rubber, food, petroleum, pharmaceuticals, and textiles industries.

ROUTES OF EXPOSURE

Inhalation

Most formaldehyde exposures occur by inhalation or by skin/eye contact.

Formaldehyde vapour is readily absorbed by the lungs. In cases of acute exposure, formaldehyde will most likely be detected by smell; however, persons who are sensitised to formaldehyde may experience headaches and minor eye and airway irritation at levels below the odour threshold (odour threshold is 0.5 to 1.0ppm; OSHA PEL is 0.75ppm).

For sensitised persons, odour is not an adequate indicator of formaldehyde's presence and may not be a reliable warning of hazardous concentrations. Odour adaptation can occur. Low dose acute exposure can result in headache, rhinitis, and dyspnea. High doses may cause severe mucous membrane irritation, burning, lacrimation, and lower respiratory effects such as bronchitis, pulmonary edema, or pneumonia.

Sensitive individuals may experience asthma and dermatitis, even at very low doses. Formaldehyde vapours are slightly heavier than air and can result in asphyxiation in poorly ventilated, enclosed, or low-lying areas.

Children exposed to the same levels of formaldehyde as adults may receive larger doses because they have greater lung surface area:body weight ratios and increased minute volumes:weight ratios. In addition, they may be exposed to higher levels than adults in the same location because of their short stature and the higher levels of formaldehyde found nearer to the ground.

Children are more vulnerable to toxicants absorbed through the skin because of their relatively larger surface area: body weight ratio.

Skin/eye contact

Ocular exposure to formaldehyde vapours produces irritation and lacrimation.

Depending on the concentration, formaldehyde solutions may cause transient discomfort and irritation, or more severe effects, including corneal opacification and loss of vision.

Formaldehyde is absorbed through intact skin and may cause irritation or allergic dermatitis; rapid metabolism makes systemic effects unlikely following dermal exposure.

Children are more vulnerable to toxicants absorbed through the skin because of their relatively larger surface area: body weight ratio.

Ingestion

Ingestion of as little as 30 mL (1 oz.) of a solution containing 37% formaldehyde has been reported to cause death in an adult.

Ingestion may cause corrosive injury to the gastrointestinal mucosa, with nausea, vomiting, pain, bleeding, and perforation.

Corrosive injuries are usually most pronounced in the pharyngeal mucosa, epiglottis and esophagus. Systemic effects include metabolic acidosis, CNS depression and coma, respiratory distress, and renal failure.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

- OSHA PEL (permissible exposure limit) = 0.75ppm (averaged over an 8-hour workshift).
- OSHA STEL (short-term exposure limit) = 2ppm (15 minute exposure).
- NIOSH IDLH (immediately dangerous to life or health) = 20ppm.
- AIHA ERPG-2 (emergency response planning guideline) (the maximum airborne concentration below which it is believed that nearly all individuals could be exposed for up to one hour without experiencing or developing irreversible or other serious health effects or symptoms, which could impair an individual's ability to take protective action) = 10ppm.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Description

Formaldehyde is a near colourless gas with a pungent, irritating odour.

Warning properties

Odour is detectable at less than 1ppm, but many sensitive persons experience symptoms below the odour threshold.

Molecular weight

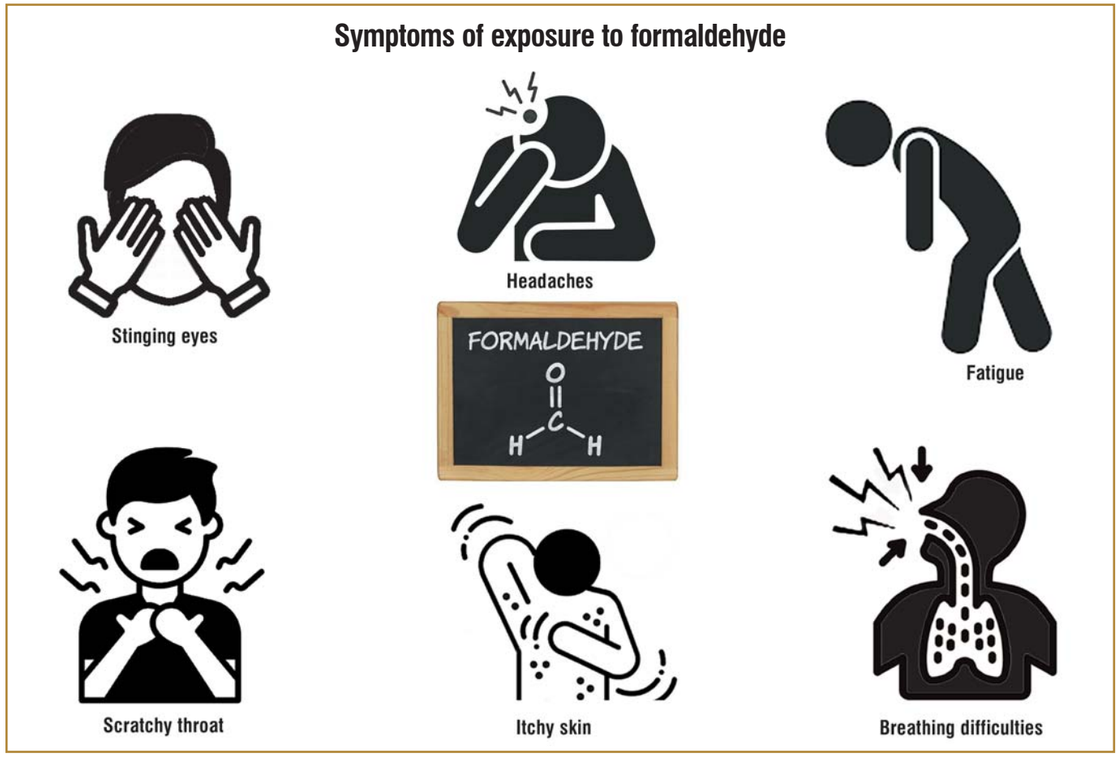
30.0 daltons

Boiling point

(760 mmHg): - 6°F (-21°C)

Vapour pressure

3883 mmHg at 77°F (25°C)



Gas density

1.07 (air = 1)

Water solubility

55% at 68°F (20°C)

Flammability

Flammable gas between 7% and 73% at 77°F (25°C) (concentration in air); combustible liquid (formalin)

Incompatibilities

Formaldehyde reacts with strong oxidizers, alkalis, acids, phenols, and urea. Pure formaldehyde has a tendency to polymerise.

SYMPTOMS OF EXPOSURE

The severity of symptoms depends on your proximity, the concentration of the gas, and the duration of the exposure.

