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Pitfalls of training in South Africa - is there a future?
Construction of Mphephu Plaza Shopping Centre
Stress and anxiety in the construction industry
Fire safety - are you prepared?

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Participating associations / organisations / institutes with AFRICAN OS&H and the Safety First Association





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Editor:	Debbie Myer
Production Editor:	Lindsay Myer
Chairman:	George Browne
Vice Chairman:	Leighton Bennett
Administration & Membership:	Sankie Greyling
Committee members:	Leighton Bennett George Browne Sankie Greyling Wensley Misrole Wellington Mudenha Debbie Myer Steward Shapiro Salatiso Mdeni Fabian Buckley Herman Fourie

Administration / Membership :

Sankie Greyling
Tel: +27 (0) 65 979-7879 **E-mail:** sankie@safety1st.co.za

Advertising & Editorial :

Delinds Publications cc
12 Delta Road, Blairgowrie, Randburg, PO Box 72366 Parkview 2122
Tel: + 27 11 886-5985 / **Cell:** + 27 83-266-6662
E-mail: delinds@mweb.co.za

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Editor's comment

TRAINING

Training and education are part of the fundamentals and success of any industry, and country, yet in South Africa, they are fraught with problems, and there doesn't seem to be any easy or quick solution.

In this issue, some of the Safety First Committee members discuss why they think that companies are not getting any value from the hundreds of thousands of rands they are spending on training courses for their employees. Another problem is that people wanting to get into the industry, or improve their skills undergo training and get the correct certification, yet struggle to find employment. Our committee members explore the reasons why many employees do not want to go on any refresher training courses, even though it may be part of an employment requirement and paid for by the company. Compounding these these problems is the fact that credibility seems to be lost with a lot of South African qualifications and the SETAs are not achieving what they are supposed to. As Wensley Misrole concludes "In the current landscape it looks very bleak. There is a sense of hopelessness that the situation will ever turn around, unless drastic measures are taken at the highest levels to improve the situation. South Africa has so much potential, if only we can harness it".

SAPEMA

SAPEMA celebrates its 60th birthday milestone this year. We congratulate them on their achievements and success so far. The Safety First Association welcomed SAPEMA when they were launched during 1961 "for their understanding the need for accident prevention. With their knowledge and tuition, they will reduce the number of accidents. We hope that this will herald a brighter future not only for industry, but for all workers and their dependents who have always feared the dire consequences of unexpected happenings". The Safety First Association and African OS&H are proud to have been a partner of SAPEMA for the past 40 years.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

When I worked for the Johannesburg Fire Department 1979/1980, some of the fire stations didn't have enough bays to keep their fire fighting vehicles, now the same bays lie empty, or are used for storage. It was welcome news that a ruling has finally been made about the corrupt "red fleet" tender paving the way for these bays once again to be filled with the vehicles that they were built to house. Until then, Johannesburg although the main economic centre of South Africa, only has a few working fire fighting vehicles. And unfortunately many fire departments throughout South Africa are suffering the same fate. Under such circumstances, it is vital for companies to practise strict fire prevention measures. Without the guarantee that a fire fighting vehicle will arrive on time should a fire break out, the loss could be devastating. Leighton Bennett in his article highlights this problem giving many examples of dangerous practices he has seen. Companies need to make sure that there are enough fire sprinklers and extinguishers on their premises and that they are in working order and serviced according to requirements. Fire escape doors and paths must be accessible at all times and not locked for security or used as storage areas. These are just some examples, read Leighton's article to learn more.

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Understanding the key differences between face coverings, masks, and respirators

With the prevalence of personal protective equipment in everyday life, it's important to know what kind of mask will work best for your environment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises the everyday use of cloth face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19, but different types of PPE can serve different purposes, and knowing how to wear each type of covering properly is essential to help protect yourself and those around you.

While we encourage you to learn more about the differences between face covers, masks, and respirators from government literature, we highlight in this article some of the differences between face covers, masks, and respirators and the function each serves.

RESPIRATORS

Surgical N95 respirators

Surgical N95 respirators provide respiratory protection and are designed to achieve close facial fit with 95% filtration efficiency of airborne particles. Surgical N95s offer fluid-resistance in addition to particulate filtration. These are approved by NIOSH, ASTM and CFR and intended for use in healthcare settings.

N95 respirators

Like surgical N95 respirators, N95 respirators are designed to achieve a close facial fit and 95% filtration efficiency of airborne particles and are intended for use in healthcare settings. Some N95 respirators have valves, which in industrial environments is fine, but they are not recommended by CDC as source control

because they don't protect others. N95 respirators are approved by NIOSH and CFR regulatory standards.

SURGICAL & PROCEDURE MASKS

Surgical mask

Surgical masks are disposable devices that act as a barrier between the wearer and potential contaminants in the environment and offer 95-98% filtration efficiency. This type of face cover typically has ties or a headband, which secures the mask more closely to the wearer's face than ear loops and may be used in the operating room, as well as in some industrial and consumer settings.

Procedure mask

A type of surgical mask that generally has ear loops or a headband and is designed for short procedures or for source control (for patients and visitors), procedure masks are not designed for use in the operating room. Like other medical masks, it is available in a range of performance levels (ASTM 1, 2 and 3), dependent on the risk that is present and offer 95-98% filtration efficiency.

FACE COVERS

Multi-layer face cover with filters

A multi-layer barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.

Face covers alone are not tested to any standards. They are not considered PPE -

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Account Manager
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Sub Saharan Africa



however, certain filters have been tested for filtration efficiency and these face covers can be up to 97% effective when worn with a filter.

Cloth face cover

Normal cloth face covers are a simple cloth barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when

the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.

Face covers are not tested to any standards. They are not considered PPE and are intended for use by the public and employees in non-healthcare environments.

Face cover with valve or vent

Some face covers come with a built-in valve or vent that is intended to reduce exhalation resistance, which makes it easier to breathe (exhale). However, studies show that it also allows particles to escape. These face covers are not approved by any regulatory standards and dependent on the material, can be between 4-15 percent filtration efficient. The CDC recommends against using this type of face cover because it does not protect others.

Bandana, scarf or gaiter

While typically considered a household item or cold-weather accessory, in the absence of any other kind of face cover or mask, people have used bandanas and gaiters as a last resort to cover their nose and mouth while in public.

Like face covers with a valve or vent, these face covers are not approved by regulatory standards and dependent on the material, can be between 4-15 percent filtration efficient.

No matter the type of face cover you wear, make sure it is fitted properly to guarantee its effectiveness. Your face covering, mask or respirator should cover your face and chin, fit snugly but comfortably against the side of your face, be secured with ties or ear loops, include a filter or multiple layers of fabric, and allow for breathing without restriction.

For cloth face masks, they should also be made of a material that is easily washable without damage or change in shape.

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Talk to us

Honeywell Safety and Productivity Solutions
Honeywell House
Waterfall Park
Vorna Valley, Midrand
Web: <https://sps.honeywell.com/us/en>
Email: sps_meta@honeywell.com
Mobile: 063 637 8307





DuPont provides sustained healthy water solutions for a South African school

To celebrate World Water Day, DuPont donated a multi-technology water treatment plant that will provide safe, pure water to Reneilwe Primary School and the local community of Temba, Hammanskraal (north of Pretoria).

The area's water sources are afflicted by high levels of nitrate and phosphate contaminants, making municipal water unsafe to drink. The new ultrafiltration membrane and ultraviolet light system is driven by solar power. It removes impurities from groundwater pumped out of a newly built borehole and can supply up to 4,000 litres of healthy drinking water per hour. A water kiosk has been built to dispense it to the local community from which they generate revenue for the school to operate the system sustainably.

Permission for the project was granted in October 2020. DuPont Water Solutions sponsored the project and partnered with Kusini Water, a South African NGO to get the water flowing in just four months.

The U.S. Embassy in South Africa also collaborated on the project, to ensure five "water champions" from the community receive training from Kusini Water to autonomously operate and maintain the plant.

Kusini Water CEO Murendeni Mafumo said, "In South Africa, one out of three schools do not have

access to safe water and clean sanitation, putting our school children at risk of serious illness from waterborne diseases. We are delighted that the community of Temba is now one of over 50 sites in the country we have helped in our mission to provide five million people with five million litres of safe water in five years. Our thanks go to DuPont Water Solutions and the US Embassy for partnering on this vital community-led project."

This announcement coincided with recognising World Water Day. "World Water Day is all about the vital importance of fresh water," said Semano Sekatle, regional commercial manager, DuPont Sub-Saharan Africa. "We are delighted to be involved with such a beneficial project as this, which contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation. With the right partnership approach, no one in this world need suffer from a lack of safe water, as effective and highly advanced technology is available that can be community-run."

"I applaud Kusini Water and their partner DuPont Water Solutions, who are helping to ensure that access to clean water and sanitation are a priority and reality for communities that have had little to no access in the past," said Frank Whitaker, Minister Counsellor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria.



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ABOUT KUSINI WATER

Kusini Water is a social enterprise that builds water treatment systems from nanotechnology and macadamia nut shells. Our systems bring clean, safe drinking water to people in rural, peri-urban and informal settlements throughout the African continent.

For further information contact:
Thembi Thulare
Business Development Manager
SSA Water & Protection
Email: thembi.thulare@dupont.com
Mobile: +27 (0) 82 609 0798



It's our pleasure to invite you to our first ever virtual event, Teaming up for Safety?. Brought to you by experts from the DuPont EMEA Safety Thought-Leaders Forum, this exclusive two-day event will feature numerous sessions covering the latest insights into workplace safety. Kicking off online on Tuesday 18th May, Teaming up for Safety? will feature technical demonstrations, panel discussions, presentation and case studies covering key topics.



To register click here:

<https://hopin.com/events/dupont-teaming-up-for-safety?ref=5209d1bdcfed>

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Three steps to the perfect disposable coverall

There are many different disposable coveralls to choose from, so it's difficult to decide which one to select, which coveralls conform with your prescribed standards and which offer the level of occupational safety needed for the work you do?

A number of aspects play an important role when choosing the perfect protective clothing: fit, wearer comfort, ease of use and the ability to combine it with other PPE components.

In this article, we will provide you with useful tips for selecting occupational safety equipment and take you through three simple steps to help you come to a decision.



STEP 1: STANDARDS - PPE REGULATIONS

Prescribed standards in your field of work are the most important factors when deciding on the best disposable coverall for you. PPE regulation EU 2016-425 must be taken into particular consideration in this process.

Further information on the EU PPE Regulation can be found in our blog article "Shedding some light on standards and guidelines for chemical protection suits".

(<https://www.uvex-safety.com/blog/shedding-some-light-on-standards-and-guidelines-for-chemical-protection-suits/>)

Personal protective equipment (PPE) can be broken down into three categories. But which category is the most relevant to you? The following three categories exist depending on the level of risk that the protective clothing is designed to protect against:

- **Category I:** Low risk = simple protective equipment
- **Category II:** protective clothing that protects the wearer against hazards that do not fall into category I or III.
- **Category III:** high risk = protective clothing that protects the wearer against potentially fatal hazards or serious and irreversible damage to health.

PLEASE NOTE: chemical protection clothing is always classified as category III.

Do you fall into one of the above categories? If you need help classifying your level of risk, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

If you have identified the level of risk for your field of activity, you can move onto step 2.

STEP 2: THE RIGHT SIZE - PROTECTIVE CLOTHING WITH A PERFECT FIT

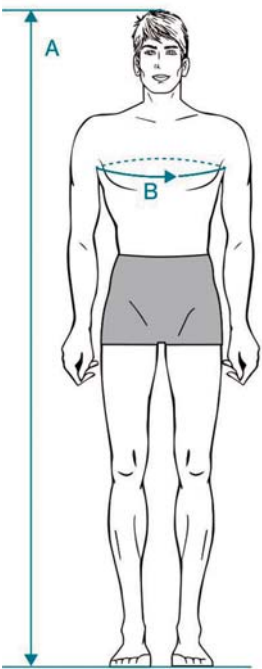
Compliance with required standards alone by no means guarantees sufficient protection. In addition to choosing the right accessories, ensuring a correct fit is also hugely important. Selecting the right size affects both the suit's protective function and wearer comfort.

An ill-fitting suit can have serious consequences:

- Too small - if your coveralls are too small, your freedom of movement will be severely restricted and, in the worst case scenario, the protective clothing will tear, exposing you to serious risks.
- Too big - If your coveralls are too big, they may get caught in machinery and place you in a life-threatening situation.

To ensure a perfect fit and to guarantee maximum safety when working with hazardous substances, uvex coveralls are available in a wide range of sizes. Figure 1 measurement chart

Please note that these size definitions are based on actual body measurements taken while wearing underwear but without wearing shoes. These sizes therefore differ from standard clothes sizes, so please always select coveralls



Sizes	Body height in cm (A)	Chest measurement in cm (B)
S	164–170 cm	84–92 cm
M	170–176 cm	92–100 cm
L	176–182 cm	100–108 cm
XL	182–188 cm	108–116 cm
XXL	188–194 cm	116–124 cm
XXXL	194–200 cm	124–132 cm

Figure 1. Measurement chart

according to your actual body measurements and not your usual clothes size.

