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RISKY BUSINESS

IF WE CAN PRACTISE RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE BOARDROOM, WHY CAN'T WE DO IT ON THE ROAD?



GAVIN MYERS

It's probably safe to assume that everyone reading this magazine is familiar with the term "risk management". As one of those ubiquitous corporate buzzwords in the safety, health environment and quality (SHEQ) spheres; there are few areas of the corporate world in which one does not encounter this concept.

A quick search on *Wikipedia* brings up the following definition of risk management: "The identification, assessment and prioritisation of risks followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimise, monitor and control the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events, or to maximise the realisation of opportunities."

That's quite a definition, but then this is quite serious business... The plethora of practitioners, auditors, analysts, assessors and advisors – all with the word "risk" either prefixing or sufficing their title – have, as part of their drive, the goal of ensuring a company's employees finish the work day incident free so that they can go home to their families.

What happens then? After the inductions have been undertaken and the SHEQ officials have chalked up another successful day of "zero harm", and after the risk auditors/analysts/assessors have concluded their audits/analysis/assessments and submitted their recommendations on how to make the workplace even more compliant, do all the company's employees take these skills and recommendations home with them?

Call me a cynic, but I think they get hung up with the hard hats and high-vis jackets – at least when it comes to the vast majority.

You see, the nature of my job means that I am required to do a fair amount of travelling. Earlier this year, for example, some colleagues and I headed out to the small town of Bothaville in the middle of the Free State.

If you've visited the area, you'll know that the roads are extremely poor. Any company's risk advisor would probably be displeased with the fact that its employees were to traverse them. At one point the GPS even suggested routing us via a dirt road ... but I digress...

Negotiating the minefield of potholes, dips, bumps, missing or loose tar and poor patchwork (what little

of it there was) required reduced speed, intense concentration and unwavering patience.

This did not stop countless drivers from speeding, losing patience and overtaking – in some cases, multiple vehicles at a time. Most of these drivers were in bakkies (one even had children bouncing around unstrapped) and quite a few were wearing prominent corporate branding.


That's what made me wonder: if most companies today are so risk averse and try to instil a culture of "reduced risk" and "zero harm" in their employees, why do some employees forget all they have learnt when they leave the premises? Why do they feel it's acceptable to drive at more than 140 km/h on very poor rural roads with countless risks around them?



Hit a pothole and burst a tyre, or lose control... Swerve at the last minute to miss said pothole and sideswipe the guy impatiently trying to overtake you... What about the risk of farm animals, drivers passing slow-moving trucks over a blind rise, or tractors crossing from concealed side roads?

All these were present, real risks ... yet – as per our definition – there was no identification, assessment and prioritisation of risk, followed by coordinated application of resources to minimise, monitor and control the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events...

Of course, this is but one example – the risky behaviour, and resultant carnage, on South Africa's roads is among the worst in the world. Per 100 000 inhabitants we rack up an average of 25.1 fatalities each year (the world average is 17.4).

The "it'll never happen to me" mentality prevails. Maybe it's about time South African corporates expanded risk management to the roads because, damn, it's risky out there ... to say the least. 



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NO SPACE FOR MACHO CULTURE

Unconscious bias is having a crippling impact on health and safety.

Examples such as the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster have highlighted a classic situation of how unconscious bias seriously affects the outcome. In this incident, professionals ignored – and even actively talked away – the evidence.



We are constantly looking for information that supports our belief.

There are various processes of the unconscious mind, which are incredibly fast. The conscious brain is much slower and requires much more effort. If we have to think about a lot of other information besides that which our job requires, we often struggle.

Take Freud's infamous iceberg analysis of not seeing what is going on under the water.

The unconscious can impact decision-making, especially when a professional has different views

from the organisational culture of a firm.

If you are slightly "different", you have to work eight to ten times harder, and are seen as less capable because of your difference. We look at differences in a very negative way.

We need to define what "good" looks like – diversity isn't just about gender, sex or race in terms of how the unconscious bias works. If different roles are mentioned – a CEO, or a janitor – we will associate our own perceptions of what people in those roles might look like. Human resources may be female, for example.

Skin colour just tells me skin colour, but I will then make assumptions based on my brain and my background. So when I see things outside of my mental model, I will view them very differently to how they are.