- **Mild to moderate exposure**:

  Stinging eyes, itchy skin, coughing, sore throat, headaches, and nausea.
- **Severe exposure:**

  Breathing difficulties, wheezing, bronchitis, or asthma attacks.

IMMEDIATE ACTION & RELIEF

In the scenario if you are experiencing acute formaldehyde exposure (often from new renovations or new furniture).

- **Remove yourself:**

  Move to an area with fresh, clean air immediately.
- **Ventilate:**

  Open all windows and use exhaust fans to increase airflow and flush out built-up gases.
- **Wash off:**

  If the fumes caused a skin reaction, thoroughly wash the affected skin with cool water.

LONG-TERM REDUCTION & RESOURCES

Due to the fact that formaldehyde is heavier than air, it can linger in enclosed spaces.

In newly renovated homes, it can take up to two years to completely off-gas to average levels.

- **Speeding off-gassing:**

  Use air purifiers equipped with activated carbon filters and run fans or dehumidifiers to increase circulation.
- **Seek care:**

  If you experience severe respiratory distress, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

Understanding construction project work method statements

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

Working currently as the Pr.CHSA on a major road construction project, I realised few CHS practitioners experience reviewing the various method statements required to be approved before construction work starts.

The project's appointed principal contractor needs to construct the required major road on behalf of the road-owner client. The principal contractor becomes the responsibility cascading Construction Regulation's section 5 client, when the principal contractor appoints the sub-contractors to construct the many various difference aspects of the construction work process stages.

All the various construction work stages introduce construction risks, requiring the principal contractor perform to his own a Baseline Risk Assessments (CR5(1)(a)) to document the risks he and his sub-contractors are likely to encounter.

Based on the risk assessments identified, analysed and evaluated risks, the various project aspect construction work activities now require associated method statements to be developed for pre-construction work approval for the road structures and earthworks before being implemented.

Understanding the method statements for the road works essentially includes the statements for site establishment, surveyor pegs layouts, traffic accommodation, ground and hillside excavations, excavation depth ground level assessments, excavation slope's stabilisation, embankment material stabilised earth, abutments for the various road structures, the introduction of the road layer works, pavement surfacing followed by the erection of road signage, road marking and road guard rails installation.

Similarly, the structure method statements have different method statement requirements related to the type of structure to be erected. These structure method statements include designer drawings and constructability method instructions, surveyor peg layouts, traffic accommodation for intersections and road deviations, excavation to structure foundation levels (including water channel drainage customisation), borehole and cast-in-situ pile construction, structure foundation excavation compaction and layering, scaffolding and fall risks, temporary works and steel reinforcing placement before structure casting, river and rail bridge structures, pre-cast structure placements (e.g. culverts, agricultural underpasses), concrete sample testing and concrete curing periods, pier and bridge deck construction, and perhaps complex structures construction, like possibly bridge deck jacking and/or bridge deck incremental launching across bridge piers, etc.

Each method statement should represent the sequence on the job-task steps to be performed to complete the method statement's process activities. Part of the method statement involves ensuring that the construction work checks and balances are included and that a record of the key approval hold point approval requirement is performed and verified within the method statements.

Consider an outline for a road works method statement for constructing a section of road crossing a steep hill-side slope. The illustrative outline presents the key listed construction work hold points without describing the various detailed specific construction work materials, layer thicknesses, quality requirements (e.g. 25-35MPa concrete, 95% Mod AASHTO compaction) and other technical requirement that need to be specified within the method statement's step requirement details, but the necessary construction work check/Hold points are shown.

PROJECT METHOD STATEMENT (MS- 0035)- EXAMPLE

Road construction section (1.75km to 2.5km) up and across the steep hill slope

1. Method statement purpose

To specifically define the procedure, for the project requirements, standards and the engineer's requirements, for constructing the road works and associated excavated slope stability, for a section of road carriageway to be located up and crossing a steely sloped hillside.

2. Scope of works

The method statement scope for the construction work of a defined 1.75km to 2.5km section of a dual carriage roadway to be located up and across a hill-side slope.

3. Reference documents

(Laws, COTO, contracts, project drawings, geotechnical info, H&S Spec, SANS standards, etc).

4. Plant, equipment, and materials

4.1 *Plant and Equipment* (list all plant and equipment to be used).

4.2 *Materials* (list all materials, chemicals, substances, etc to be used).

5. Construction methodology

5.1 *Contractor site establishment and works areas traffic accommodation* – for site, work areas and access protection).

5.2 *Setting out* – road survey layout pegs

- Hold point HP1: Setting out approval (by the project engineer).

5.3 *Excavation:* Slope cut excavation and spoil removal to formation preparation level excavation and slope excavation with excavation slope stabilisation (soil nail drilling and installation, drainage, mesh and shotcrete).

- Hold point HP2: Excavated slope and founding material inspection / Geotechnical confirmation.
- Hold point HP3: Soil nail holes alignment and depth inspection.
- Hold point HP4: Soil nail bars pre-grouting and post-grouting pre-curing inspections and approvals.
- Hold point HP5: Soil nails load testing – engineer witnessed and approved.
- Hold point HP6: Inspect and approve the technical drainage material installed on the excavation slope.
- Hold point HP7: Drainage technical material placement inspection and approval.
- Hold point HP8: Excavation slope stabilised with steel grid mesh placement inspection and approval, pre-shotcrete applications.
- Hold point HP9: Inspection and approval of the shotcrete thickness and quality.

5.4 *Excavation and formation preparation*

Road excavation level inspection and exposed ground surface proof rolled

- Hold point HP6: Formation / proof roll condition inspection or action to be taken to improve ground works condition before approval (e.g. layer stabilisation).

Layer Works:

5.5 Subgrade preparation

Fill and subgrade materials placement (in 150 to 200m layers) compacted and density tested.

- Hold point HP10: Compaction test approval per layer before subgrade approval.

5.6 Subbase construction

Specified subbase material types placed in layers, shaped to required camber and levels.

- Hold point HP11: Subbase layers density and level approvals.

5.7. Base layer construction

Specified crushed stone placed in layers, spread, watered, compacted and trimmed to tolerances.

- Hold point HP12: Base course approvals (levels, density tested, surface finish).

Asphalting Works - Scope

Construction of asphalt surfacing layers for the road:

- Prime coat.
- Tack coat.
- Asphalt base/binder/wearing course.
- Asphalt risk exposure, follow the Asphalt Safety Data Sheet (SDS) PPE requirements.

5.8 *Surface preparation*

Clean base (no dust or loose material) and repair defects.

- Hold point HP13: Surface readiness approval before priming.

5.9 Prime coat

Apply specified bituminous prime, allow curing before asphalt placement.

- Hold point HP14: Prime coat inspection and approval.