Once you have determined your measurements correctly and identified the size of uvex protective suit you need, we can move onto the last step and select your perfect coveralls.

STEP 3: WEARER COMFORT – MATERIAL AND COMPOSITION OF COVERALLS

Finally, you should also give some thought to wearer comfort so that your work is not negatively impacted in any way by wearing ill-fitting or uncomfortable work clothing. The following factors affect wearer comfort and lead to a high level of wearer acceptance:

- Feels pleasant next to the skin
- Breathability
- Air permeability
- Low weight
- Optimum freedom of movement

As the level of protection increases, the climate control of the material decreases. As such, you should weigh up carefully which coveralls are right for you, so that you can strike a balance between optimal protection and maximum wearer comfort for the area of use in question.



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The benefits of utilising rope access for building, maintenance, and construction

Working at heights is a regular part of work in many industries like construction, oil and gas, telecom, facade maintenance, and others. In many such industries, workers work in difficult to access areas, high above the ground. The construction industry in particular, requires significant work to be done at heights. There are several benefits of utilising rope access, we will explore some of these benefits below:

1. Rope access teams are fast and economical

When work on a building at height is necessary there is no faster and economical way to complete it than by using rope access teams. A rope access team comprises of certified, trained technicians who are skilled in working at heights and inaccessible areas.

Consider when welding is necessary 80 meters above the ground on the surface of a building. It will be time-consuming and expensive to create scaffolding to complete such work. Doing so to complete such a simple job may take days. Also, using a crane to do it will be prohibitively expensive. On the other hand a rope access team can easily complete the job in just a few minutes.

Hence rope access teams are able to work at heights quickly allowing the job at hand to be

completed faster than it could be otherwise, and because rope access teams don't need any additional equipment besides what they carry, they are inexpensive to deploy.

2. Rope access teams leave no imprint

A rope access team can work at heights without leaving any imprint. They can be ready to work quickly and be dismantled quickly without leaving any trace except that of a job well done. On the other hand, when scaffolding is erected to work at a height it blemishes the exterior of a building for some time.

3. Good safety record

Someone with little or no knowledge of working at heights may be quick to believe rope access is the most dangerous way to work at heights. They couldn't however be more wrong. Among all the techniques used to work at heights, rope access is by far the safest.

4. Rope access teams can reach any spot

Unlike scaffolding, man lifts, and other equipment used to work at heights, rope access teams can reach and work in virtually any spot. Consider that in addition to working on the surface of a building, rope access teams can enter and work



inside industrial chimneys, ducts, smokestacks, and domed roofs.

5. Flexible with no down time

Rope access teams are flexible and can be deployed after little planning. Any change in the priority of work or change in weather can be easily accommodated by rope access teams. On the other hand, such disruptions are far less well managed when scaffolding is used.

When scaffolding is used it may lead to significant disruption of other work and to a loss in man hours and consequently to lower productivity. Rope access teams cause little or no downtime which ensures productivity isn't hampered when such teams work in a building or site.

Rope access teams can be used for a variety of purposes. They can be deployed during a building or plants construction; during installation of structural steel; to install mechanical and electrical equipment; for close visual inspections, or for waterproofing, painting, and decorating.

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World Tuberculosis (TB) day - 24 March 2021

According to Chihota (2021), during 2019, 10 million people were inflicted with Tuberculosis (TB) and close to 1.4 million people died globally, most (95%) of the cases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Furthermore, it is estimated that a quarter of the global population is infected with TB, which equates to approximately 1.8 billion people (Chihota, 2021). Therefore, TB is a major cause of illness and death globally.

Within the context of South Africa, TB was ranked first in terms of the underlying natural causes of death for the years 2015 - 2017, contributing 7.2%, 6.5%, and 6.4% (Statistics SA, 2017).



Professor John Smallwood, Professor of Construction Management, Nelson Mandela University

health education and awareness activities; advocacy in terms of TB control; referral of employees with TB symptoms to the nearest health facility for diagnosis and treatment, and support of TB patients during their treatment, including directly observing their treatment.

CONCLUSIONS

TB is still an issue, and the South African construction industry has contributed to mitigating the spread of TB to a limited extent, however, the industry can and must intensify its efforts relative thereto.

PHP is not as important as the other project parameters, and such programmes are not pervasive in the South African construction industry. Furthermore, traditional South African health and safety (H&S) programmes must evolve in terms of addressing PHP, including TB, and health and well-being issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All H&S related research should investigate whether PHP, including TB, are addressed, or not. Given the limited research conducted relative to the health status of construction workers, the collective industry should mobilise with respect to the aforementioned.

Statutory councils, industry and professional associations, clients, construction project managers, designers, quantity surveyors, and contractors should be made aware of the benefits of project TB-related programmes. The industry in turn should implement PHP in general, address TB, and industry H&S programmes and competitions should be amended to address PHP, including TB, due to the relationship with H&S, and health and well-being.

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PAST CONSTRUCTION TB-RELATED RESEARCH

A study conducted among 'better practice health and safety (H&S)' general contractors (GCs) by Smallwood and Venter (2001) addressed, among other, TB. Pamphlets / Flyers, and posters predominated, followed by induction in terms of ten interventions arranged / undertaken by GCs relative to TB. Employee health, employee quality of life, and productivity predominated among eight aspects in terms of the perceived future impact of TB on construction / society. Newsletters and pamphlets / flyers predominated, followed by awareness education (speaker) and posters in terms of the extent eight employer-related interventions would help to combat TB. Employee health and employee quality of life predominated in terms of the perceived impact TB has had on construction / society in the past. Lack of awareness, lack of education, and socio-economic conditions predominated in terms of the perceived extent to which five aspects have contributed to the spread of TB.

A more recent study conducted by Smallwood and Deacon (2016) among 'better practice H&S' GCs addressed primary health promotion (PHP) in South African construction. PHP was ranked last in terms of the importance of nine parameters to respondents' organisations. TB was ranked fifth in terms of the extent to which workers benefit or would benefit from sixteen primary health issues being addressed in the work place. TB was addressed between annually to quarterly / quarterly in terms of the frequency respondents' organisations address sixteen primary health issues with workers.

WORKPLACE SETTINGS WITH INCREASED RISK OF TB

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2003) highlights workplace settings and the causes of increased occupational risk: cramped living quarters and potentially poor health conditions; silicosis; exposure to infected individuals, and migrant workforces in terms of related poverty, poor sanitation and living conditions, and births in countries with high TB infection rates.

RECOMMENDED WORK PLACE INTERVENTIONS

The WHO (2003) refers to the following opportunities for workplace TB control activities: education and awareness regarding TB as part of general or occupational employee

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Pitfalls of training in South Africa - is there a future?

Training and education are part of the fundamentals and success of any industry, and country, yet in South Africa, they seem to be fraught with problems. African OS&H spoke to some of the committee members of the Safety First Association about their thoughts on this contentious subject

Companies are spending hundreds of thousands on training employees. Are they getting value?

I do believe that in the occupational health and safety education and training environment, companies only send employees on relevant work required training, but often the problem is that employees never complete all the training identified for their position.

In my experience the facilitators of health and safety training are very committed and deliver good service.

My issue is more with the course content where you are restricted to a unit standard and the allocated time for the training. Companies who send their employees on training often want to shorten the durations, which results in a waste of money for the company. Companies need to understand that there are reasons why courses are certain durations.

Sometimes companies also request staggered training, for example they want a five day course to be done one day a week over five weeks. This is very demotivating for the learner, with the result, little is learned.

I'm not sure if this practice still exists but years ago in the mining environment some training would start at 11pm at night or 2am or 6am in the morning at shift changes. Very little is learned as concentration levels are low and only ends up satisfying the criteria that the employee attended the training.

Why are employees so hesitant to go on training courses?

I have never personally experienced that employees resist training, maybe it's the assessments they have to complete that they find daunting.

I have had the experience that whilst doing a training audit at a mining company some years back, it was found that the training made no difference as incidents / accidents still continued. It was found that when employees returned to the workplace after completing the training, they were told by their supervisors that to forget whatever they learned in the classroom because in the workplace they have their standard way of doing things and it's not going to change. I guess in that type of environment employees will be reluctant to attend training.

Companies generally do want to implement new approaches for safer workplaces and send



Wensley Misrole is Director (Managing) of ARINT Global Services, an International Professional Engineering and Technical SHEQ Services company. He has a total of 46 years workplace experience, of which 25 years was spent in the Marine Construction, Engineering and Maintenance disciplines and 15 years in the OHS consulting services focusing on training and auditing.

employees on training. The problem may be that management themselves do not attend the training and when employees want to implement what they learned there is a resistance from management. This will also contribute to employee's reluctance for training.

Why do employees struggle to get employment after attending some courses even though they get certification.

The problem is when their training is only theoretical and they lack work experience. There is no incentive for companies to employ such people, for example there are no tax relief or incentive schemes. I do believe that in occupational health and safety it's very problematic to hire people with no practical background.

I come from the old school where I first did a trade and by the time I migrated to health and safety I had first-hand knowledge of industry. I had worked with lock outs, confined spaces, working at height, hazardous chemical substances etc. I partly educated myself along the way in occupational health and safety.

I have advised young people who want to pursue a career in health and safety and start by enrolling for short courses because they do not have the means to enroll at a TVET college or university, that they should rather focus on getting employment in any industry even if it's as a labourer, and then show an interest in health and safety, try to be elected as a health and safety representative, and then pursue their careers as they gain the industry knowledge and work experience at the same time.

It appears as if credibility seems to be lost with a lot of South African qualifications. Is this true? And why?

Yes in my experience, if you work outside of South Africa, NEBOSH is the required qualification for occupational health and safety. Why have we not come up with credible training to counter this or at least be comparable?

To determine the acceptance of our qualifications internationally, one first has to look at the ranking of our universities with the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings:2020, our top University of Cape Town ranked at number 220 and next came University of The Witwatersrand ranked at number 403. So we should not be surprised that our qualifications leave a lot to be desired, despite the billions of rands budgeted for them. Although out of a total of 11 African universities featured in

the QS World University Rankings 2021, the majority (seven) of these are in South Africa, this accolade has limited appeal internationally.

I know acquaintances who have good jobs presently in South Africa and want to take jobs in Europe, but their qualifications are not acceptable.

To give context to our South African qualifications, I have firsthand experience of my son who had a Bcom Honours degree, and was fortunate to be recruited by a company in the Netherlands as one of ten interns selected world-wide. They sent the ten recruits to a university on an island in the Caribbean to study International Taxation Law for one year, whereafter he was transferred to Sao Paulo, Brazil (he had to learn to speak Portuguese), after two years in Brazil they required him to work in one of the African Portuguese speaking countries which he declined, resigned and came back to South Africa to work locally. Whilst here he completed a Master's degree. He still wanted to work internationally, but realised he needed an international qualification from one of the top international universities to better his chances of finding work. To get accepted he first had to do the Graduate Management Admission Course at great cost which took about a year, despite the qualifications he already had, before he could be accepted. Thankfully he was accepted and completed another Master's degree full time in Spain also at huge cost and is now living and working in Europe. He has now been accepted to do his Phd three years fulltime, no part time allowed. Even though it's a lot cheaper, he will not do any further studies in South Africa because of how it's perceived internationally.

In South Africa we make education accessible to the masses which is very noble and the right thing to do, but instead of maintaining a reasonable standard we lower our standards, a case in point the matric pass rate. To a large extent it is not the inability of our learners to compete with the best in the world, it is the lack of opportunity and the Institutions of higher learning that is letting us down.

I must add that there are pockets of excellence in South Africa for example in our medical fields and others.

Are SETAs achieving what they are supposed to?

I have a passion for training, education and knowledge transfer, as a result of my 46 years of industry and mining experience, but I have not presented any training in the past four years, because having to deal with the SETAs disillusioned me. They have become bureaucratic "monsters" in that the "turn-around times" to get anything done takes many many months to complete with lots and lots of follow ups, and time wasting for processes which should be fairly quick. For example,

my registration as an assessor took 8 - 12 months, which has now elapsed and I dread having to go through that cumbersome process again.

SETAs should be enablers of learning but there are so many stumbling blocks in the way. While I firmly believe in standards and uniformity, it has discouraged innovation and uniqueness of training. For example, if you develop a unique training course for your company or your clients and invest time and money in research and development, you can register the course as a skills programme with a SETA. Once you do that it is available to all your competitors who have not invested anything, so you avoid going this route. Therefore there are many good training courses in occupational health and safety that will never be registered with a SETA. The dilemma is that learners need to do SETA aligned unit standard registered courses to get the credits.

More and more training companies are getting their course materials endorsed by Professional Institutes for CPD points as an alternative to SETA accreditation and credits. This speaks volumes of why training companies are going this route.

In the field of occupational health and safety I don't believe they have the right people with credible credentials for decision making.

There are SAQA registered occupational health and safety certificate qualifications listed below, but to my knowledge no one has completed any over all the years when I last checked. This is a serious indictment of SETAs not fulfilling their mandate and not assisting training organisations to make this possible.