To reference Robin Ely of Harvard Business School, macho culture is also endangering the workplace by creating a culture where people feel they have

to prove themselves rather than assess risk.

One example of cultural change was on an oil rig, where, without any new procedures, accidents were reduced by 84 percent. This was done by changing the ethos on the oil rig where the staff established a safe outcome together, and there was an environment where there was a safe psychological space in which people could say: 'I'm not sure I know how to do that'.

Jeremy Lewis
PDT Global

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A collage of images related to health, safety, and operator training. The central logo for Skills Resource Group features a stylized green and blue hand holding a white object, with the text 'SKILLS RESOURCE GROUP' and 'Staffing • Training • Safety • Payroll' below it. Surrounding the logo are various images: a forklift operator, a person performing CPR on a mannequin, a yellow excavator, a group of workers in high-visibility vests, a person using a fire extinguisher, a person in a white lab coat, and a person operating a yellow crane.

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BOOSTING COMMUNITY HEALTH

Non-profit company Unjani Clinics has been given a boost thanks to some new advanced refrigerators, which do not rely on electricity, to ensure that medicines and vaccines are properly stored and their efficacy maintained.

Unjani Clinics, the brainchild of Dr Iain Barton of Imperial Logistics, help to alleviate congestion in South Africa's stretched and under-resourced public healthcare system. The 34 Unjani Clinics have helped immunise more than 30 000 patients in the past 24 months.

A problem, however, was that previous basic bar fridges were not proving effective in keeping vaccines and medicines sufficiently cool. To resolve this problem, Unjani Clinics partnered with medical refrigerator supplier Zero Medical and Johnson & Johnson, that provided funding for new, state-of-the-art Sure Chill AC and solar fridges for most of the Unjani Clinics.

These refrigerators maintain a temperature of between two and eight degrees for up to five days, so vaccines and medicines are kept safe and effective during power outages. Sure Chill technology will not form ice on the cabinet walls, so there is no risk of vaccines being frozen.



"Unjani Clinics has installed 33 mains-operated Sure Chill fridges, and one solar-powered model, which is being used in Hammanskraal, where there is no electricity supply," says Lynda Toussaint, CEO of Unjani Clinics. "Unjani Clinics is now equipped with World Health Organisation-approved cold chain technology."

"We partnered with Zero Medical because the company sponsored a gas stove, 40-litre freezer and two-plate stove for every Sure Chill fridge that Unjani Clinics acquired," says Toussaint.

Unjani Clinics donated these sponsored goods to community-based non-profit organisations Kids Haven, Life Line, People Opposing Women Abuse and the Mali Martin Polekegong Centre.



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LOSING NO WATER IN THE WASH

A Cape Town-based company is doing its bit to help with the harsh reality of drought and water restrictions. On October 1 it launched a laundry washing process that does not make use of municipal water supply.

Green Planet Laundry makes use of 100-percent purified borehole water. Additionally, 50 percent of the (grey) water used in its machines is recycled, further reducing the amount of ground water required.

Water is extracted from a borehole, then purified using a custom-built water purification system to remove any contaminants. The water is then ozonated for sanitation.

The process requires ambient air to be compressed and then dried. This dry air is then fed through oxygen (O₂) concentrators to 95-percent pure O₂, which is fed into "Corona Discharge" ozone cells, from which ozone gas (O₃) is produced. The ozone is injected into the treated borehole water.

The recycled water is recovered and cleaned then also treated with the same circulating and controlled ozone process. This kills any bacteria and prepares the water to be used again as prewash or wash water in the next cycles.

There are said to be numerous benefits to this process. Ozone gas oxidises soils and eliminates microbes in the linen, leaving clothing clean, sanitised and soft. It acts as a biocide, controlling odours and killing viruses and bacteria. It has



disinfectant capabilities up to 150-percent more powerful than chlorine. Linen life is increased by up to 50 percent. Fabrics feel softer, and are noticeably whiter.

Furthermore, solar energy powers the entire water purification system, including the borehole, making the system environmentally neutral.

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SAFETY ASSISTANCE SYSTEM WARNS OF DIRTY BOMBS

The threat of terrorism in Europe has been on the rise in recent years, with experts, politicians and security agencies particularly worried that terrorists might make use of "dirty bombs", where radioactive material is mixed into conventional explosives so that it is scattered by a subsequent explosion.