5.10 Tack coat

Apply uniformly before asphalt layers

5.11 Asphalt placement

Asphalt delivery temperature control, layer using paver then immediate steel and pneumatic rolling, rolling patterns to achieve the required density.

Place the binder course and wearing course as specified.

- Hold point HP15: Asphalt density and temperature compliances.

5.12 Road marking and finishing works

Road cleaning, markings layout survey, road stud, road signage and guard rail installation work.

- Hold point 16: Road marking final approval (quality, alignment reflectivity, etc).

6. Quality control

7. Health and safety

8. Environmental management (along the road corridor)

9. Final notes/completion

10. Inspection, test programme and hold point

Sign off Table

Activity	Inspection	Frequency	Acceptance Criteria	Responsibility	Hold Point	Sign-Off

DuPont sets a new standard for chemical protection suits:

The Tyvek® 400 APX™ innovation

At a recent gathering of distributors at the African Pride Hotel Melrose Arch, DuPont introduced its latest innovation: the Tyvek® 400 APX™ Disposable Chemical Protection Coverall. Manufactured using advanced material technology, the new coverall aims to address one of the PPE industry's long-standing challenges — improving breathability in chemical protection suits without compromising protection or durability.

Distributors participated in a packed programme featuring presentations, an interactive quiz session followed by networking over lunch.

This next generation of Tyvek® was presented by Andrzej Palka - Leader, EMEA DuPont Personal Protection, Luxembourg, who explained that although the product is still in its early stages of rollout, DuPont only launched APX after years of scientific research, extensive trials and close collaboration with customers. DuPont first carried out internal testing across a variety of climates and working conditions before the product was independently tested by EMPA (Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology) to verify its performance.

According to Palka, APX offers workers an advanced combination of protection and comfort. Heat stress is reduced while high levels of protection are maintained, making the garment suitable for hazardous environments such as mining, chemical processing and pharmaceuticals.

He noted that as industries continue to evolve, DuPont remains focused on innovation and responding to the changing needs of end users. By listening closely to customer feedback, the company continues to pursue its core objective of improving dermal protection while developing new PPE solutions.

During the discussion session, the DuPont team welcomed suggestions and feedback from distributors to "take back to the drawing board". DuPont is therefore encouraging ongoing user input to help further refine and enhance the product.

CONCLUSION

Tyvek® 400 APX™ is a significant improvement in wearer comfort for Type 5/6 chemical protective clothing, especially in hot or physically demanding environments.

Ajen Maharaj concluded the proceedings by giving the example of a recent trip he had made to a mine in the region where workers were operating in extreme heat conditions. Although they wore their PPE, the intense temperatures often led them to take shortcuts.

It is hoped that with this new product, workers in such situations will no longer feel the need to compromise on their safety.

MAIN STRENGTHS OF TYVEK® 400 APX™

1. Extreme breathability

APX was specifically engineered to improve air circulation, moisture escape and heat dissipation. This is especially important for workers wearing PPE for long shifts or in hot environments.

2. Reduced heat stress

Overheating in PPE is a safety issue. Empa testing showed measurable comfort improvements versus traditional chemical garments.

3. Maintains Tyvek-level protection

The new material keeps the chemical barrier protection and durability associated with standard Tyvek® garments while improving comfort.

4. Lightweight feel

The garments feel lighter and less restrictive than older chemical suits.

Premier Workwear:
Engineered protection for Africa's industrial workforce

In high-risk industrial environments, protective clothing is far more than a uniform requirement — it is a critical component of workplace safety, operational reliability and regulatory compliance. For procurement professionals, safety managers and operational leaders, selecting the right supplier means finding a partner capable of consistently delivering compliant, durable and fit-for-purpose solutions at scale.

This is the role Premier Workwear has built its business around for more than four decades.

As a leading Southern African manufacturer and supplier of workwear, PPE and specialised protective clothing, Premier Workwear supports organisations across mining, energy, utilities, logistics, manufacturing, construction, emergency services and heavy industry. The company's approach combines regional manufacturing capability, global technical partnerships and a strong understanding of African operating conditions to deliver dependable protection solutions to industrial customers throughout the region.

A key differentiator for Premier Workwear is its reliable large-scale supply capability supported through its manufacturing and stock-holding capacities. Premier Workwear recognises that large organisations require more than access to products. They require consistency, dependable lead times, product continuity, technical support and confidence that the equipment supplied aligns with recognised safety standards and operational requirements.

Premier Workwear has positioned itself to meet these expectations through structured sourcing, quality-focused manufacturing processes and the development of specialised product ranges aligned to demanding industrial applications.

The company offers a comprehensive portfolio of compliant and standards-driven products, including general industrial workwear, safety footwear, high-visibility apparel, rainwear, corporate uniforms and specialist PPE solutions. In addition, Premier Workwear has developed strong expertise in technically advanced protective garment categories, including flame-resistant (FR) clothing, arc protection garments and chemical protective apparel designed for hazardous working environments.

These specialised ranges are increasingly important as industries place greater emphasis on risk mitigation, workforce protection and compliance with international safety standards. In sectors such as utilities, oil and gas, mining, chemicals and heavy manufacturing, the consequences of inadequate protection can be severe.

Premier Workwear works closely with customers to ensure garment selection is aligned with workplace hazards, compliance requirements and wearer comfort.

Beyond product supply, the company provides flexible and tailored service solutions designed to support complex operational environments. This includes customised Service Level Agreements (SLAs), Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) programmes and structured supply arrangements that assist customers in improving stock availability, reducing procurement complexity and ensuring continuity of supply across multiple sites and operations.

Premier Workwear also offers extensive customisation capabilities, including bespoke garment design, branding, embroidery, reflective configurations and tailored uniform programmes aligned to operational requirements and corporate identity standards. This allows organisations to maintain both functional protection and a professional, consistent workforce image.

The company's philosophy is that effective PPE should not only protect workers, but also support productivity and encourage consistent usage. This has driven ongoing investment into fabric innovation, garment engineering and wearer comfort technologies that improve mobility, breathability and overall performance in demanding environments.

One example is the company's innovative FlexiCool range, developed to provide enhanced movement and moisture management while maintaining durability and professional appearance. The range reflects a broader industry shift toward modern PPE solutions that combine protection, comfort and functionality.

As African industries continue to modernise and expand, the demand for reliable, standards-driven protective solutions continues to grow. Organisations increasingly require supply partners capable of delivering both technical expertise and dependable execution.

Through its focus on quality, compliance, innovation and long-term customer partnerships, Premier Workwear continues to position itself as a trusted partner in protecting the people who power Africa's industries.

To learn more about Premier Workwear and its range of workwear, PPE and specialised protective clothing solutions, connect with the team or visit the company online.