- National Certificate: Occupational Health, Safety and Environment - NQF Level 02
- National Certificate: Construction Health and Safety - NQF Level 03
- Occupational Certificate: Safety, Health and Quality Practitioner (Occupational Health and Safety Practitioner) - NQF Level 05

In my opinion the amount of money awarded to SETAs does not result in value for money.

How do you see the future of education and training in South Africa?

In the current landscape it looks very bleak. There is a sense of hopelessness that the situation will ever turn around, unless drastic measures are taken at the highest levels to improve the situation and alternative career options are made available to our young people. Only 35% of learners enrolled at university complete their studies in the allocated time, and about 30% drop out after the first year.

South Africa has so much potential, if only we can harness it.

Companies spend thousands of rands on training employees. Are they getting value?

The training companies set expiry dates indicating the training validity only lasts 1, 2, or 3 years, which is a questionable return on the training investment for the company as the training is costly, and there is a time off and loss of production costs for employees undergoing off-the-job training. It also means additional expenses, for the return training income which will have to be paid to the training provider.

Why are employees hesitant to go on training?

The reason is simple, we did the course a year or two back, and to do it again is not educational but boring because the course content does not change much and often courses are not customised to employee needs.

Most of the legislated training requirements have not changed in years, so why retrain? For example, the OHSAct sections 17 & 18 on H&S Representative Appointment and Duties requirements have not changed since 1993, so why are there expiry dates on training where the H&S Rep course will have the same old content. No wonder employees are reluctant to hear the same information again when they have been doing H&S inspections and participating in H&S committees for years.

If the training course provides no new learning, why repeat the same old training courses? Perhaps this adds to why H&S training is considered a grudge buy by companies?

Why do employees struggle to get employment after attending some courses although they get certification?

Here again the course is possibly focused to a unit standard which does not allow for customised work situation activities and situations.

Companies ask "Is that course suitably specific to our job requirements and workplace, and are a few days enough to facilitate the employee's training outcome competency?" The company does not think so!!

It appears as if the credibility of South African qualification is being lost. Is this true?

The credibility of all South African education has been compromised and down-graded by overseas standards. Look how the requirement levels for a matric pass rate have been lowered to 40%.

Do I want to go to a doctor who got a 40% pass rate, or do I want to fly in a plane where the pilot got 40%?

Wits, UNISA, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, etc qualifications which were all previously recognised internationally are no longer recognised overseas.



Leighton Bennett
(Pr.CHSA)
Benrisk Consulting,
Insurance Surveyor,
and OHS and
Risk Management
Consultant. He is Vice
President Safety First
Association

Are SETAs achieving what they are supposed to do?

SETAs should be approving their training standards, but who in the SETA has the background and knowledge to vet training materials submitted for their approval and accreditation. The course content and knowledge transfer of many training providers is/was poor as was found when safety practitioners were tested by the former IOSM professional body.

Why is it that employers don't always accept training certificates?

Training providers are often scamming the public about their SETA accreditations. They may be accredited for a specific course or some courses but they place accreditation logos on their advertising, and their training course certificates falsely indicate "all their" training is certified.

This is why employers often don't accept training certificates at face value. And, it is for this reason that I always require that the construction work contractor add the training course provider accreditation authority certificates for the specific training courses on the Construction H&S File for the employee training to be accepted.

Do you think that the H&S courses and course materials are up-to-standard?

There are many training providers who think H&S is a soft-touch income generation business, with the result, the training material quality is poor and the course presenters are often not H&S experienced to effectively present some types of course materials.

Often H&S course materials are "copy and pastes" from internet sourced training presentations and texts, and they are often not customised for the African environment, nor for our H&S law compliance purposes.

I recently found this "copy and paste" process when vetting a new OHS course text book to be used by one of South Africa's higher training institutions.

Let me give you an example of the "blind" training provider leading the trained "but still unknowing" employee on site! A Pr.CHSA colleague found a scaffolding training course provider on a construction site approving the scaffold erection for use, even though the erected scaffold was not SANS 10058 access scaffold standard compliant.

The frightening part is that he was the training provider of a SETA accredited scaffolding course, but could not see that the scaffold erection was not safety compliant.

That is one example of many safety training related non-compliances occurring on site and in the workplace.

Companies are spending hundreds of thousands on training employees. Are they getting value?

Some companies do not as employees do not live up to expectations and others leave the company soon after training. Also, their training is not always applicable to type of work they do.

Why are employees hesitant to go on training courses?

It will give them more responsibilities but not more pay.

Why do people struggle to get employment after attending some courses even though they get certification?

Either employers do not accept the standards of training, or they do not need someone qualified in that particular field.

The market is flooded with people trained in certain fields resulting in unemployment as the



Herman (Harry) Fourie
is a part time consultant
creating software
systems. He has several
diplomas and certificates
and is a member of several
professional organisations
throughout Africa
and beyond.

potential employee only has limited qualifications. *It appears as if credibility seems to be lost with a lot of South African qualifications. Is this true? And why?*

Many trainers provide training, but never follow up with trainees to see if they are capable of doing the work they received the training for.

Like in safety training most do not have a POE of any kind to say that they are competent to do the work.

You have trained people in the field but they are not competent to do the work

Are SETAs achieving what they are supposed to?

No as they cannot agree on what must be accredited and what must not. Minor trainings that do not need SETA accreditation now need accreditation, and it means nothing for the employee on the road forward concerning NQF credits etc.

Companies are spending hundreds of thousands on training employees. Are they getting value?

I believe they are not getting the full value for the training they are paying for, and I will give my reasons:

Employees are attending training sessions of 4-5 training modules crammed into one day. How is this possible? How much can an employee retain with so many courses being shoved down their throats in one day?

Many of these trainings are rushed through with an intention to complete it as quickly as possible, due to the client requiring the proof of training for their clients or to fulfil their own training's matrix.

Not much intention of providing quality training with as much knowledge retention is considered possible.

We found that many service providers we used gave the supervisor and managers the answers to the exams to help their classes get a 100% pass rate.

The current training courses offered are providing as much information as possible but with very little practical application and implementation of what they are trained on.

The way it is structured is a lot like school where the facilitator speaks, and the students listen or in some cases even sleep.

Why are employees hesitant to go on training courses?

Many see the trainings as a waste of time, as boring and with no value added benefit for themselves.

Many courses now have an expiration date of one year so they don't see this as a value to their CVs and careers.

Some companies deduct the time off as unpaid leave so employees lose this time or have to take forced leave to attend training.

Many have received the same training year in



Fabian Buckley
CEO HSECP

and year out with little value or positive impact.

Why do employees struggle to get employment after attending some courses even though they get certification?

Many companies know that these short courses do not add much value and are not seen as a qualification but as a short course.

Many companies look for diploma and degree qualifications with some also accepting the programmes offered by Unisa.

It appears as if credibility seems to be lost with a lot of South African qualifications. Is this true?

Yes it is true and has been for a while. There are too many poor quality "fly by night" service providers who are only in it for financial gain.

Many companies do not see the value after training has been completed by their employees.

Short courses can not give an employee enough time to retain their knowledge, where it can be demonstrated in their companies.

Are SETAs achieving what they are supposed to?

No they are not. They need to restructure all the courses to be a lot more structured, give enough time for practical application and consider a blended learning approach.

Coaching is a brilliant way for employees to learn as they will retain much more through this learning approach.

Blended learning includes, in class, online live sessions, E-Learning, practical experience, a coaching approach to learning is vital, there must be examinations and virtual reality where possible.

The students should then be allowed to teach what they have learned even if it's in a recorded video which can be sent for assessment to see if they have learned enough for them to be considered as competent or not yet competent.

Ergonomics management in remote working - *post Covid-19*

REMOTE WORKING PATTERNS ESTABLISHED DURING COVID-19

The future of work became a strong item in global occupational health and safety conversations in the latter part of the last millennium and the predictions on the new kinds of work and changes in employment patterns were projected for 2030 but little did we know we were going to have the COVID-19 pandemic which forced remote working on global working populations.

While lockdowns have been lifted in almost all countries, working from home seems to have become a key working pattern that has stayed. According to the Buffer study titled "State of Remote Work", 99% of the respondents said they would like to work remotely at least some of the times for the rest of their careers. And according to a BBC report, 50 of UK's largest employers said they had no plans of returning all their employees full time to the office in the near future. A number of organisations are also saying they want 100% home working with no physical contact in office whatsoever.

Remote working has become a global legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Owing to the fact that most organisations had no plan for remote working before the compulsory lockdowns, a number of employees initially struggled to get used to working from home and many are still struggling. The transition was abrupt with no opportunity for education and training in safety and health, or even the opportunity to make provision for adequate home offices. This has left several workers with poor health outcomes. Amongst these are the burdens of mental health, increased sedentary behaviours and poor ergonomic conditions.

ASSOCIATED HEALTH CONDITIONS

From conversations we have had with a number of organisations in Nigeria, there have been discussions and engagement with employees on mental health and sedentary behaviours, but little has been done on training and awareness of how to manage ergonomic conditions while working from home. This has led to an increase in hospital visits from lower and upper back pain, neck pain, wrist and eye pain.

Pain management is delicate to handle, it is better prevented than managing it. Many studies have linked pain to insomnia which also negatively impacts on employees' productivity.

It is important to understand the true meaning of ergonomics. Some people see it as simply correcting adjustable seats and desks or workstations but the truth is, you can have these adjustable work tools and still suffer from ergonomics conditions. So, what indeed is ergonomics? It was coined from two



Ehi Iden President
OSHAfrica

Greek words in 1949 by KFH Murrell "ergon" meaning work and "nomo" meaning law, in other words, the law of work. According to the International Ergonomics Association, it is the scientific understanding of the interactions amongst humans and other elements of a system. It is not the sophistication of the work tools that matter, but the way they adjustably fit or compatibly align with the physical body structure of the user.

Office workstations are often occupational hazards, but this is even worse when working from home where there is a total lack of ergonomic planning.

ORGANISATION RESPONSIBILITIES

During the discussions we had with employees from different organisations, it was encouraging to learn that in spite of the sudden relocation to work from home, a number of organisations understood what this would mean to the health and wellbeing of their employees, and made impressive provisions.

Some allowed their employees to buy adjustable seats and desks and covered the costs, while others allowed employees to take their work desks and seats home. This helped lessen potential ergonomics risks. Unfortunately, other employees were left to work from makeshift workstations and desks such as sofas, kitchen seats, beds etc.

The recent report from *BUPA* stated that over 11 million Brits are now in pain caused by working from home, because only 32% of them have dedicated workstations.

No one knew how long the lockdown was going to last, and these unhealthy work tools would have been manageable for a short period, but when working in these conditions became prolonged, workers started reacting badly as ergonomics illnesses and disabilities began to set in.

According to a report published by *Personnel Today*, 4 in 5 who worked remotely developed some forms of musculoskeletal disorder. The report placed low back pain at 50%, neck pain at 36%, shoulder pain at 28%, while 46% of the employees said they have been taking painkillers more often than they would like to. These outcomes are indicative of poor body posture caused by using the incorrect work tools.

MODERN DEVICES AND THEIR IMPACT

In the future of work, this may be a recurring issue, we therefore need to start addressing this from both national and enterprise levels.

Workplaces and work processes have become characterised with all kinds of new devices, and with every new technological device comes its own set of risks. Even laptops were not designed with ergonomics in mind. More than 4 billion people



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access the internet via smart devices. We need to figure out ways to use these devices safely. There is an urgent need to acknowledge that this has a high potential of employees suffering from illnesses that did not exist two decades ago. Working with these devices, places our bodies in awkward postures, we hunch over them or tilt our heads downwards placing an increased load on our vertebrae columns.

PHYSICAL IMPACT OF BAD ERGONOMICS

According to a report published by Kirsti Pedak of Tallinn University, the average human head weighs 4 - 6 kilogram, this is a load on its own and correct placement will improve the increased burden of upper back pain. When we tilt our heads forward by 15 degree, the load we place on our vertebrae column is increased by 13.5kg, this increases to 25kg if we tilt our heads by 45 degrees.

One of the foremost laws in ergonomics management is proper body positioning, the way we position our necks and heads. Neutral body posture is advised and adjustable work tools is important in ergonomics management for remote workers.

Risk exposure is measured by the duration and frequency of exposure.

While remote working has created a blurred line between our private time and work time, it is important to keep in mind the need to take intermittent breaks. You do not need to be glued to your laptops all day long, even with the temptation to do so. Employees must focus on their own health and well-being. You need to take break, get off your seats and stretch out, walk around, gaze into the distance for a while to relax the tensed muscles in your eyes.

Through prolonged sitting with bad posture, the body gets used to the wrong signals and eventually the bad posture seems normal to the body. Regaining good posture could then become increasingly difficult, as good is deleted from our muscle memory and replaced with bad. This increases the tensions to our back, neck, shoulder muscles and bones which in turn causes irreversible changes to our skeletal structure. Awkward body posture and poor ergonomics can lead to irreparable disability and must not be trivialised.