Researchers in Germany have developed a new system that will be able to detect possible carriers of radioactive substances, even in large crowds of people.

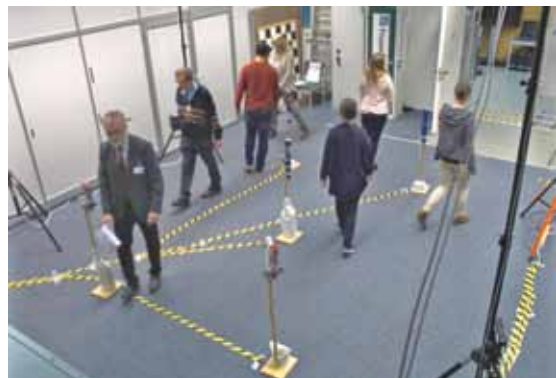
Dirty bombs are not a form of nuclear weapon, since they do not rely on a nuclear chain reaction occurring after they have been set off. The radioisotopes needed to make dirty bombs, such as cesium-137, are easy to acquire; they are used in many nuclear medicine departments at hospitals and in research centres, for example.

"Five grams of cesium – scattered by a couple of kilograms of explosive – is enough to cause billions of dollars' worth of damage, to say nothing of the psychosocial effects and the impact on health," says Prof. Wolfgang Koch, a mathematician and physicist who heads the sensor data and information fusion department at the Fraunhofer

Institute for Communication, Information Processing and Ergonomics (FKIE).

Fraunhofer FKIE has developed an assistance system capable of detecting radiological threats in a stream of people and warning security personnel. It comprises several components...

The sensor network is made up of gamma spectrometers. "Most of the materials that lend themselves to being used in a radiological bomb emit gamma radiation, which cannot be shielded. That's why we use this kind of sensor," Koch explains.



The next phase of the system will be able to tell which substance is emitting the radiation, and whether it is being carried on someone's person or is present inside their body – perhaps because they are on medication such as radioactive iodine.

Although individual sensors can provide data on the type of material and the intensity of its radiation, they cannot pinpoint its location. This calls for Kinect cameras, as used in the gaming industry.

The advantage of these cameras is that they provide images and information about distance. Mounted on the ceiling, they record groups of people like a hilly landscape, precisely tracking even the busiest streams of people. "We know at any given point where each person is located, but of course, we don't know their identity – and that is an essential consideration for data protection," Koch adds.

Once these devices are connected to each other, they can record people in both time and space. Sophisticated mathematical evaluation algorithms then filter out the desired information from the huge amounts of data.

"We use artificial intelligence to do this. The algorithms help us calculate the movements of the only person with whom the gamma sensor readings can be correlated. That identifies the potential attacker," Koch explains.

Fraunhofer FKIE has been granted permission to experiment with weak radioactive substances, and has already successfully tested its system in the laboratory under the supervision of a radiation control agent.

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THE MISSING INGREDIENT TO THE CARROT AND STICK

INCULCATING A SAFETY CULTURE IS GENERALLY DONE IN TWO WAYS. THE FIRST IS TO REWARD APPROPRIATE SAFE BEHAVIOURS. THE SECOND IS TO DISCIPLINE ANY TRANSGRESSIONS. WHILE THESE METHODS SEEM LOGICAL AND FAIR, ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

I have never heard of a company where the safety of its people is not a top priority.

If a supervisor tells staff members that as soon as they have completed their duties, they can go home, they will generally give a renewed push to quickly wrap up.

Offering rewards is a terrific way to persuade people to work harder. Everyone wins ... or so it seems. In this scenario, the extra effort was not made in order to finish the task, but to go home early. This reward therefore only created the illusion of motivation.

Confusing action with motivation is easy. True motivation is intrinsic. In this instance the supervisor was able to get action, but not motivation. Take away the offer to go home early and the energy to get the job done rapidly dwindles.

As a short-term strategy this is wonderful as the job gets done. However, the responsibility for completing the work remained with the supervisor. The workers did not give a concerted effort on their own.