Zambia Sugar Company increases safety budget to K100million ($5.3million)

Mark Kaunda is a safety consultant, trainer, instructor, writer and speaker with over 15 years of combined industry experience. Based in Zambia, Mark is the Founder and CEO of SafetyFocus Suppliers, a leading safety company in Zambia supplying safety products, safety trainings and consultancy works.

Zambia Sugar Company is demonstrating an impressive commitment towards safety. With Oswald Magwenzi as Managing Director, Zambia Sugar has been making a visible safety impact on its workers and the communities. When you read this article, you'll agree that Zambia Sugar is a shining star worthy of emulating by other companies when it comes to workplace safety.

Recently Zambia Sugar hosted a Safety Week from 4th to 8th May, 2026 under the theme *Working Together to Create a Safe Place to Work.* The 5-day Safety Week was packed with exciting activities and performances. Each department was given an opportunity to showcase their safety performance to the rest of the company. On the final day, Zambia Sugar presented safety awards to recognise and celebrate its workers and contractors for their outstanding safety performance.

Although I missed the first four days, what I witnessed on the final day left me super impressed. In this article, I will share some key highlights that stood out for me.

KEY SAFETY INITIATIVES USED TO DRIVE SAFETY AT ZAMBIA SUGAR

With over 7,000 employees, Zambia Sugar has implemented many initiatives and programmes aimed at promoting safety in the workplace and beyond. Here are few initiatives that captured my attention.

Busongo teams use dance and drama to drive safety

1. Zambia Sugar increased its safety budget from K45 million ($2.4 million) in 2025 to K100 million ($5.3 million) for the period of 2026 and 2027. But, their safety spend goes beyond just buying PPE. By sponsoring various safety events in Zambia, they contribute towards improving the safety culture of our country and beyond. For example, Zambia Sugar was the headline sponsor of the 2024 and 2025 AfriSAFE Awards, 2026 Zambia Safety Awards and 2025 Zambia Occupational Health and Safety Association Gala Dinner among others.

2. Zambia Sugar places emphasis on leading indicators rather than lagging indicators. Instead of celebrating and rewarding workers for achieving low Lost Time Injury, Zambia Sugar rewards prevention. They celebrate workers and reward them for stopping work if the situation is unsafe, for reporting near misses, and for introducing initiatives to improve safety.

3. Zambia Sugar rewards contractors for good safety performance, and not just workers. This motivates contractors to improve the safety of their own workers and to comply with Zambia Sugar's safety requirements. Zambia Sugar conducts safety audits on their contractors to ensure that they stay compliant, thereby driving safety into the supply chain. Meeting safety requirements is part of the procurement process.

4. Workers are empowered to stop work if unsafe. They get awarded for stopping production for safety reasons. Every worker is given a card signed by the CEO authorising them to stop work that's not safe.

5. Zambia Sugar uses drama to drive safety. The drama teams are called Busongo which means wisdom. These teams are found in most of the company's sites. When I inquired how workers manage to do rehearsals, I was told that the teams are given permission to do their rehearsals during normal working hours. Introducing drama has made safety entertaining, thereby increasing its acceptability and awareness into the organisation. The Busongo Drama groups drive safety messages through songs, dances and poems.

THE AWARDS THAT STOOD OUT FOR ME

Zambia Sugar presented numerous awards to its workers. I estimate that more than fifty workers received awards—including the department awards. I tried to keep track of the number of 220 Ltr fridges that were given to workers, but I lost count when I reached fifteen.

Following are few awards that stood out for me:

A School Safety Club was awarded for contributing to safety using drama, poems and dances among other things

1. One worker was awarded for gathering his courage to speak to the director for not stopping at a rail crossing. He was given a fridge for his act of bravery. The company policy demands that everyone stops at the rail crossing.

2. One worker was awarded for stopping work and refusing to work during critical maintenance until safety measures were taken. He was given a fridge.

3. A team was awarded for refusing to continue working after the work permit expired. They insisted that the permit be renewed before resuming work. Each team member was given a fridge.

4. One worker was awarded for consistently wearing cyclist PPE when reporting for work and for ensuring that his bicycle had all the safety features. His commitment to bicycle safety is something that even Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) and Zambia Traffic Police noticed and recognised. He was given a fridge.

An award ceremony was held at the end of the Safety Week hosted by Zambia Sugar, under the theme *Working Together to Create a Safe Place to Work*

5. A contractor company was awarded for outstanding safety performance. The contractor is a transporter for Zambia Sugar.

6. A School Safety Club was awarded for contributing to safety using drama, poems and dances among other things. Each pupil was given a school bag, shoes, uniform and other school essentials. The school is owned and run by Zambia Sugar.

THE AWARDS CATEGORIES

The following are some of the awards categories. Some had multiple winners while others had only one individual or group winner.

1. SHE Rep of the year
2. Safety Ambassadors of the year
3. Stop Work For Safety
4. Leadership Commitment
5. First Aider of the year
6. Fireman of the year
7. Contractor of the year
8. Most Improved Department
9. Green Award promoting environment and sustainability
10. Best Overall Execution of Safety KPIs
11. Managing Director's Choice.

Imagine what our industry could achieve if every company took safety in a manner Zambia Sugar is doing! That imagination is possible if we all emulate Zambia Sugar. Zambia sugar is showing us that it's possible. If Zambia Sugar can do it, every company can do it too.

To improve safety in our organisations, we need a new way of thinking. We need new initiatives such as drama and safety awards to motivate workers and contractors to comply with safety.

Should LPG plants be allowed near residential areas in developing economies?

Providence Akpa is a Business Risk and Operational Excellence Advisor and Executive Consultant with over 25 years of experience delivering strategic solutions in Occupational Safety, Environmental Sustainability, ESG, HSE and climate risk.
He is the Principal Consultant at QHSE Services Provyda Ltd, Nigeria.
Providence has a PhD in Occupational Safety Health, a Master in Environmental Chemistry and Pollution Control, a BSc in Industrial Chemistry.

Globally, the debate around LPG facilities near residential areas is not new. In many advanced economies, stricter urban planning systems, stronger enforcement, engineered safety controls, and emergency response capabilities help manage the risks associated with LPG operations. Even then, incidents still occur.