LACK OF REMOTE WORK COMMUNICATION

A number of employers are beginning to identify the enormity of this problem, understand the risk and introduce interventions in their workplaces. But where do we begin? There is no one-style-fits-all approach. The best starting point is remote work risk communication. We missed this at the start of the lockdowns because we were not prepared for it, but by now this should be part of daily communication with employees.

Employers must listen to employees to understand the areas they need support. Profiling

employees is a key to identifying those who have existing ergonomics conditions, who the organisation may even have catered for in their workplace by getting them seats and a desk to ameliorated those concerns. But, these employees have been working from home for over a year now while their seats remain unused in the office. They should be allowed to take those seats home to set up in their home offices.

Continuous training on how to adjust our work tools is also important, and could be done weekly for just 5 minutes during virtual meetings.

ERGONOMICS MANAGEMENT AT THE HOME

There is a popular concept for ergonomics management called "**NEW**", the acronym helps employees remember how to use the concept.

N - neutral posture: This posture must be maintained while sitting or standing. It make sure the pelvis is not in an awkward position and keeps the pains away.

E - eye and elbow height: Whatever type of desk or seat is in use, ensure the keyboard (ASDF home row) is well-positioned within elbow level while the top of monitor should be at or slightly below the eye level. This prevents tilting of the head or hunching over the monitor which are great sources of body pain.

W - work area: Creating both primary and secondary work zones. The areas on your table where your hands can reach without difficulty are your primary areas and the materials frequently used should be kept within those areas. Secondary work zone are areas within reach of the outstretched arms. These are materials not frequently used.

IMPORTANT EXERCISE AND WORK BREAKS

While a number of employees may have the luxury of having decent ergonomics seats for work at home, there are many who have to improvise by creating ergonomics comfort with their existing seats.

Placing a thin pillow on your seat can make an ordinary chair much more comfortable with the pillow offering lumbar support to the spine. There are a lot of household items that can be used for work comfort, putting a firm cushion or a tightly folded towel under your buttocks will raise your hips and increase the curve of your spine making sitting more comfortable.

The 20:20:20 rule is good for control of eye strain. Learn to take micro breaks of 20 seconds, every 20 minutes and stare at things at least 20 feet away. This helps reduce the tension in the eye muscles. The need to take intermittent "stretch breaks" is crucial, and is used to create changes in body postures. This must be part of daily work plans and employees are advised to set reminders on their phones. Placing your printer in another room is also

helpful, forcing you to leave the seat for micro breaks each time you send a document for printing.

We must learn to place our work equipment properly to improve awkward body positioning. One tip is to place monitors 20 – 40 inches (above and arm's length) away from the eyes. The monitor's distance should be about 20 inches away when using small screens and further away as the screen size gets larger. A laptop stand is useful for proper monitor alignment.

If the feet are not rested properly on the floor once the seat's height has been properly adjusted, you may need a foot rest to allow your hip bone to sit properly, and this will help avoid the pain from this part of the body. If you do not have a foot rest, you can improvise by placing cartons, piles of books or stacks of clothes under your feet.

SMART PREVENTION EXERCISES

Eye rolling and eye rest

Close your eyes and roll your eyes clockwise all the way round three times. Then repeat the same process anti-clockwise another three times. Just like the 20:20:20 rule, this helps release the tensed muscles in the eyes.

Warm-up

Drop your head gently to your chest while breathing in and slowly roll your head up to your left shoulder, then while breathing out slowly, roll your head back to the centre. Repeat this to the right, then three times on each side. This helps relax the tensed muscles in your neck and aids flexibility in movement of the head.

Head tilt

Maintain a neutral position and tuck in your chin, slowly tip your head to the left hand then return to the centre, then tip to your right and return to the centre. This should be repeated three times on each side.

Head turn

In a neutral position, slowly turn your head and look over your left shoulder, hold for a few seconds, go back to the centre and then repeat to the right. Repeat this three times in each side.

CONCLUSION

Doing these exercises is an opportunity for micro breaks and helps release tensions from those parts of your body which have a heavy burden of ergonomic related conditions.

We need to keep in mind that whatever wrong we subject our bodies to now, these behaviours will impact on us for the rest of our lives. Cumulative effects of our poor ergonomics behaviours must be considered. While the toll of remote working continues, so must ergonomics education.

Organisations must offer employees all the support they need to ensure that they remain healthy and productive.

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OSHAfrica welcomes the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) as a corporate member.

This partnership is very strategic and will help the organisation foster greater work within the field of OSH across many countries in Africa.

On 30 March, OSHAfrica participated in the inaugural meeting of ITUC and other partners across Africa to mark the birth of the ITUC-Africa Occupational Health and Safety network Network.

"We see this as a great stride in our wheel of progress and we will keep at this until we achieve the Africa we want", said Ehi Iden.



Construction of Mphephu Plaza Shopping Centre - during Covid-19



Johan Heyneke has a BCom Business Management (Risk Management) degree from Davinci Institute. He is employed by Riscon. He has been appointed as a safety officer and safety consultant for several sites to ensure compliance with the act and regulations.

The Mphephu Plaza development is divided into two phases - civil and construction phases. The Principal Bulk Earthworks contract was awarded to Jodan Construction and the Principal Building contract was awarded to Belo & Kies Construction. The client, Mosail Trade and Invest (Pty) Ltd wanted to invest in the Siloam community, and simultaneously uplift the community with this unique one-of-a-kind development. This development enables businesses to penetrate the Siloam retail market which in the past was not possible. Residents had to travel far distances to enjoy a shopping experience, now it is right on their doorstep.

This is a flagship development for Riscon Consultants, and together with MDSA Project & Construction Management who were appointed by the developer to manage this development and steer the project to the success it has become, in a progressive yet safe environment.

Riscon was appointed as occupational health and safety agents to ensure that the principal contractor complies with all the necessary Acts and Regulations protecting the interests of the client, as well as the community. Riscon visited the site prior to the tender process to ensure that all the hazards and risks were identified.

CIVIL PHASE

A notification of construction was submitted and stamped by the Department of Employment & Labour on 15th October 2019 for the Mphephu Plaza Development, and Jodan Construction took occupation of the site on 16 October 2019.

Jodan Construction submitted the health and safety file that was compiled according to the coherent occupational health and safety specifications and baseline risk assessment in the tender. From the offset they involved the community by hiring machinery and equipment from local businesses.

Water management was the first challenge that presented itself during this phase of the project. Massive rainfall on an untouched site, and little to no rainwater management left the contractor with what can only be described as a mud bath.



Water management was the first challenge that presented itself



Construction started during 2019

MSDA Project Management identified the areas where water posed a risk, and instructed Jodan Construction to excavate multiple trenches to drain the water to a natural occurring attenuation pond located 50 meters behind the site.

A major risk during this phase was accommodating and managing the passing traffic while constructing the road widenings and entrance to the development.

Jodan Construction made safety their first priority and never scored less than 91% on the monthly legal Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) audit. Jodan Construction started handing over sections of civil work to Belo & Kies Construction on 25 February 2020, and the final section was handed over during June 2020. They handed the health and safety file over to the client and started with site de-establishment.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

Belo & Kies started with the foundation

excavations on 25 February 2020. The development then took a turn that no person could ever have imagined or anticipated. The national pandemic and subsequent lockdown starting in March 2020 forced the development to come to a complete standstill.

Covid-19 restrictions

According to lockdown levels, construction was allowed to continue the beginning of June 2020.

Belo & Kies Construction had to ensure that all COVID-19 protocols were followed as per the President's national state of the nation address. They implemented everything concerning COVID-19, from isolation areas, to employees wearing 3-layer material masks.

Riscon Consultants provided the contractor with a new set of COVID-19 regulations that needed to be adhered to, and conducted an audit on Belo & Kies to ensure that they were complying before any work could commence. Belo & Kies continued on site from 5 June 2020.

The construction started off at a slower pace than normal, but gradually escalated until they were progressing faster than before.

The change in approach and way forward in implementing the necessary preventative measures were new to everyone, but had to be adopted to ensure that all employees on the site were safe and healthy.

Although the project was delayed by roughly ten weeks due to COVID-19, this did not stop the principal contractor who saw this as an opportunity to prove that they had the motivation to succeed under the difficult circumstances.

The opening of the shopping centre was postponed from October 2020 to March 2021 and the contractor ensured that the project was completed with good quality, and in good time in accordance with their contract.



A major risk was accommodating and managing the passing traffic while constructing the road widenings and entrance to the development



Aerial shot of the site during construction taken by Riscon

The development showed a good amount of progress as the weeks passed, even with the silly season as they call it in the retail and the construction industries, approaching fast.

Additional pressures due to accelerated pace

Due to the accelerated pace of construction, we had extra pressure to keep the employees safe. Temperatures were peaking to as high as 45 Degrees Celsius, so we ensured that Belo & Kies provided the employees with potable water at identified points on site to retain the hydration of all workers. Toolbox talks were escalated to a once-a-week to keep everyone on site informed of the possible dangers of heat exposure for the last remaining weeks of 2020.

Annual shutdown procedure

On 15th December 2020, I conducted my last inspection for the year as the contractor started site closedown for a much-needed builder's break, transporting employees back to their homes.

A shutdown audit was done and submitted to the client to ensure that the site was safe during the holiday season. By this date 75% of the brickwork and wet work had been completed.

Back to work 2021

At the start of 2021 the employees were well rested and ready to get the project finished. The goal was to finish the few remaining sections of wet works and start with the finishes so that the shops could be handed over, to be inspected by the tenants and MSDA Project Management.

Riscon requested that all documents be reintroduced and all employees be reformed of COVID-19 protocols.

Unexpected cyclones and massive rainfalls

With everything seemingly under control, we soon heard that the Tropical Cyclone Eloise was on its way and the Siloam community was in the path of the storm. The site was pelted with 190mm of rain in 48 hours. The infrastructure was so well

designed that it was capable of absorbing this abnormal rainfall. As the site recovered with Belo & Kies bringing masses of silt into the site from the mountain across the road, the region was affected by another two storms leaving only destruction on its way. Altogether it was estimated that there was 580mm of rainwater downpour in twelve hours, equalling the annual rainfall to the region. Research shows us that this rainfall exceeded the one in two-hundred-year flood line that appears in this region based on all records archived.

The once clean and well-advanced development was now covered in silt and mud and drenched with water. The development had received a massive amount of rainwater, 1000mm between 1st January 2021 and 23rd February 2021. Belo & Kies took the task of cleaning and completing one BO inspection after the other. No contractor ever expects this amount of rain in such a short period of time in an area that averages around 580mm per annum.

Opening

The Mphephu Plaza Shopping Centre opened on 25 March 2021 to the public. With all the challenges that were experienced on the way, from Covid-19 to cyclones, and it still being completed in a record time frame of 1 year and 8 months, it will be an enjoyable place of gathering to the community as well as a vast catchment of retail seekers.

Conclusion

With all of these challenges, Belo & Kies' first priority always remained the health and safety of their employees and they never scored below 90% on the monthly legal OHS audit.

All the parties involved are proud of the work done despite all hurdles that stood in this development's way. We know that we have delivered a wonderful product. We look forward to working with both the consultant team as well as the principal contractors on other projects in the future.

Stress and anxiety in the construction industry

In this article, I will discuss the high stress, anxiety rates and suicides in construction which continue to rise. I will analyse the causes, and how we can reverse the trend which is having an enormous impact on the construction industry.

Construction jobs are full of stressors, but those are compounded by factors that extend beyond the workplace, including the global pandemic, civil disobedience, unpredictable weather conditions, and an uncertain economy. When taken together, these stressors give us at least a partial understanding of the prevalence of suicide in the industry.

Over the past year, many countries, have moved in and out of lockdowns making many citizens anxious and angry, spoiling plans and sports gatherings, and even worse, threatening livelihoods ... and of course, threatening lives.

How can we defend ourselves from this attack on our morale? On our resilience? On our hope? Even though I had my low points through this extraordinary year, I discovered that we can live above our circumstances, above the world events happening around us, without living in denial.

Sometimes, the offered breakthrough feels counterintuitive and irrational when neither our heads nor our hearts can agree. Yet, I have discovered that we can start with joy. In defiance of our circumstances, we can intentionally choose joy. Sometimes, although it may seem irrational, we must laugh in the context we find ourselves living through.

PEOPLE AND EMOTIONS

Construction workers are not immune to the emotional upheaval that can come from receiving a request to return home for an uncertain period of time, and for frightening reasons such as Covid-19.

When that happens, there's usually fear, uncertainty, and doubt because the jobs they rely on might be gone by the time they return.

Some may have found temporary alternatives such as working close to home doing maintenance projects, but the pay is significantly less, and the work sporadic.

When construction reopened after the initial hard lockdown, many employees found themselves working harder and working longer hours to make up for lost time.

We heard comments from dissatisfied employees such as: "Over the past few months, I have not had one day off"; "I have worked overtime, and many of my colleagues in the same boat as me have become ill from stress".

Numerous clients /customers of mine have been forced to close doors. The mental burden is very taxing and my heart aches for so many.

On many construction sites, there are no



Dr. Bill Pomfret brings an unrivaled perspective on risk, regulation and liability from over 50 years of experience as a safety consultant working for leading companies around the world.