Likewise, many companies have some sort of bonus, or reward system when they reach a production target or achieve a safety record. Such rewards are always appreciated by staff, but, surprisingly, do not

necessarily motivate. There is nothing wrong with this approach if a company has a big cheque book. As long as managers are willing to wave the "carrot", they can count on staff working hard.

However, leaders need to be mindful that there are some drawbacks to this approach. Instead of an internal pride and commitment towards safe production, employees work only for the reward.

The onus for high-quality, safe work still resides with the company. When the manager wants to try to improve performance, the teams often expect a bigger bonus. If for any reason the reward is not provided, employees quickly become disgruntled.

It is also not uncommon to hear of teams taking a back seat when they realise that they are not going to make the target. What was meant to be a motivator backfires and is counterproductive. The biggest downside of rewarding performance in this manner manifests when staff start to hide incidents because they do not want to lose their bonuses.

Eventually leaders become exasperated when the reward approach fails to deliver. The alternative is very attractive considering it usually attains instant results – yell, scream and threaten someone, especially with their job, and they will jump into action.

Unfortunately, this is a costly short-term win. Over time, staff will disengage. A mindset of "no matter what I do I am going to be in trouble" develops and before long a "why should I bother" attitude manifests. In fear of making a mistake, workers stop taking the initiative and wait to be told what to do. All of this culminates into deep-seated resentment and insolence towards the leader.

Just as with rewards, when it comes to using the "stick", the leader has to drive performance. They have to keep monitoring team members and insisting on safe production. This is a tedious, frustrating and time-consuming process – for both managers and workers alike.

Experience confirms that both strategies have a short and limited effect and should not be relied upon. To achieve sustainable results leaders need to find ways to tap into the internal motivation of their staff.

One of the best ways to do this is to provide a sense of ownership. From an engagement perspective, for staff there is a fundamental difference between merely completing a list of activities to having ownership of their work.

As an example, a CEO arrives on site, and the security guard respectfully asks him or her to do a breathalyser test. How the CEO responds at that moment will have a lasting impact. If he or she gladly complies, it sends a message that the security officer's job is important. If the CEO thanks the

message resounds that the security guard's work is a sham; it is not important and safety is not a real value.

If that is the message, why should the guard be proud of their work? Not even the CEO takes it seriously...

When a staff member walks into a manager's office with a question, instead of instantly answering, imagine if they responded with: "You are the expert; what do you think? You do this job every day and I trust you. What is your view?"

When managers answer questions without first hearing the employee's opinion, the notion that staff work for management is reinforced. This does not evoke a sense of personal pride.

Imagine meetings where the leader merely facilitates the discussion instead of dishing out a list of instructions. I am always astounded when leaders



security guard it sends another message that their diligence is appreciated.


If the CEO becomes irritated, starts ranting and raging and demands to be let in immediately, the



express their annoyance that team members seldom contribute. Why should they if they are expected to simply follow orders?

If managers want staff to take more responsibility for their work (key word being their) then they ought to listen to and support their ideas, especially the ones with which they do not agree.

Lastly, one of the biggest motivation killers is when production targets, budgets and timelines are determined in the comfort of a manager's office without getting input from the people who actually do the work and have first-hand experience of the working conditions.

At the end of the day, if they want more sustainable results, managers need to replace the "carrot" and the "stick" with tangible strategies that engage the internal motivation of the staff. 



Dr Brett Solomon is the CEO of The Kinetic Leadership Institute and is a recognised leader in combining neuroscience, change management and leadership theory to drive cultural transformation processes. Brett specialises in neuroleadership, especially when it comes to an understanding of what motivates human behaviour and how to influence it. He has been involved in numerous culture change and leadership development initiatives throughout Africa, Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

NOT HAVING TO FLIP THAT SWITCH

**BRIDGING THE SAFETY-MINDSET
GAP BETWEEN HOME AND WORK
IS A CHALLENGE THAT LEADERS
AND SAFETY PROFESSIONALS FACE
EACH AND EVERY DAY**

Initially, when I sat down to write this article, I had no idea what I wanted to write about. It was only a good few days later when it finally came to me – on the N2 (of all places), while being transferred by car from Durban's King Shaka airport to Richards Bay.