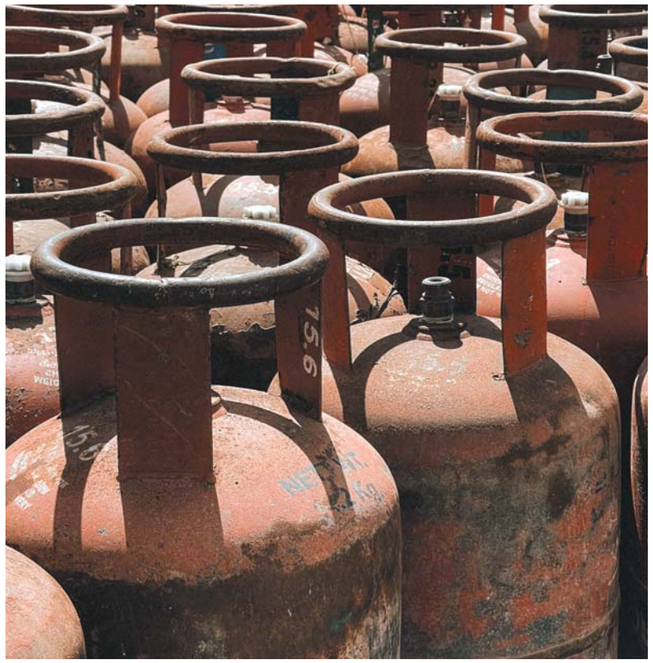
The challenge becomes far more complex in developing economies where rapid urban expansion, weak infrastructure control, inconsistent enforcement, and commercial pressure often collide.

In countries like Nigeria, residential developments frequently grow around existing LPG facilities, while in other cases, LPG plants are introduced into already congested environments. The result is a dangerous overlap between energy demand and public safety exposure.

The question, therefore, should not simply be whether LPG plants should exist near residential areas. The real question is whether the surrounding risks are truly understood, assessed, controlled, and continuously managed.

From experience, many discussions focus heavily on approval and siting distances, yet risk extends far beyond location.

The real threats often emerge during operations: poor maintenance culture, weak process safety



systems, inadequate hazard analysis, compromised emergency preparedness, poor traffic management, untrained personnel, and limited community awareness.

A facility can meet minimum regulatory requirements and still remain operationally vulnerable.

This is where many developing economies face a deeper challenge, not the absence of regulations, but the gap between compliance and sustained operational discipline.

Globally, modern risk management is shifting toward lifecycle safety management, where environmental, operational, and community risks are continuously evaluated from design to decommissioning. Unfortunately, many facilities in emerging economies still operate within reactive systems rather than predictive ones.

The consequences are significant. A single LPG incident in a densely populated area can trigger loss of lives, environmental damage, economic disruption, reputational crises, and long-term public distrust, not just for operators, but for regulators and the entire sector.

The solution, therefore, is not fear-driven opposition. It is stronger risk governance.

Proper EIA, process safety management, emergency response planning, operational audits, land-use control, and continuous regulatory oversight must become non-negotiable.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether LPG plants are near people. It is whether the systems protecting those people are truly working.

Hidden risks of on-site fuel storage

Kobus Groenewald, Consultant for GIB Insurance Brokers

With fuel prices rising, businesses across fuel-dependent sectors have been forced to rethink how they manage their supply.

From agriculture where fuel is used for everything from powering machinery and transporting produce to ensuring equipment can be run off-grid in the event of electricity instability, to freight and logistics, construction and others, many businesses store fuel on site. This assists in managing operational continuity to accommodating day-to-day activities while shielding businesses from price volatility. But according to Kobus Groenewald, Consultant for GIB Insurance Brokers, it's also important they are cognisant of risk exposures that may apply.

"Fuel storage is governed by layered safety standards and municipal by-laws," explains Groenewald. "With businesses accommodating their fuel needs on site, they need to amend their risk management practices and policies, or they may find themselves operating outside the conditions insurers expect to see in place."

Industry bodies—including the South African Insurance Association—have warned that speculation around fuel supply and rising costs is prompting both households and businesses to store fuel. But many are not fully cognisance of compliance and safety storage requirements.

COMPLIANCE THRESHOLDS

One of the biggest misconceptions is that fuel kept in drums, containers or small tanks is automatically regarded as low risk. In reality, even relatively modest quantities of petrol or diesel fall under flammable substances regulations and municipal fire safety by-laws. These rules vary between municipalities, but they generally place limits on the quantities that may be stored.

Where storage exceeds those limits, businesses may be required to install approved flammable stores or obtain certification from local authorities. Even where quantities fall within permissible thresholds, storage conditions still need to meet basic safety conditions. These typically include the use of certified containers, storage in well-ventilated areas away from ignition sources, proper labelling of fuel types and clear warning signage. Separation from electrical equipment or open flames is essential, as is ensuring that basic fire protection equipment is available nearby.

The physical environment is also critical. Storage areas should be designed to prevent spills from spreading, often through the use of bunded areas or containment trays. Businesses should have a spill response plan in place. In operational environments where fuel is transferred between containers or equipment, precautions must be in place to prevent static discharge.

"We understand the practical reality where fuel storage on premises develops gradually with a few extra drums here and there, and over time the need to review and disclose information to insurance processes can be overlooked," says Groenewald. "It is important to continually engage your broker for a full review."

He adds that agricultural and commercial insurance policies do not always prescribe a fixed litre limit for fuel storage. Instead, underwriting decisions typically rely on disclosure of the exposure and confirmation that the insured is complying with applicable regulations and safety standards. "Where fuel storage is not fully disclosed or documented, insurers may only become aware of the exposure after a loss event has occurred," he adds, "and the reason why brokers encourage clients to revisit how their fuel storage is recorded.

"In many cases the solution is not complicated. Businesses must simply document how fuel is stored on their premises, and record the quantities. Once that information is available, brokers and underwriters can assess whether the controls in place comply with safety standards," says Groenewald.

Fuel storage and handling must align with the law—including the Occupational Health and Safety Act, as well as other applicable safety regulations governing hazardous substances. Relevant South African National Standards, particularly those dealing with dangerous goods storage, may also apply, depending on the nature of the operation.

Municipal fire safety by-laws form another critical layer. These regulations determine storage limits, and may require specific infrastructure or permits if those limits are exceeded. Because the rules differ between municipalities, businesses operating across multiple sites may face different compliance requirements at each location.

Then there is the value of the fuel. Larger on-site reserves mean that a higher insured value may be necessary at any given time. If the sums insured have not been adjusted to reflect the higher value of stored fuel, businesses could face underinsurance in the event of a loss.

"When fuel storage is approached as part of a structured risk review, it becomes manageable," Groenewald concludes. "The challenge arises when storage develops informally and the insurance programme has not been updated to reflect that reality. That is when businesses can be caught off guard."

Warnings of fire safety during winter months

Johannesburg EMS issued an urgent fire safety warning following a fatal fire at Zamampilo informal settlement.

With winter upon South Africa countries, Johannesburg Emergency Management Services (EMS) has issued a critical plea for heightened fire safety understanding, requesting employers create awareness among their employees.