He also spent nearly a decade in the North Sea exploration and production as a safety manager. Dr. Bill is a passionate advocate for safety training.

vacations due to pressure to finish the project on time, and workers sometimes have to work 7 days a week.

Yet, life must just go on for them, which is stressful and leads to frustration and anger. I've often had to intervene to calm people down. When a project is over and employees are told to go home, they often don't know if there'll be another project. Some jobs are a once in a lifetime events.

I've seen too many divorces because of the difficulty of managing the time/money balance in the construction field.

The employee needs to schedule time to talk to his family, sometimes only for short periods before or after work. With all these stressors, his head still needs to be clear to deal with everyday hazards.

STATISTICS TELL THE STORY

With my background in risk management, compliance, and occupational health and safety, I believe that the traditional focus in the construction industry has been on safety, but not mental wellness

In Canada, there are approximately three workplace-related fatalities per day and 1,017 per year, according to OHS Canada, while there are 10 suicides per day and 4,000 suicides per year, according to the Government of Canada's website.

Though it is difficult to assess whether suicides are directly related to work-related stress factors, I believe it is a contributing factor.

The stress, disruption, and uncertainty caused by the pandemic is causing pronounced mental health concerns, including suicidal thoughts and feelings, according to the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

In Canada, 500,000 workers are off work due to mental health reasons according to the Commission.

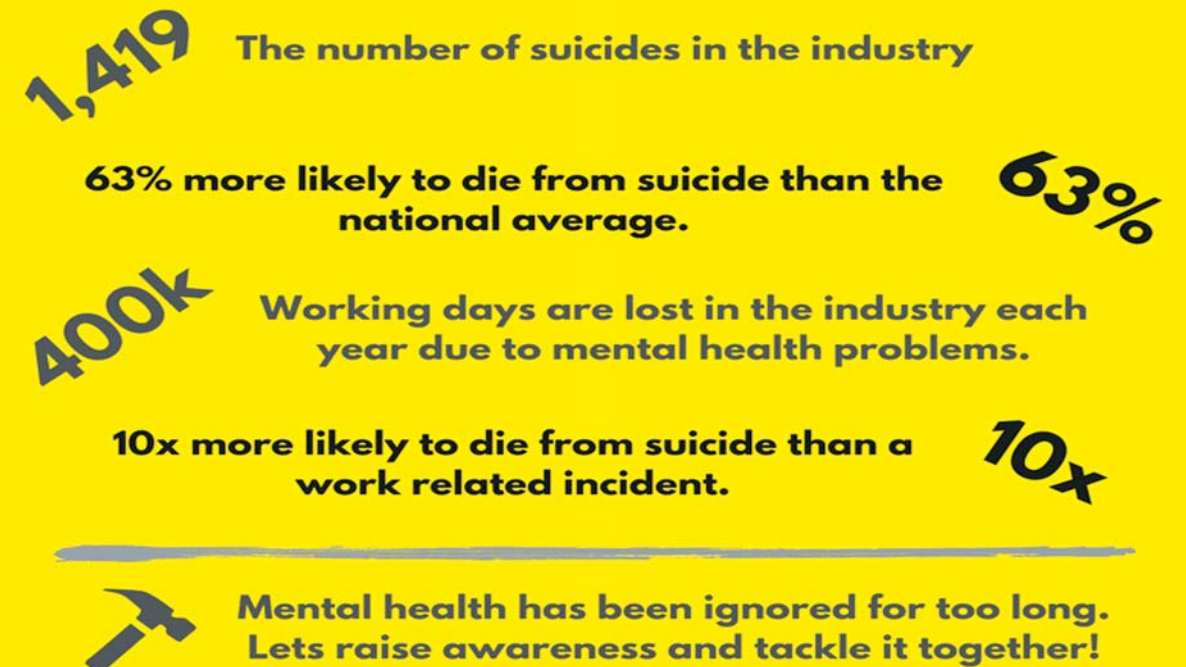
So the question is, what can we do from an awareness and education perspective to deal with the increasingly complex problem of mental health and wellness in the construction industry?

WORKPLACE STANDARDS MUST BE CREATED

Pre-pandemic, anxiety and depression were already costing the Canadian economy \$51 billion. With the result, Canada is the first country to have created psychological and workplace standards, CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013 – Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

Moreover, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), construction has one of the highest suicide rates (49.4/100,000) across all industries in the United States. In fact, more lives are lost per day from suicide than from all of OSHA's Fatal Four Hazards combined.

MENTAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION



WHY DOES CONSTRUCTION HAVE SUCH A HIGH SUICIDE RATE?

Many share the belief that the type of workplace culture found in the construction industry directly correlates to the high rates of suicide among workers. There's a culture of toughness, combined with a sense of fearlessness and thrill-seeking.

Things like family separation, isolation, extensive travel, sleep disruption and deprivation due to shift work, seasonal layoffs, and end-of-project furloughs are all factors that can be hard to handle.

On top of that, there's a prevalence of chronic pain and alcohol and substance abuse, coupled with performance pressures (schedule, budget, quality).

SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

We need to relook at the employer/employee relationship and create more of a positive impact in the workplace.

How we interact at work starts with little things, such as civil discourse. But things can escalate quickly because workers are stressed, they're thrown together and they have to evolve into artificial communities.

Harassment is another problem. But, sometimes reporting harassment to your supervisor may be a trap because the supervisor may be causing the harassment or the supervisor tries to play

psychologist when they're not qualified.

I recommend creating a mental health first responder position to create a psychologically safer workplace.

This is an idea promoted by both the Red Cross and Safety Projects International Inc.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

One bright spot in all this, is the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention (CIASP).

The CIASP was born out of necessity in response to the CDC statistics. Established by the Construction Financial Management Association (CFMA) in 2016 to shatter the stigma surrounding mental health issues, CIASP became a standalone 501(c)(3) organisation in 2018.

Their goal is to raise awareness about suicide prevention and provide resources and tools to create a zero-suicide industry by uniting and supporting the construction community.

But there are other things you can do at a more grassroots level. The construction community needs to band together to recognise these critical issues. Employers and employees need to talk to one another and to check in.

Don't assume the person working nearby is just fine. Once we start really conversing and caring, then we can make some headway.



Near miss: A leading or lagging KPI?



Rufai Ajibola is a chartered health and safety professional who holds a MSc. in Environment, Health & Safety from the University of Sunderland. He is currently the HSSEQ manager in a gas-fired power plant in the middle east

When the discussion came up between professional colleagues recently, the overriding conclusion was 'what does it matter? Both parties agreed that near miss or safety miss is one of the key performance indicators (KPI) of an organisation's OHSMS performance. They agreed that all near misses should be reported and investigated in order to prevent the incident re-occurring and escalating into a serious injury. Yet, there was no agreement on whether a near miss is a leading or lagging key performance indicator.

WHAT IS A NEAR MISS?

ISO 45001:2018 defines a near miss as an incident in which no injury or ill-health occurs but has the potential to do so. The same OHSMS standard requires organisations to measure their OH&S performance, using the measurement criteria determined by the organisation. Therefore, it is understandable why a number of practices or events are used as benchmarks or criteria for performance measurement. The case for near miss starts as organisations further break down their performance indicators as leading and lagging KPIs respectively.

Simply put, leading indicators are those that highlight the proactive measures to prevent or mitigate OH&S loss events, while lagging indicators indicate reactive measures or post-loss events activities. Accordingly, activities including safety inspections, training delivered, safety audits and so on are usually listed under leading KPIs as they are positive events while workplace accident data or loss-events like fatalities, asset damage, and occupational ill health are categorised as lagging indicators. These two measurements, although have their benefits and potential issues if not effectively managed, should be utilised to give a wholesome regime of OHSMS performance monitoring in an organisation.

Generally in practice, performance targets are set based on these KPIs for which organisations strive to meet. For instance, when a target of two safety inspections per year is set, (i.e. under leading KPIs), the organisation intuitively strives to conduct at least two or more inspections in the year to demonstrate performance excellence. Similarly, when a target of zero fatality is set (i.e. under lagging KPIs), the site deploys efforts so that the target is met and that no fatality occurs in the project. Now, this is where it gets tricky!

PROBLEMS OF TARGET SETTING

As for near misses, organisations on one end consider them as a lagging KPI and thus assign a

target to it. To them, near misses are potential negative events and should be investigated as though actual loss events. The target they set evolves based on previous years' near miss frequency so that they can demonstrate continual improvement. So for instance, if there were twelve near miss incidents in 2020, they target to 'have only six near miss incidents in 2021'. By so doing, the organisation indirectly prevents its workforce from reporting near miss incidents once the target of six is met. Even when the target is almost as high as the previous year (say eleven), it still means that near miss reporting in excess of eleven will, at least, be frowned upon or may not receive effective attention as with the ones within the set target.

This is one of the ways employers formally discourage near miss reporting, and trend is not uncommon even in organisations with a considerably mature OH&S management system implementation.

CREATING A POSITIVE SAFETY CULTURE

On the other extreme end are organisations that consider near misses as leading KPIs given that near miss reporting is an indication of a positive safety culture and should be encouraged. Accordingly, they set ambitious annual targets for near miss reporting so that if there were twelve near miss incidents in the previous year, they set a target of twenty on the following year to encourage workers to report near misses as and when they occur.

Further in this category are organisations that incentivise near miss reporting which, although an originally well-intentioned programme, lead to the workers and H&S safety reporting common site occurrences as near misses just to achieve the set target and compensate the reporters. Unfortunately, these do not automatically translate to a successful incident reporting management. The consequence is felt more as organisations benchmark (read compare) their performance with others in the industry whereby company A reported twenty near misses and company B feels it is underreporting because its near miss target is ten.

BALANCING POINT

The problems presented above are not caused as a result of KPI categorisation or targets setting alone. It is a reflection of what among other things, can go wrong during OHSMS implementation. Therefore the solution lies in a combination of measures-education, awareness and clarification.

For organisations who consider its lagging indicator, care should be taken to demystify the targets attached to it for instance, so that

employees do not see it as a number which must not be exceeded.

Everyone, including the management should understand the importance and thus 'naturally' feel inclined to report as and when a near miss occurs, regardless of whatever target is set for it. A practical way is to make the target 'null', implying that the event is only being monitored for further analysis, trend and so on but not being capped at a certain amount.

For those who consider a leading indicator, and thus 'over-celebrate' reporting, there should be an inward look into why employees may not want to report near misses before jumping to 'celebrate' or compensate those who do.

In a value-driven organisational safety culture, employees do not need to be promised gifts before they report near misses. Under-reporting is a direct result of existential barriers to effective reporting.

For instance, many literatures trace employers' attitudes and behaviour as the root causes for under-reporting among staff and therefore not likely to be addressed by incentivising or enlisting as corporate KPI.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that safety misses are potential loss events which present opportunities for improvement within the OH&S management system. Monitoring of it is essential for data-driven analysis for instance, but there should be a system(s) to ensure that the means of measurement for performance evaluation do not lead to a compromise of the fundamentals of good safety management system. Depending on which side of the divide your organisation belongs, relevant precautions should be taken to achieve full benefit of the programme put in place.

Work / life balance in the new normal



Saide Aly Mansur is Managing Director Mansur and Associates International Consultants, and Advisor to the Strategic Centre for Consultancy & Technology (SCCT) Qatar.

As safety and health professionals take on more responsibilities during the new normal, they face a growing workplace health threat stress.

If you've been in the business world since the mid-1990s, you've likely heard your management espouse the desire for employees to achieve greater work / life balance. Many companies have adopted programmes to help employees strike a better life balance by providing health club benefits, entertainment discount programmes and additional time off for events such as the birth of a child.

MANAGING STRESS

First, let's get clear on the primary purpose of achieving work / life balance. It's about minimising stress in your life. Much of the stress in a typical person's life is derived from work. Stress comes from non-work activities as well. You can say you've got work / life balance, but in addition to working full-time, you might participate in many activities with the kids, volunteer at the local homeless shelter and exercise 5 days a week. If you're feeling stressed and tired, you haven't achieved the primary intent of work / life balance, which is to reduce stress. All you have done is balance the degree of stress you have in your work life with the stress you have in your non-work life. But at least the stress is balanced.

In 2020, we all had a wake-up call and despite all our planning and strategy to get our work / life balanced we were faced with a pandemic that took our journey off course and we had to redirect our compass on a new path to work / life balance. We introduced a number of new programmes during the lockdown and this created higher stress levels at

our work fronts.

Working on various projects during the pandemic we developed a few practical work / life balance go byes, consider the following:

Consciously (and honestly) decide what is really important

Saying that work / life balance is important is one thing; but truly meaning it is a different game altogether. You may want to believe you place other things above work, but wanting to believe it simply doesn't mean it's so. Make a conscious, realistic declaration on where your priorities lie, then examine your behaviours or ask a friend, relative, significant other or spouse.

Step 1 - Take the first step toward the quest for work/life balance means eliminating the gap between what you desire and what you do.