Feeling a bit jaded from a series of long flights between Vienna and Durban, I didn't immediately take out my laptop, as would usually be the case. Instead I just sat for a while, surveying the passing KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) scenery.

Not long into the trip, I noticed three people hitchhiking on the opposite side of the motorway, southbound towards Durban ... with a golf bag in hand, no less!

While seeing people hiking with a golf bag was certainly a first for me, what really struck me was that they were standing on a motorway hoping (or worse still, expecting) a vehicle to stop for them – behaviour that is both dangerous and illegal.

A WORLD OUTSIDE OF WORK

These hitchhikers also reminded me of the importance of the world outside of our working world in contributing to a company's desired safety culture and ultimately its performance.

With that thought triggered, I spent the rest of the trip observing the behaviour of others around me ... drivers, passengers and pedestrians. Sadly, the hitchhikers with a golf bag in tow were not an isolated incident.

The number and severity of at-risk behaviours observed during that trip to Richards Bay was

staggering. Just some of the worst were:

- A cattle herder watching his cattle graze on the verge of the motorway, seemingly oblivious of the danger presented should one or more of his cattle suddenly decide to walk onto the motorway.
- A vehicle overtaking us in the yellow lane (reserved for emergency vehicles only). Spare a thought for the consequences had this happened when we were driving past the cattle grazing alongside that same shoulder of the road just a few minutes earlier.
- A driver in the oncoming traffic doing a U-turn across a solid white line on the national motorway to join our direction of travel!

In addition, there were children playing on the side of the motorway, numerous people hitchhiking, passengers sitting on the back of open bakkies, people selling their wares on the side of the road, as well as damaged (or completely missing) safety barriers on the pedestrian bridge crossings that had not been repaired.

Sadly, what this confirmed for me is how few people are sufficiently risk averse. When out on the road so many people just do not seem to take their own or other peoples' safety into account.

Not surprisingly, the knock-on effect of this behaviour is that people tend to adopt the same low levels of risk perception and management at work, contributing to work-related incidents, close calls and/or work-related injuries.

DEVELOPING THE DESIRED SAFETY CULTURE

To provide a safe and healthy working environment



for all, leaders also need to consider the behaviour of people outside the workplace. It is through these observations that they can start to influence the change behaviour necessary to, ultimately, develop the desired safety culture.

To do this, employees and contractors need to move through the three phases: from a dependent safety culture, to an independent safety culture where everyone at least looks after their own safety, and, finally, to an interdependent safety culture where everyone looks after their own safety as well as that of others.

An independent and, to some extent, an interdependent safety culture can be achieved through the introduction of programmes where individuals and teams consider the risks and required precautionary measures prior to commencing their tasks.

The effectiveness of such programmes is, however, largely dependent on the maturity of the organisation, its leaders, teams and individuals. For example, if a supervisor has a low regard for safety, he or she would be less likely to support time spent on the proactive elements of safety prior to conducting tasks. Those employees and contractors would then tend to rush through the pre-task assessments and could

beyond just the road, it's clear that what is needed is a 24-hour safety mindset.

Whether we're driving recklessly, standing on a chair at home to repair something out of reach, or not using the correct personal protective clothing at work, it all constitutes unsafe behaviour. Instead, the safe way of doing things – whether at work or at home – needs to become a habit.

For safety to become a habit, we need to move away from the "switch on, switch off" mentality, where employees and contractors arriving at their place of work, "switch on" their safety mindset to meet the company's safety and health requirements. And then, when leaving work at the end of the day, they "switch off" from thinking about safety and conduct the risky behaviours on the road or at home.

We need to ensure that all employees and contractors are "switched on" to safe behaviour on a 24-hour basis. Only then can safety become a habit, and only then can we influence a company's safety culture and performance.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This holistic approach to safety is not without challenges. These include, for example, if a generally poor culture exists in terms of the rule of law, or if there is a high tolerance of risk-taking by people in general.

Companies can still make a difference, however. Safety campaigns should include safety beyond the workplace, where companies could share off-the-job safety communication for the home as well (for example, safety tips on how to use dangerous equipment like angle grinders).

Companies could also support home safety by allowing employees to borrow ladders, safety harnesses and other equipment, to make it possible to conduct safe home repairs and maintenance. Employees could also be given personal breathalyser testers, to encourage self-checks before driving after consuming alcohol.