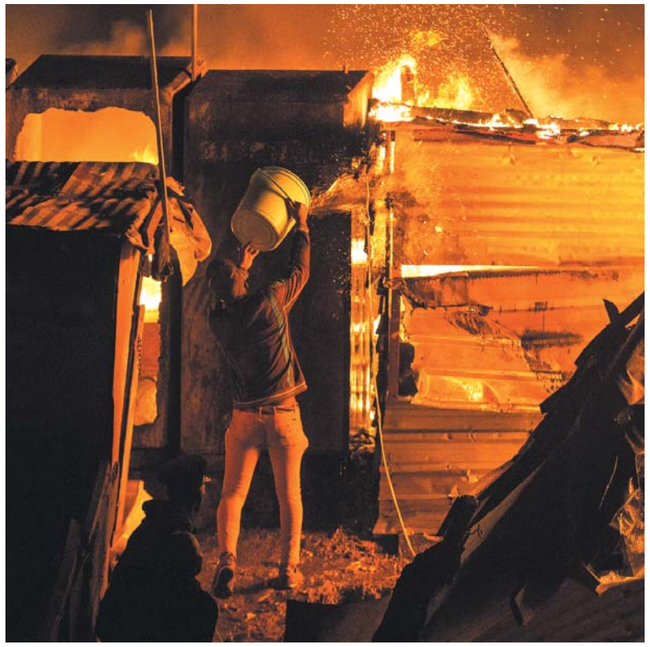
This urgent warning comes in the wake of a devastating tragedy in the Zamampilo informal settlement, where four-year-old twins lost their lives in a fire which ripped through their home during the early morning hours of May 12, 2026.

The sudden shift in weather saw many residents "scrambling" to heat their homes, often using high-risk methods. But these “quick solutions” can lead to fatal consequences.

A HEARTBREAKING REMINDER OF THE STAKES

The fire in Zamampilo serves as a grim reminder of how quickly heating devices can turn deadly. Johannesburg EMS officials emphasise that vigilance is the only defence against such tragedies.

"We are urging all residents, whether in informal settlement shacks in apartment buildings or brick structure homes to never leave heating devices unattended. The tragic loss of the young lives is a reminder that constant supervision is necessary when heating devices are in use," a spokesperson for EMS stated.



Although this article focuses on the home environment, the above applies equally to heaters used in the office environment. Heaters used may be left on at the end of the day, sometimes for the entire weekend. The consequences and costs could be devastating for the company involved.

GUIDELINES FOR WINTER HOME SAFETY

To prevent loss of life and destruction of property, EMS has outlined the following mandatory safety measures in the home:

1. Never leave heat sources unattended

This includes electric heaters, paraffin stoves, and braziers. Always turn them off before leaving the room or going to sleep.

2. Supervise children

Small children should never be left alone in a room where a heating device is in use.

3. Maintain clearance

Ensure there is ample space around any heating device. Keep flammable materials like curtains, bedding, and furniture at a safe distance.

4. Check equipment

Inspect all heaters for frayed cords or leaks before use. Ensure they are used according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY?

In the event of a fire, every second counts. Johannesburg EMS advises residents to take the following immediate actions.

1. Call for Help

Dial 112 from any mobile phone (toll-free) to reach the emergency services. |

2. Extinguish

While waiting for firefighters to arrive, attempt to extinguish the fire using buckets of water or sand—provided of course it is safe to do so.

3. Evacuate

If the fire spreads rapidly, prioritise evacuation. Ensure everyone is out of the dwelling immediately.

LOOKING AHEAD

With the "strange weather conditions" expected to persist, Johannesburg EMS remains on high alert. Employers are encouraged to share these safety tips with their employees to ensure a collective effort in keeping the community safe during this premature winter season.

Remember: Safety starts with you. Stay warm, but stay alert.

SAIOH News

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

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

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

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

SAIOH President's Message

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

Fellow members and colleagues,

We are already almost halfway through 2026; a reminder of how quickly the year moves and how important it is to keep working together with purpose and care.

These past few months presented challenges for our Institute and for many of us, personally too. I want to speak plainly and from the heart: I am immensely grateful for the resilience, patience and kindness I have seen across our community as SAIOH navigates the operational challenges we are experiencing.

Behind the scenes our small team has been working long hours to keep services running: finalising upgrades to the Quality Management System (QMS), getting the new website ready, and rebuilding branch activity. I must acknowledge the work put into this by our SAIOH administrative staff.

To help carry this load and elevate the service to our members, we have advertised four new roles — an additional full-time administrative support person, two part-time assistant examiners for the Professional Certification Committee (PCC) to support our Chief Examiner, and a full-time Communications and Digital Media Manager. I am hopeful these appointments will bring much needed breathing room and momentum.

On a personal note, many of you will know Lee and Rebecca Doolan from our PCC administrative team. Their recent loss has touched us all. Please join me in keeping their family in your thoughts. I have been moved by how members have reached out with support and grace; this human kindness is what defines us.

Despite constraints, our PCC has kept to its commitments; exams in March, oral assessments underway and the next written cycle planned for June.

Our technical teams continue to advance practical guidance on heat stress, real-time monitoring and ergonomics, and CPD opportunities remain available through a steady stream of webinars.

I am particularly excited about our 2026 Annual Scientific Conference, which the Gauteng Branch and the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) are shaping into a meaningful gathering to mark NIOH's 70th anniversary.

It will be held from 28 September to 1 October 2026 at the Thaba Eco Hotel in Johannesburg under the theme 'Building Stronger Partnerships for Healthier Workplaces'.

If you have a story, data, case study or practical lesson to share, please submit an abstract by 10 July 2026; your experience matters and fuels our collective learning.

I want to acknowledge and thank Deon Jansen van Vuuren for his extraordinary, largely voluntary service over many years to SAIOH, and especially over the last several years as the SAIOH General Manager; we owe him a great deal of gratitude and wish him well in the next chapter of his life.

At the same time, I warmly welcome Claudina Nogueira as our new General Manager. Claudina steps into a pivotal role at an important time for SAIOH, and I look forward to working closely with her as we strengthen our operations and member services.

Lastly, many thanks to each of you - branch volunteers, committee members, candidates, examiners, and the many silent contributors - for staying the course. If you have ideas, concerns or simply want to connect, please reach out to me or to our office. SAIOH is strongest when we work together and look out for one another.

With sincere appreciation,
Cas

SAIOH's Quarter in Review

From March to May 2026, SAIOH has endeavoured to manage the operational constraints that it has been facing since the end of 2025, in a period that has been most challenging for the Institute.

SAIOH remains committed to its membership and mandates and is focussing on strengthening administrative capacity, revitalising branch functionality, and finalising the functional upgrades of both the QMS and the new website.