Make your calendar a life thing, not just a work thing

Integrate important personal activities into your calendar. Examples of things to schedule include exercise, being home (at your laptop or home office) for dinner and kids' activities. Also include items such as important meetings that your spouse or significant other needs to attend which require you to be at home with the kids.

Step 2 - ensure that you create a life calendar and not just a work calendar. We all fell into this trap when we found ourselves having meetings seven days a week at all hours of the day.

Measure success in results, not hours

Those who measure success based on hours worked will prioritise hours over results and tend to be less motivated to figure out how to get more work done in less time. Those who measure success

based on results are more likely to figure out better ways to do things, prioritise their work and be at home (not at the laptop or remote work station).

Step 3 - Don't use the clock as your gauge of success; use the results you deliver as your success yardstick. This was a major success for many of us and found that teams working on projects were able to achieve great results when they focused on results and team work.

Don't succumb to peer pressure

From our earliest years, we are exposed to peer pressure. The "I dare you" from our youth become "Who's got a bigger house?" or "Who drives a nicer car?" as adults. Just because a peer works 18 hours a day doesn't mean he or she gets more done or is more effective. It just means that your peer chooses to run the hours race because he or she feels it is the best way to get ahead. Don't let your peers' actions pressure you to run the wrong race

Step 4 - Just stay focused on providing meaningful results that provide value to the organisation.

Don't take on too much "life" in work / life balance

Achieving work / life balance doesn't mean you cram more and more stuff into the life side of the equation to balance out a high-octane work life.

Achieving good work/life balance means doing both in moderation and minimising the stress in your life. You could be working a 40-hour work week and still be stressed out because of the non-work activities you've committed to. Doing too much life can be just as stressful to you and your loved ones as doing too much work.

Step 5 - Don't feel obligated or pressured to fill up every hour of your week with life activities. Doing both in moderation helps you attain the key benefit of work / life balance: a low-stress life.

CONCLUSION

Realising the quest for work / life balance means first doing some serious soul searching and coming to grips with your true life priorities. If you acknowledge you are a workaholic and don't want to change, then by all means work 18-hour days. If you do want to change, though, you need to accept the challenge head-on and get on the road to a more balanced lifestyle. You may be surprised at how your quality of life increases and how little it truly impacts your career aspirations.

I would love to hear from other professionals on how they are coping with work/life balance in the new normal.

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The COVID-19 pandemic, with its now gazetted legislative requirements and the impact of the COVID lockdown has introduced a series of new risks into the business and workplace arena which need pro-active responses to achieve a health and safe workplace environment.

Benrisk Consulting offers a risk assessment service which includes an assessment of the COVID risks a workplace or project site may be exposed to and provides protective measures guidance and protocols to achieve legal compliance.

The first risk assessment available is the workplace issue /job-task based hazard identification risk assessments (eg. HIRAs) related to managing the detection of and the possible exposure risks to the transmission of the COVID virus in the workplace and during the daily job-task work processes.

The second risk assessment level available is the higher-level Baseline Risk Assessment, where both the inner and external context risks related to the impact of the COVID pandemic are workshopped with the Management Team to obtain risk profiles which can be used to focus the organisational vision, mission, continuity and business strategy for recovering from and surviving the negative impact of the COVID pandemic and the lockdown.

Businesses frequently lack the in-house expertise to perform or to meet these business and legally required risk assessment and COVID risk management requirements.

Let Benrisk Consulting help you

Contact: Leighton Bennett,
(BSc, MDP Dip, Pr.CHSA, AIRMSA, GradSaioh, OHS Prof, FIOSM)
Pr,CHSA & SHE & RM Consultant
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COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT SERVICES

Fire safety - are you prepared?



Leighton Bennett
(Pr.CHSA)
Benrisk Consulting,
Insurance Surveyor,
and OHS and
Risk Management
Consultant. He is Vice
President Safety First
Association

FIRE DEPARTMENTS LACK THE FACILITIES TO FIGHT FIRES

Most think so, but few have thought through what fire safety risk they may face. Many say why worry, we can phone the local fire department to help.

But firstly, what people do not know is that many local fire departments, in Gauteng for example, have been closed due to both manpower shortages and more seriously the lack of operational fire tenders to respond to your fire. Secondly, a list of classified fire departments in South Africa that used to be available from the Fire Prevention Association to provide insights as to the capability level of fire departments, has not been updated in years.

So, with that being the situation, there is a lot you need to consider. "How fire safety prepared are you and your workplace? When was the fire safety, emergency procedures, evacuation drills, etc discussed, updated or practised at your workplace? The common answer is "I can't remember" or "never".

I conducted an OHS audit at the now infamous Bank of Lebanon building back in 2005 to find an overall safety compliance of 27%, and a few years later three firemen died fighting that building's fire.

UNFORTUNATE FIRE SAFETY RISKS IN PLACE

As a SHE, Risk Management and "freelance" Insurance Surveyor let me share some examples of the fire safety risks and safety non-compliances that I have encountered at businesses, schools and workplaces:

- Fire equipment not usable due to vandalism, not being serviced (annually), fire extinguishers used and not recharged, fire equipment missing or not accessible, fire hose reels perished, abused, etc.
- Most staff members have no idea how to use a workplace provided fire extinguisher. They have not been trained, and the "PASS" method has not been communicated to them. See Figure 1.
- I saw a primary school on the 7th floor of a building where the steel fire escape staircase was so rusted that stairs had rusted off leaving holes to fall through the 6 floors to the ground.
- At a high school hostel on the ground floor, all the windows are covered in Spanish window bars, and security gates at the exit doors are locked at night, leaving many girls locked in, without a key or fire-fighting equipment.
- I saw a warehouse where the emergency exit doors are bolted closed, needing more than a normal bolt cutter to get out, fire extinguishers are missing and emergency exit signages are poorly marked.



Figure 1. Fire extinguisher usage

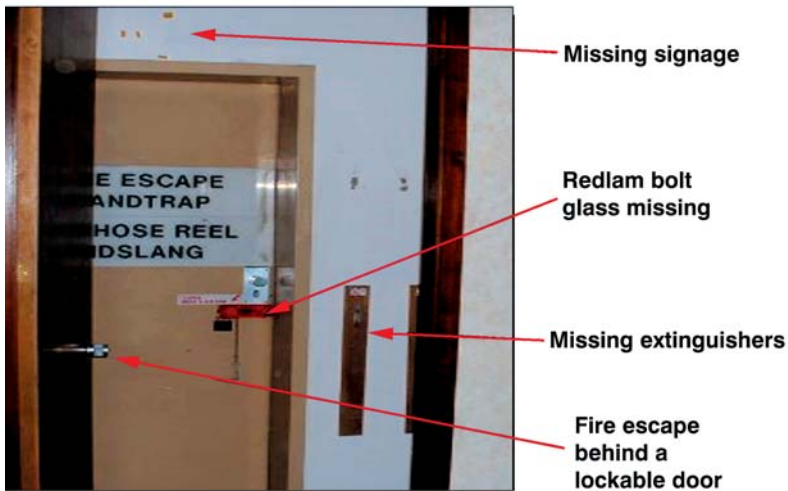
- A primary school where the security gates of its emergency exit door are welded closed, preventing access to the fire escape staircase.
- Some buildings have emergency exit doors which open into enclosed courtyards with no easy escape, also have the possibility of glass and fire debris falling onto those caught in the courtyard.
- Other buildings have exit doors opening into garden areas layered with plants, rock and pebbles, and no safe walkways are provided to facilitate the rapid evacuation of the people across such garden areas. See Figure 2.
- Other buildings have exit doors with no or empty key boxes and even the wrong keys to open the exit door for emergency purposes.
- A merchant's wood yard had 4 fire hose reels not connected to the water supply, while the hose nozzles and lengths of fire hose (should be 30m long) have been removed from the fire hose reels at other locations.
- Often water sprinkler system valves are not regularly tested, so the system's water supply flow valve seal has perished and the valve is stuck closed. Sometimes the water supply or delivery valves have been closed, so the sprinklers will not work.
- Smoke detection systems, with a defective detector setting off a constant, irritating alarm at



Figure 2. An exit door opens into a garden area layered with plants, rock and pebbles, and there's no safe escape walkway

security, may be silenced at the smoke detection panel alarm, preventing any future smoke alarm warning being heard.

- Major shopping businesses have burned down because fire pumps have failed. If a fire pump is regularly tested by security but run for too short a time to recharge the batteries, especially in winter, they will fail. Is there a fitted battery charger now?
- In one case, the battery for the diesel motor driven fire pump for a site's fire hydrant system was stolen so no fire water was available for the buildings and grass fire fire-fighting purposes.
- Building dry wall partitions are often changed for new floor plan layouts, but often the offices in the new layout are missing a room sprinkler head or smoke detector so would be unable to respond to any fire risk in that unprotected room. Alteration plans must update fire detection requirements.
- Furthermore, building dry wall changes also often result in the access to fire escapes being compromised, for example, the fire escape and/or the fire equipment may now be located within a locked storeroom.



Fire escape and emergency doors must be properly managed

FIRE SAFETY CHECKS MUST BE FOLLOWED

- How many of the abovementioned fire life safety risks are present or occurring at your workplace or even at home?
- Are you as fire safety prepared as you thought you were?
- What is in place to respond to your fire emergency situation, should the local fire emergency services not arrive on site within a reasonable time?
- How good, updated and practised/drilled are your workplace fire emergency procedures?
- Have you checked that your fire team members are still applicable, and that they haven't left the company or died?
- Do you know which is your nearest emergency escape exit and an alternative escape exit location from your workstation?
- Do you know that fire drills must be held at least annually, but often 6-monthly in terms of some local authority emergency management bylaws (e.g. Johannesburg)?
- Is there a communicated (landlord's) emergency procedures plan for your office park, shopping centre, multi-tenanted building, etc?
- Has the fire-fighting equipment (extinguishers, hose reels, hydrants, hydrant hoses, etc), fire detection and alarm systems been serviced within the past 12 months?
- Have the sprinkler system valves had a major overhaul in the past 36 months, and are regular sprinkler valve operational tests being done and recorded?
- Are all your flammable chemical substances, accumulations of combustible wastes (paper, cardboard, plastics) on site properly fire safety managed?
- Is there a need for a "hot work" permit system to be used on site?
- Are smoking areas properly designated and their usage obeyed?

CONCLUSION

I trust this article has made you re-look at your fire life safety and hopefully it will lead you to ask the right fire safety questions at your health and safety committee meetings or to your management and employer.

Remember if this fire safety situation is not suitably pre-planned, practised, regularly reviewed and updated, fire event panic will occur and some employees are likely to be injured or die, and you could be the next victim should a fire event occur.

SAIOH President's Message

SAIOH management and the SAIOH National Council are going full steam ahead with the planned initiatives for 2021. Entities have already met and are working hard to ensure a prosperous year. In this newsletter, an overview is provided of activities to date, planned activities (including an appetiser about the annual conference), PCC matters, etc. Starting with this newsletter, we are introducing our SAIOH National Council - a few persons at a time - not only for our SAIOH members, but also other OSH practitioners to get to know them better. We are looking forward to ending the first quarter on a high note and strive to make the remainder of 2021 memorable!

INTRODUCING OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Nico Potgieter: SAIOH marketing and communication, e-mail: n.potgieter@dundeeprecious.com

1. Dr Hennie van der Westhuizen, SAIOH President



Having studied a National Diploma in Environmental Health at the Pretoria College for Advanced Technical Education, Hennie started his career as an Environmental Health Officer with the Department of National Health in 1979. During his years as a civil servant, he gained experience in local and international control of epidemic and communicable diseases, such as smallpox, bubonic plague, yellow fever, cholera, malaria, and Congo fever. Other functions included monitoring and evaluating services at municipalities, in rural communities and in government departments, that could affect public health. These included water supply, suitable accommodation, food hygiene, refuse removal, and sewerage treatment. During this time, he studied towards a Higher Diploma in Public Health at the Cape Technikon.

In January 1993, Hennie was appointed as a lecturer in Occupational Hygiene at Port Elizabeth Technikon. He enjoyed teaching, realising that this was his calling in life, and immersed himself in teaching and Occupational Hygiene. During his tenure at the Technikon, which later became Nelson Mandela University (NMU), he obtained an MSc degree in Occupational Hygiene at the University of Greenwich in London. Whilst lecturing, his employers gave him permission to register with the then Department of Labour, as an Approved Inspection Authority.

In 2007, a decision had to be made to either leave NMU to do full time consulting, or to continue as an academic. He chose academia, accepting the position of Head of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Studies at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). There, he managed the Environmental Health and

Environmental Management academic programmes. He also became involved in the African Academy for Environmental Health and was part of an international team, comprising a member from Zambia and a professor from the University of Belfast, that wrote the Occupational Hygiene syllabus for member institutions in sub-Saharan Africa.

Whilst at CPUT, Hennie was awarded an Erasmus Mundus international scholarship to pursue studies towards a PhD at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) in Leuven Belgium, for 18 months. After he retired at the end of 2016, he remained active in academic matters and Occupational Hygiene. He is currently a SANAS technical assessor.

Hennie lives in Bellville with his wife and enjoys growing orchids, some of which have successfully been sent to orchid heaven.

2. Naadiya Nadasen, SAIOH Vice President



As a Occupational Hygienist for Apex Environmental, Naadiya Nadasen is both diligent in the discipline of Occupational Hygiene and committed to the profession. With more than nine years of professional experience, she has independently demonstrated strong knowledge in the Occupational Hygiene industry and has completed a variety of projects and training programmes.

While studying towards a Masters degree in Environmental Management at UKZN, Naadiya's passion, enthusiasm and curiosity for Occupational Health grew, and cemented her career as an Occupational Hygienist.

Naadiya currently provides voluntary support to the KZN SAIOH branch and is the Vice President of SAIOH, where she is committed to growing the organisation.



CREATING AWARENESS IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC

SAIOH continues to market and communicate Occupational Hygiene across multiple platforms, thereby increasing the general public's awareness and knowledge of our noble profession.

Some of the recent items include:

- SAIOH sent a motivation to the DoH requesting to be put onto the priority list for COVID-19

Contribute to Awareness

RSG is an Afrikaans radio station of the National Broadcaster, the SABC, with around 2 million listeners (mostly Afrikaans speaking). Thus far, this was a key radio station targeted for public awareness.

If any of our members or other interested parties have contacts with other Radio stations, TV channels, etc., SAIOH can assist in setting up interviews on topical issues with them.

If you have any suggestions, inputs, or contributions in this regard, please e-mail them to our president at President@saioh.co.za, or to the chief administrative officer at info@saioh.co.za.

vaccinations, as many of our members are involved in fighting the pandemic at the front-line. Feedback in this regard is awaited from the DoH.

- SAIOH is busy launching a Technical Committee, which will be responsible to develop Position and Technical Papers. We look forward to great outputs from this Committee.
- A third and fourth round of radio interviews on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG) took place. Jaco Pieterse spoke about Ergonomics towards the end of last year, and on HBAs and specifically Legionella, earlier this year. SAIOH also organised a pool of other OH Experts that can do these interviews in other languages also, i.e., English, and a multitude of African languages. This information and details were shared with all the SABC Radio stations, so we hope to see more interviews soon.

SAIOH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SAIOH is pleased to announce that the SAIOH Annual Conference Committee is working hard, planning the upcoming SAIOH annual conference, which is due to take place in Cape Town from 26 to 29 October 2021. The theme will be 'Navigating Occupational Hygiene in uncharted waters'.

The Committee is considering different formats, e.g., face to face, virtual or a hybrid option. The option of live-streaming the conference is also being considered, to ensure easy access for everyone and higher participation from SAIOH members and other interested parties.

As history dictates, everyone can expect a fully loaded conference programme with a variety of interesting topics, excellent Professional Development Courses (PDCs), and the usual awards evening and gala dinner (if not virtual).

A sneak preview of the programme follows.

Focus topics

- Global harmonised systems (GHS)
- Asbestos Abatement Regulations
- Hazardous Chemical Agents Regulations
- Ergonomics Regulations

Provisional keynote topics

- Epigenetics and occupational hygiene
- Particulate sampling - analytical procedures
- Dust sampling for space agencies
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) - Department of Employment and Labour
- Epigenetics and asbestos
- Mining forum - topic to be decided

Provisional oral presentations

- Psychosocial issues
- Ergonomics
- GHS
- Matching biological exposure indices (BEIs) to occupational exposure limits (OELs)

- PCC sessions

- Asbestos-contaminated soil remediation

Professional Development Courses (PDCs)

- Principles in workplace design for 'physically challenged' people
- Identification of non-routine asbestos-containing materials during risk assessments
- Risk assessment

FROM THE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE (PCC)

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

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

Karen du Preez: SAIOH PCC chairperson, e-mail: KarenD@nioh.ac.za

Certification assessments and important dates

A total of 76 candidates registered and wrote the written assessment in the first quarter of 2021:

- 37 at the Occupational Hygiene Assistant level
- 23 at the Occupational Hygiene Technologist level
- 16 at the Occupational Hygienist level

The first PCC written assessments for 2021 took place on Friday 12 March. At the time of this newsletter, papers were still being marked. Statistics will be made available in the next newsletter.

Important upcoming PCC dates

- PCC meeting scheduled for Friday 23 April 2021
- PCC oral assessments scheduled from 23 April to 6 May 2021

Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum

The SAIOH Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum (OHSF) was introduced to administer all aspects related to the recognition of occupational hygiene training materials, training providers and institutions, and the development and management of assessment and examination systems, where required.

The SAIOH OHSF recently approved the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) as the first recognised training provider (RTP) for the SAIOH AP 101 - Counting of airborne asbestos fibres by phase contrast microscopy (PCM) module. The module will be presented by the Occupational Hygiene Section of NIOH, and the examination will be administered by the SAIOH PCC.

Prospective training providers can apply as RTPs for the AP 101 module, as well as the AP 102 - Analysis of bulk materials for asbestos content module. Other modules currently in development include the AP 103 module on Management of asbestos in buildings, including asbestos risk assessment.

These training courses and RTP applications are for any Occupational Hygiene related courses.

Another function of the OHSF is to evaluate applications from tertiary institutions for recognition of their occupational hygiene related qualifications.

Qualifications at the South African Qualifications Authority's, National Qualifications Framework (SAQA NQF) level 8 or higher, with an occupational hygiene content of at least 50%, that align with the content of the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) International Certificate in Occupational Hygiene (ICertOH) (Website:

<https://www.OHLearning.com>), will be recognised by the SAIOH PCC for evaluation at Occupational Hygienist level.

Qualifications at a SAQA NQF level 7 with an occupational hygiene content aligned with at least 50% of the content of the OHTA ICertOH, will be recognised by the SAIOH PCC for evaluation at Occupational Hygiene Technologist level.

All tertiary institutions that offer occupational hygiene qualifications are encouraged to contact the PCC administrator for information regarding application for recognition (Lee@saioh.co.za).

The details of recognised training providers as well as recognised qualifications will be made available on the SAIOH website (<https://www.saioh.co.za>).

Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) feedback

SAIOH has a memorandum of understanding with OHTA, which is internationally recognised, including by the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA). SAIOH recognises and accepts OHTA's occupational hygiene qualifications as part requirement for its certification prerequisites.

Recent feedback from OHTA includes:

- OHTA recently launched a newsletter called OHTA Global Link. It is available on the SAIOH website under the Resources and Publication tab (<https://www.saioh.co.za/page/Resources>)
- In November 2020, the SAIOH PCC representative on the OHTA Board, Peter-John Jacobs, presented an update on OHTA, which can also be viewed on the SAIOH website under the Resources and Publication tab (see link above).

All OHTA news is posted on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za), as soon as it is received, for our members or OSH practitioners to peruse. Information is also available on the OHTA website (www.OHLearning.com).

SAIOH OHTA Approved Training Providers (ATPs) are listed below. Their details can also be found on the OHTA website.

- Apex Environmental (e-mail: dee@apexenviro.co.za, Tel: 031 914 1004, <https://www.apexenviro.co.za>)
- Blugrey Occupational Hygiene Consultants (Pty) Ltd (e-mail: manager@blugrey.co.za, Tel: 083 243 3932, <https://www.blugrey.com>)

- Health and Occupational Hygiene Laboratory CC (e-mail: hohl@telkomsa.net, Tel: 012 653 3850, <https://www.hohlcc.co.za>)
- National Institute for Occupational Health (e-mail: JeannethM@nioh.ac.za, Tel: 011 712 6406, <https://www.nioh.ac.za/>)
- Nershco Services (Pty) Ltd

(e-mail: admin@nershco.com, Tel: 083 302 6200, <https://www.nershco.com/home.php>)

- Poltech (Pty) Ltd (e-mail: philipv@poltech.co.za, Tel: 012 653 2181, <https://www.poltech.co.za/>)
- Sedulitas (e-mail: pjjacobs@sedulitas.co.za, Tel: 082 551 400, <https://www.sedulitas.co.za/>)

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Hennie van der Westhuizen: SAIOH president, e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

Nico Potgieter: SAIOH marketing and communication, e-mail: n.potgieter@dundeeprecious.com

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

Kate Smart: SAIOH chief administrative officer, e-mail: info@saioh.co.za

1. SAIOH strategy update

The annual SAIOH strategy meeting for 2021 was held earlier this year and was attended by all the key role players within SAIOH.

In the previous strategy session, six main objectives, along with their performance indicators were identified. The purpose of this year's session was to allocate specific task teams to each objective. These teams will now be responsible for the roll-out of each of the objectives, which are:

- To maintain and ensure SAIOH's relevance in creating workplaces free of health risks in the African context - Immediate Past President (Norman Khoza) and Vice President (Naadiya Nadasen)
- To embrace the application and use of 4IR and digital technologies in occupational hygiene practice - Technical Chair (Deon Swanepoel)
- To preserve professionalism and ethical professional practice amongst occupational hygiene practitioners - Ethics Chair (Oscar Rikhotso), Prof. Cas Badenhorst (in a support capacity), and President (Hennie van der Westhuizen)
- To develop and build the SAIOH brand in the African context, locally and abroad - Marketing and Communication (Nico Potgieter)
- To contribute to improving training and continuous development of the occupational hygiene profession in the African context - PCC Chair (Karen du Preez) and President (Hennie van der Westhuizen)
- To provide and maintain good governance and administrative practices within SAIOH - General Manager (Deon Jansen van Vuuren) and the SAIOH administration

2. SAIOH Council and Management Board activities

Memoranda of understanding

We are pleased to announce that the Management Board has done the groundwork and is busy finalising memoranda of understanding with the Ergonomics Society of South Africa (ESSA) and the Responsible Packing Management Association of South Africa (RPMASA), with the latter already signed.

Website and social media

The SAIOH Management Board is finalising appointment of an IT company to revamp the SAIOH website.

This includes developing a modern Website that will integrate with the MySAIOH administrative record system.

The administrative team has also been hard at work, ensuring that SAIOH has a greater presence on all social media platforms, with the intent of greater cohesion between social media and the SAIOH website.

SAIOH branches

A branch chair strategy meeting was held on 11 March 2021, where the branch chairs focused on member's needs, planning their meetings and workshops for the year, and the hosting of mini conferences on the webinar platform.

Participants will now need to discuss strategies and focus areas with their individual branches, which will be communicated in due course.

Make your mark

The SAIOH Council invites topics and the establishment of working groups for technical papers, from its members and any interested party. If you have any suggestions or contributions in this regard, please e-mail them to our President at president@saioh.co.za or to the Chief Administrative Officer at info@saioh.co.za.



Celebrating SAPEMA's 60th anniversary



by Deleane Luzzatto,
Chairman SAPEMA



The classic saying of "Time Flies" is an understatement for the past 10 years since our 50th Anniversary in 2011! And when we take a look at the turbulence of what 2020 brought us with Covid-19, this certainly was a game changer for all!

When we look back and reflect where over the events that have made history over past 10 years in both in South Africa, and SAPEMA, it confirms that we cannot become what we want, by remaining what we are!

2011 saw the 14th Dalai Lama unable to attend the 80th birthday celebration of fellow Nobel Peace prize laureate Desmond Tutu, having been refused a visa to enter South Africa.

2012 marked a year of serious history in our Mining sector; Police opened fire on workers at a platinum mine in Marikana, killing at least 34 people, and leaving at least 78 injured and arresting more than 200 others. Prosecutors drop murder charges in September against 270 miners after a public outcry, and the government sets up a judicial commission of inquiry in October.

In the September, Former ANC youth leader Julius Malema is charged with money laundering over a government tender awarded to a company partly owned by his family trust. Mr Malema says the case is a politically motivated attempt to silence his campaign against President Zuma, over the Marikana shootings.

Then in October the Platinum mine owner, Amplats fires 12,000 striking miners as wave of wildcat strikes shows little sign of abating.

2013 brought tributes flooding in from all around the world, when "the father of our nation", Nelson Mandela dies at age 95.

Then came the fall of Zuma! The anti-corruption ombudsman heavily criticises President Zuma for a twenty-million-dollar upgrade to his private home.

The ruling party, ANC, wins a majority in the general elections, held in May of 2014. And the "Blade Runner", Oscar Pistorius, is sentenced to 5 years in prison for killing his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp.

Eskom rations electricity to prevent load

shedding, blaming years of badly managed maintenance. A shocking and brutal spate of Xenophobic attacks leaves several dead in 2015.

In March, of 2016 the Supreme Court rules President Zuma violated the constitution for not repaying public money used to improve his private residence. And then Zuma dismisses the Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, in 2017 leading to the country's credit rating being cut to junk status.

2018 presented an eventful year to say the least. We had a super blue blood moon in January which was the first blue blood moon eclipse since 1983.

Jacob Zuma resigns as the president after 9 years in power, two new finance ministers and slumping into a recession.

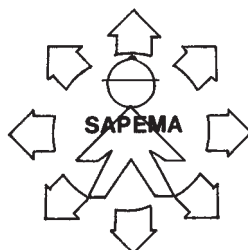
Prince Harry marries Megan Markle; Canada becomes the first industrial country to legalise cannabis for recreational use. Many nations around the world particularly in Europe, the Commonwealth as well as the US, celebrated 100 years since the end of World War 1.