New SAIOH posts have been advertised to support the delivery of the aforementioned areas of focus, viz. an additional full-time administrative support staff member and part-time assistant examiners to strengthen PCC capacity, and a full-time Communications and Digital Media Manager.

SAIOH and its members extend condolences to Lee and Rebecca Doolan - our colleagues, friends, and PCC administrative staff members - who recently lost their husband and father-in-law Kevin, respectively. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Doolan family at this difficult time, and we are appreciative of the patience and compassion shown by SAIOH members in their time of sorrow.

Despite operational constraints, the PCC has continued delivering on its core mandate with first-quarter written assessments having been conducted on 6 March 2026, with the required follow-up processes underway. Preparation has continued for the first oral assessments of this year, and the next cycle of written assessments, scheduled for the month of June.

The Occupational Hygiene Skills Set development team remains committed, meeting regularly to advance professional standards, and members have benefitted from ongoing access to local and international webinars through accredited organisations like the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) and the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA), ensuring CPD opportunities.

The scientific programme for the 2026 SAIOH Annual Conference is under development, as is the planning of the professional development courses (PDCs) that are always associated with the conference.

SAIOH is pleased to extend hearty congratulations to Prof. Spo Kgalamono on her permanent appointment as Executive Director of the NIOH. SAIOH and its members look forward to continuing the valuable relationship between the two organisations over the next five years, under Prof. Kgalamono's guidance, and we wish her every success in her NIOH leadership role.

National Council Feedback

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

SAIOH Management Update: 1 March – 25 May 2026

Governance and Operational Engagements

Engagements worth noting include the following:

- Several members of SAIOH Management attended the online meeting between SAIOH, the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), and the Occupational Hygiene Approved Inspection Authority (OHAIA) Association on 24 March 2026.
- A SAIOH Management Board meeting was held on 16 April 2026.
- The DEL and SAIOH held a meeting on 22 April 2026 to start the process of drafting a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two entities.
- As an endorsing organisation of the Global Occupational Safety and Health (GOSH) Coalition, SAIOH submitted a letter to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) in support of the Coalition's 'Call to Action'. The document urges the WHO and delegates to the 79th World Health Assembly (WHA) to ensure that worker health remains firmly embedded in global strategies and action plans despite severe budget cuts and other constraints. The WHA was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 18 - 23 May 2026.

Established following the ICOH2024 Congress in Marrakesh, Morocco, the GOSH Coalition now comprises 19 participating organisations, including SAIOH. The Coalition seeks to strengthen OSH capacity globally and advocates for basic occupational health services for all workers, including those in the informal economy, enhanced protection for young workers, and safeguards against the impacts of climate change on worker health and safety.

SAIOH Branch Activities

- The KwaZulu-Natal Branch held a hybrid meeting on 9 April 2026, with in-person attendance at the Environmental Science Building of the Durban University of Technology (DUT).
- The Western Cape Branch held an in-person meeting on 17 April 2026 at Intaka Island Activity Centre, Century City, Cape Town - the first meeting under the leadership of the new Branch Chair, Ms Lizette Greeff. The next meeting (online only) is scheduled for 19 June 2026.
- The Gauteng Branch held an online meeting on 15 May 2026, under the leadership of the new Branch Chair, Ms Monica Young. A call for nominations for the new Gauteng Branch Committee was shared with SAIOH members on 9 March 2026.
- Several other regional structures — including the Central (Free State), Northern Cape, and Mpumalanga Branches, as well as the Zululand Discussion Group — remain inactive.

SAIOH Technical Committee Feedback

Work is ongoing and at various stages of development in terms of technical guidance documents on heat stress management, real-time monitoring, and ergonomics risk assessments.

Communications, Marketing and Training – Local and International

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

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

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

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

- Government Notice: Declaration - GN 7221 in GG 54319 regarding the Hazardous Substances Act 15 of 1973: Extension of the Implementation Date of Group I, Category A, Category B And Group II Hazardous Substances, dated 13 March 2026 with the commencing date being 13 September 2027:

https://shorturl.at/fPUT2

- A media statement from the DEL on the elimination of silicosis in non-mining sectors was shared on 16 March 2026:

https://tinyurl.com/4cvstvb2

- Links were shared for the virtual attendance of the DEL's National Occupational Health and Safety Conference, held from 17 to 19 March 2026 and themed 'Beyond Compliance: Prevention in Practice'. The recording of the proceedings of the first day is available on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/live/fRfbyqLJYzk

- The 'Notice of Exemption in terms of Section 40 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, read with Regulation 8(3) of Noise Exposure Regulations', from the DEL, was shared on 2 April 2026 and is accessible at:

https://tinyurl.com/56ch9tkf

- An invitation to the DEL's Occupational Health and Safety Day Commemoration in Mbombela on 24 April was shared on 8 April 2026. The event was themed 'Good psychosocial working environments: A pathway to thriving workers and strong organisation'.
- The link to the DEL's Directory of OHAIA, published in April 2026, was shared on 13 April 2026:

https://tinyurl.com/2s4crfnj

- An invitation for a DEL webinar titled 'Code of Practice for Audiometry' to be held in two parts, on 10 June and 16 July, was shared on 14 May 2026. For more information and access links please see:

https://tinyurl.com/yc3njkys

- Two webinars were presented by Wavecontrol on a new frequency selective measurement solution for electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure assessment (19 March 2026) and real-world EMF measurement solutions using Wavecontrol's SMP3 Meter (16 April 2027), both CPD-accredited by SAIOH.

- An extended deadline for abstract submission was announced in mid-March 2026 for the 42nd Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists for Industrial Hygiene and the Environment (AIDII) Congress in Bologna, Italy,17-19 June 2026 (information received from IOHA).
- A free webinar presented by Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) on 30 March 2026, titled 'Engineered (Artificial) Stone - An Unacceptable Hazard!'. Professor Deborah Glass from Monash University in Australia provided compelling evidence linking job exposure patterns with increased risk of respiratory disease among workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) from engineered stone. This research provided an important evidence base for Australia's ban of engineered stone containing more than 1% RCS. The recording is available on WHWB's channel on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0ZNT0nhWmU

- Two issues of the newsletter 'OHTA Global Link', March and April 2026, were shared on 18 March and 14 April 2026, respectively. The latter is a special issue focussing on the virtual programme of the AIHA Connect 2026 Conference, taking place in New Orleans, USA, on 1-3 June 2026. The links to the issues are below:

https://tinyurl.com/98kxchhj

https://tinyurl.com/4j2f9shd

- The IOHA newsletter 'Global Exposure Manager' (GEM), issue 1 of 2026, was shared on 20 April 2026, and is accessible at:

https://tinyurl.com/39arax6a

A call for the submission of articles for consideration for the next GEM newsletter was shared on 14 May. Articles should be submitted no later than 20 June 2026.