In the midst of all of this, the PPE industry and SAPEMA, had its fair journey of forging forward, facing challenges and evolving as an Association.

CHAIRMEN OVER THE YEARS

John Bain-Venn
Craston Wilson - Gardwel
Brett Jones - MSA
Cobus Kruger - Quality Safety
Rob Ellis - Tiffy Safety
Howard Palmer - Amtronix
Duncan Ramsden - MSA
Dave Alexander - North Safety
Ivan Pretorius - 3M
Ron Anderson - MSA
Barry Mitchell - North Safety
Darryl Jacobs - uvex Safety
Ravesh Rama - Leo Garments
Hayley Arnesen - MSA
Deleane Luzzatto - Rebel Safety Gear
Clyde Beattie - uvex Safety
Deleane Luzzatto - Rebel Safety Gear

Our logo through the years



Original logo 1961



Logo redesigned by Rob Ellis
in 1988 and still in use today



50 year commemorative
logo 2011



60 year commemorative
logo 2021

History of SAPEMA

SAPEMA, originally called the "Personal Protective Equipment Manufacturer's Association" was founded in 1961 by six major manufacturers and distributors of personal protective equipment.

EARLY YEARS

The timing was perfect for the formation of the association which was centralised in Johannesburg in the heart of the construction boom.

The objectives were to create an association that could represent its members and lobby on their behalf with the government and the South African Bureau of Standards; to promote its members as suppliers of quality products and services; and to educate users in the correct application of PPE.

SAPEMA was welcomed by the safety industry as a valuable contributor towards accident prevention and the preservation of life.

SAPEMA members immediately took on a leading role together with other safety associations in assisting industry and mining with preventative measures such as the correct use and application of PPE and most importantly the correct training of the workforce in all aspects of safe working practices and conditions.

The secretariat of the Association was first administered by the Transvaal Chamber of Industries (TCI). Meetings were held in the old Railways Club building at Sturrock Park Johannesburg. Administration was changed to the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industries (JCCI) when the TCI merged with the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce (JCC) in 1987.

The year of SAPEMA's founding in 1961 coincided with South's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, leading to the birth of the Republic of South Africa and the rand becoming the official monetary unit. Members now had to convert all their prices from pounds to rands. As an idea of prices, a dust coat at the time cost R2.85.

Over the years, SAPEMA continued to grow and entrench itself as a professional association. In 1982 its name changed to "The Southern African Protective Equipment Manufacturer's Association", by this time the membership had increased to 17.

In 2003, with the return of international trade and

investment, its name changed to the "Southern African Protective Equipment Marketing Association", to represent companies distributing quality imported products and not only local manufacturers.

By 2011 when SAPEMA celebrated its 50th anniversary its membership had grown to 48 companies.

STANDARDS

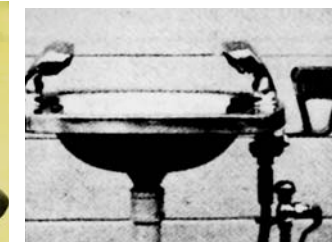
From early days of the association the need to develop and make available personal protective products of acceptable standards was identified as a necessary requirement.

Over the years, SAPEMA members got together with other organisations such as the Chamber of Mines, NOSA, Safety First Association, Department of Labour and the Government Mining Engineer - now the Department of Minerals & Resources and formed Standards Working Groups with the South African Bureau of Standards. International standards were adapted or adopted to suit local product requirements and the local markets.

During the 1980s significant developments of standards took place and SAPEMA was at the forefront of making them available.

SAPEMA formed expert "Product Groups" whose function was, together with other role players, the development of South African PPE Standards. Significant development of international standards, together with the increase in imported PPE, contributed to the complexity of our South African standards.

Technical committee were formed to deal with the complexity of standards and legislation and to provide SAPEMA members with a forum to deal with SABS, Regulatory Authorities and other Government Legislation bodies and NGOs. To deal with each category of PPE, technical subcommittees were formed with a chairman and committee members with specific technical knowledge for each. To assist with the understanding of various standards SAPEMA compiled a handbook on PPE which was invaluable for SAPEMA members and end users.





Gauteng inaugural committee meeting

BRANCHES

A KZNatal branch of SAPEMA was established in October 1975, but it ceased to exist after 5 years due to lack of support. During 2006 it was reborn under the Chairmanship of Barry Mitchell with Ravesh Rama as Chairperson.

On the 24th of August 2009 the Gauteng branch of SAPEMA held its inaugural meeting at the Hungarian Alliance Club in Midrand. The meeting was well-attended indicating the need and enthusiasm for this initiative. Jaco Combrink of HSE Solutions was appointed as facilitator.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SAPEMA participated, organised and partnered with various associations in coordinating conferences and workshops over the years.

- In May 1975, SAPEMA was invited to take part in a safety show held in the centre court of Sandton City. This exhibition was organised by the Safety First Association and aimed to educate the public and create an awareness of industrial safety hazards.
- Safety Africa 2003 was held at Gallagher Estates under the Chairmanship of Ron Anderson. It was formed as a shop window for its members.
- In 2004 SAPEMA held a fashion show at Noshcon. This was organised by Barry Mitchell and Loren Pearson. This tradition picked up again during 2017 with the A-OSH Expo.
- Two Sapema Safety days were held during 2005 under the Chairmanship of Barry Mitchell. One focused on hearing protection and the other on protective clothing which was assisted by Ajen Maharaj.
- In 2006, SAPEMA partnered with the Institute of Safety Management (IoSM), the SA Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) and the Safety First Association (SFA) to form NOSHBO - the

National Occupational Safety & Health Environment Board, which was formed to act as a lead body to promote and improve the practices and principles of occupational health and safety. Darryl Jacobs was instrumental in driving the initiative on behalf of SAPEMA.

The first initiative of this newly formed board was a conference and exhibition called SAFECONEX. The first event was held at the Johannesburg Exhibition Centre. Over the following 3 years, the event was hosted at the Indaba Hotel and Conference Centre where a two day conference was supported by a mini exhibition.

NATIONAL SAFETY

By the 1990s, SAPEMA had grown into a professional association and wanted to get their message out to a wider audience.

Rob Ellis who was Chairman at the time approached the Safety First Association with a view to appoint National Safety as their official mouthpiece. Since January 1993, SAPEMA has been represented in every issue of National Safety (now known as African OS&H). "The Science behind the Safety", was a regular column published in every issue, compiled and edited by Rob Ellis to answer technical questions about Personal Protective Equipment.

WEBSITE

SAPEMA's Website: www.sapema.org was launched early August 2009 with the responsibility of updating it falling to Hayley Arnesen. Hayley was the first female chairperson.

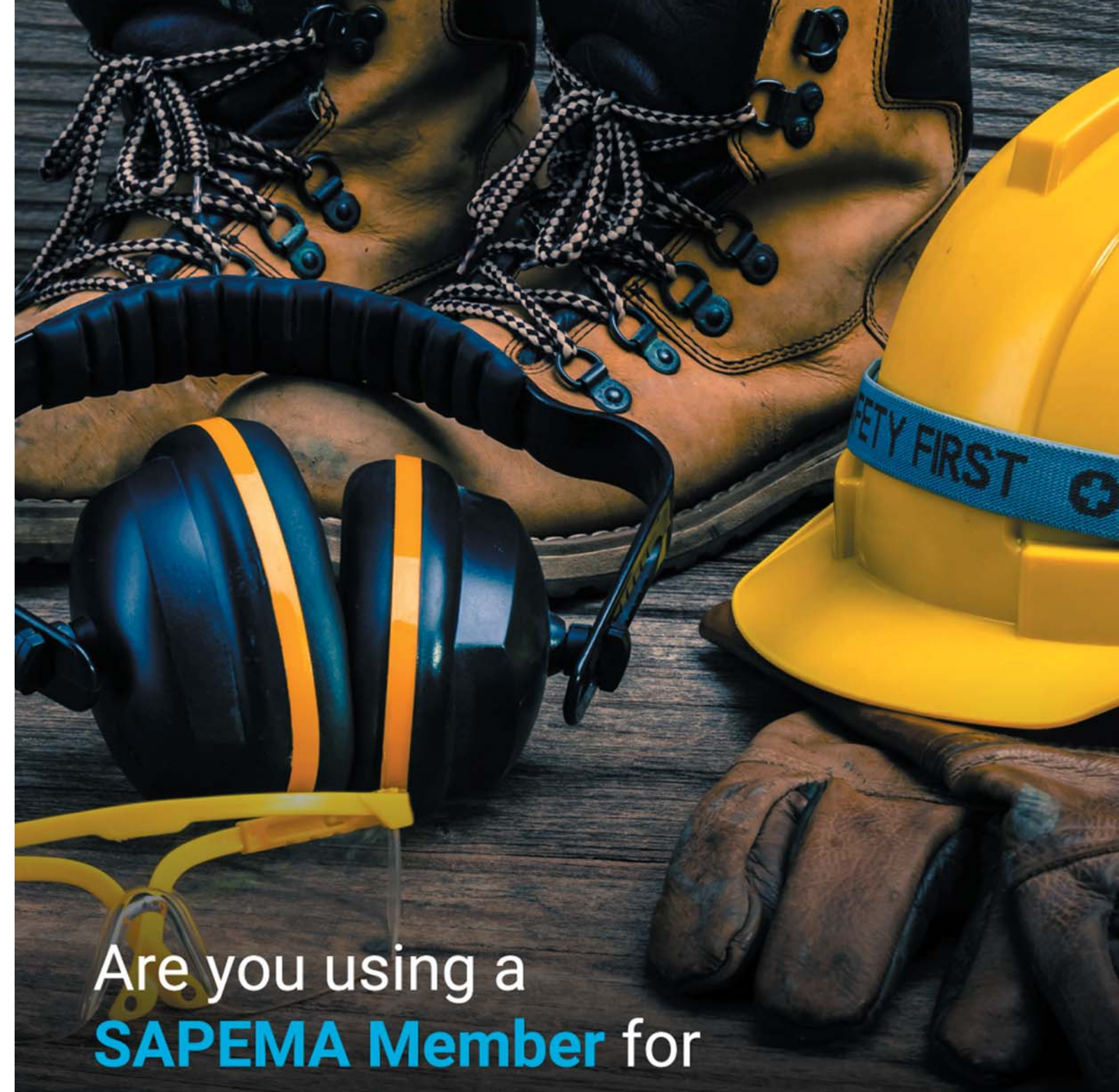
GOLF DAYS

Until the early 2000s, the only time SAPEMA members got together was at committee meetings. Barry Mitchell who was Chairman at the time, suggested having at least one fun day every year, where members could socialise and network in a more relaxed environment. He launched the annual golf day to which members could also invite their customers.

Graham Christie of Uvex Safety and Loren Pearson of MSA Africa were appointed to organise this event. The first golf day was held in 2004 with the participation of 8 companies.

Under Darryl Jacobs' chairmanship, other associations were invited to join the golf day to foster and strengthen relations between all associations with the same vision. It has grown into a successful annual occasion.

Part 2: History of SAPEMA: Achievements over the past 10 years will be published in the May/June issue of African OS&H.



Are you using a **SAPEMA Member** for your PPE requirements?

During this unprecedented time of Covid-19, many have jumped onto the PPE band wagon in order to survive. Their only knowledge of PPE, is their ability to trade.

When choosing a PPE supplier, ensure that they are an official SAPEMA Member. SAPEMA Members are experienced Manufacturers & Distributors of compliant PPE to recognised and approved Safety standards. **SAPEMA and its Members stand for compliant Product, correct usage of PPE, and standards and specifications.**

Your Protection is Our Priority!

For more information, contact SAPEMA on 063-442-9935 or info@sapema.org.



Southern African Protective
Equipment Marketing Association

www.sapema.org

oshprov



Oshprov Pty Ltd
Reg. 2018/499060/07 B-BBEE 9257497154



50 Vivien Road Farmingham Ridge Pinetown KZN 3610
admin@oshprov.co.za admin@hsejobs.co.za applications@hse-members-club.co.za



<https://www.oshprov.co.za>

Cell: 076 471 4458

We assist SME's within their
respective health and safety areas.

We focus on organizations that do not always
have the means to implement health and safety,
but are also passionate like us to care for their
workers and working environment.

We assist schools, farms,
places of worship
and medium sized events.

We are a training
provider,
with excellent training
material
and Saioh accredited
courses.

**All the SHREQ support
you need, at the best rates
and best service ever.**

We have branches in KZN & OFS.

**We cover everything
from the safety file to jobs
and much, much more.**

HSE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

for employers and job seekers

OSHPROV has recently launched an employment service
for the OSHE industry through its revamped website.

Anyone seeking employment in the OSH industry,
or any employers needing to fill OSHE vacancies
in their companies are urged to register.

NEW

There is no cost for this service.

Employers click on the link:
<https://oshprov.co.za/employers/>

Job seekers click on the link
<https://oshprov.co.za/job-seekers/>