- A request from North-West University (NWU) for participation by SAIOH members in an online survey for a study on the skin as an exposure route, was shared on 26 March and 14 April 2026.
- The Occupational Hygiene Section of the NIOH is presenting two sessions of the SAIOH AP101 training on analysis of airborne asbestos fibres using phase contrast microscopy during 2026. The first session was conducted at the NIOH on 14 – 16 April 2026, the second session will be presented on 13 – 15 October 2026. Training attendance is free of charge and SAIOH examination fees are covered from a donation received for asbestos-related projects. Travel, accommodation and additional fees are for the candidates' own account. Further sessions will be scheduled in 2027 and/or 2028.
- An invitation to the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) Stakeholder Workshop (in hybrid format) on 15 May was shared on 8 April 2026. The MHSC presented an update on its study to develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the implementation of a standardised monitoring strategy for RCS in the South African mining industry.
- Invitations were shared for three webinars presented by the Ergonomics Society of South Africa (ESSA), all CPD-accredited by SAIOH, on 30 April, 13 and 20 May 2026, on the following topics, respectively: (i) 'Seeing work differently – New lenses for Human Factors and Ergonomics (HFE)', presented by Professor Andrew Thatcher (President of the International Ergonomics Association - IEA) and Dr Steve Shorrock (Eurocontrol, UK); (ii) 'Incorporating AI in Occupational Health and HFE', presented by Dr Casper Joubert (Stellenbosch University); and (iii) 'AI - Just another new technology or a game-changer for decent work and human factors?', presented by Dr Thomas Alexander (Vice President of IEA).
- The link to the eleventh revised edition of the 'Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals' received from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was shared on 10 April 2026:

https://tinyurl.com/39cjtw26

- An invitation for a free webinar held on 22 April by the University of Toronto Occupational Medicine Rounds on the topic 'Climate change, heat stress, and what do when the going gets hot', presented by Dr Gregory Banta, was shared on 20 April 2026.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) global report titled 'The psychosocial working environment: Global developments and pathways for action' was shared on 24 April 2026 and is accessible at:

https://shorturl.at/oCjVV

- The announcement of a free collaborative webinar between the IEA Technical Committee on Informal Work and WHWB held on 28 May on the topic 'Assessing physical risks of young workers in agriculture: Special groups need special methods', was shared on 13 May 2026. The webinar drew on recent research by WHWB in the vanilla supply chain in Madagascar where workers operate largely under informal arrangements.
- The announcement and call for abstracts for the 9th Asian Network of Occupational Hygiene (ANOH 2026) Conference was shared on 14 May. The conference will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 15-19 September 2026 (https://www.anoh2026.mn)

- Appreciation and best wishes for Deon Jansen van Vuuren as he steps down from his position of SAIOH General Manager (part-time) over the last seven years, was shared with SAIOH members on 27 March 2026. Over a distinguished career spanning 46 years, Deon made an exceptional and largely voluntary contribution to the advancement and professionalisation of occupational hygiene in Southern Africa and beyond.

SAIOH maintains pro-active and regular engagement with its members through direct e-mail notifications, e.g., the Mailchimp system, telephone calls, and virtual meetings. These communications provide updates on, for example:

- Legislative changes and new standards,
- Industry news and technical developments,
- Professional opportunities in occupational hygiene, and
- Products, services, courses, and webinars related to occupational hygiene, occupational health, and environmental safety.

SAIOH 2026 Annual Scientific Conference

The Conference Organising Committee, led by the SAIOH Gauteng Branch, met online on 6 March and 17 April 2026. Development of the conference programme and the pre-conference PDCs is underway. This year's Scientific Conference will be hosted by SAIOH in collaboration with NIOH, in celebration of the latter's 70th anniversary:

- **Conference dates**: 28 September to 1 October 2026
- **Venue**: Thaba Eco Hotel, Johannesburg (https://www.thabahotel.co.za)
- **Conference theme**: '*Building Stronger Partnerships for Healthier Workplaces*'. A call for the submission of abstracts was shared with members on 15 May 2026. The conference sub-themes for the submission of abstracts for consideration as oral and poster presentations are as follows:
- Policy, Systems, and Partnerships – Aligning Institutions for Sustainable Impact
- Prevention of Workplace Exposures – Success Stories, Case Studies and Shared Learnings
- Modern Challenges and Re-emerging Risks – Learning from Past and Present Occupational Diseases
- Innovation and Digital Technology for Healthier Workplaces
- Capacity-building and Professional Development in Occupational Health and Hygiene
- People, Equity, and the Future of Work – Placing Workers at the Centre of Change

Abstracts about legislation, standards and regulatory implementation may be submitted under the first two sub-themes as listed above, and should ideally focus on collaborative approaches, evidence-informed practice, and practical application.

Important dates to note:

- **Deadline for abstract submission**: 10 July 2026
- **Notification of abstract acceptance**: 25 August 2026
- **Accepted presenter registration deadline to confirm attendance**: 4 September 2026
- **Deadline for regular registration for conference and/or PDCs**: 4 September 2026
- **Deadline for the submission of the PowerPoint oral presentation for review and uploading to the system**: 18 September 2026

From the Professional Certification Committee (PCC)

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

- A PCC Executive Committee meeting was held on 27 March 2026.
- The first PCC written assessments were held on 6 March 2026, the first oral assessments of the year started at the end of March, and planning is underway for the next cycle of written assessments, scheduled for 12 June 2026 (applications had to be submitted by 24 April, and the payment deadline for all assessments was extended by one week, until 22 May 2026).
- Written assessments will continue be conducted at controlled venues invigilated by at least two PCC assessors, with all examination papers securely couriered and centrally coordinated. Oral assessments will continue primarily online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, with recordings retained for quality assurance, while in-person assessments remain an option.
- SAIOH members are reminded that they can now upload CPD activities throughout the year via MySAIOH, and that all CPD submissions are subject to audit prior to certificate release. Due to the increased administrative complexity of the new system, the appointment of an additional full-time administrative staff member is underway, to strengthen PCC capacity. The guidelines for SAIOH CPD processes are accessible at:

https://shorturl.at/l5Mr1

https://shorturl.at/07w80


SAVE THE DATE
SAIOH Annual Conference 2026 in collaboration with the NIOH
Date: 28 Sept - 1 Oct 2026
Venue: Thaba Eco Hotel, Johannesburg
Theme: Building Stronger Partnerships for Healthier Workplaces
The NIOH celebrates 70 years of excellence and impact in 2026
SAIOH
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
Division of the National Health Laboratory Service