Notwithstanding the challenges, there is a lot that can be done to promote a 24-hour safety mindset. It takes commitment and effort. It also takes time. Therefore, while working hard at developing the desired safety culture, companies need to ensure robust controls are in place and that they are followed. Leaders and safety professionals also need to remain vigilant in their efforts to promote safety and health.

Only then will we ensure that everybody returns home safely, every day. Safety is not about the numbers; it is about caring about our employees and contractors both at work and at home. Every day. SM




miss important aspects, which could have serious consequences.

SWITCHING ON, SWITCHING OFF

The more people break the rules of the road, the more tolerant others become of this type of risky behaviour and, in time, they too start to break the rules of the road. Using this analogy for safety



Brian Darlington is the group head of safety and health for the Mondi Group, based in Vienna, Austria. He has filled the role since 2012 and is responsible for safety and health in more than 30 countries. Brian started working at Iscor before joining Mondi in 1987, working in Gauteng. In 2000 he transferred to the Kraft Division in Richards Bay. During 2005, Brian transferred to Europe, taking up the position of business unit SHE manager, responsible for SHE in paper mills in Austria, Hungary, Israel, Slovakia, Poland, South Africa and Russia, as well as forests operations in South Africa and Russia.



THE POWER OF SUBTLE PERSUASION

GREAT SAFETY CULTURES ARE UNDERPINNED BY THE SAME FORCES THAT MAKE US CRAVE THAT SHINY NEW CAR, THAT CLASSY NEW WATCH, OR THOSE COOL THREADS. THERE'S A SIMPLE, COST-FREE, THREE-STEP METHOD FOR CREATING SAFE BEHAVIOUR IN YOUR WORKPLACE RIGHT NOW

Did you notice how perfectly your colleague's shoes go with her outfit, or how when your boss wears a white shirt it makes him look even more important?

Consider for a moment your aspirations for your own career or life. Choose any particular milestone that had importance: when you were just starting out; a job interview; a change of role or company; a turning point ten years ago, or even now. Where did you seek inspiration? To whom did you turn to for guidance?

Now think about the visual cues and symbols of that person, who you viewed as "successful", that resonated with you. Did they have a nice, big house; a shiny new car; the coolest suits; membership of *that* golf club; or a sexy Swiss watch?

Sure they did! And it's natural that we are drawn to seek such rewards in life, too. How do we attain them?

Myriad management development books have identified the essential attributes, habits, personality traits and keys to success... To be a successful leader you just need to do what successful leaders do.

SOCIAL IMITATION

Whether it is leadership or sports; general management or good behaviour; fashion or hairstyles; making new friends or impressing people at parties, our approach remains the same. We identify – consciously or subconsciously – those individuals who stand out as a "match" to our expectations or aspirations, and then strive to emulate their behaviour and use their words.

In simple terms, we copy those people we desire to



be more like. We do so because our brain tells us that it is how we'll look cool, become more popular, get better results, and gain those rewards.

Exactly the same process occurs when it comes to safety. The key in building and sustaining a truly great organisational safety culture is not in producing policies and procedures – which is just the foundation – it lies rather in social imitation. By way of explanation, allow me to share a couple of recent experiments we conducted in a client's workplace.

Slips, trips and falls always pop up as a common cause of workplace injuries. They often occur where there is a change in floor surface or direction of travel – such as on a staircase. We understand that good practice is to hold the handrail, yet we rarely do this – after all we've walked up and down stairs hundreds of times in the past without accident or incident.

In this particular workplace several accidents had occurred on staircases over the years. The corporate response had been to affix rather intense-looking

signage to the walls in stairwells advising workers to "always hold the handrail". During our initial observations we noticed that less than ten percent of people complied with this instruction.

"Perhaps because the signs have been in place for more than a year, they are now simply being ignored," offered the HR manager when we shared our findings. We wondered whether there was something more to it. Had people become "sign blind"?

The first phase in our experiment was to affix long, bright stickers to every fifth stair riser (the vertical part of each step) gently asking workers to "please hold the handrail". Over the next few days we observed a slight improvement in people holding the handrail – around 15 percent.

Phase two was the addition of little yellow and black stickers on the handrail itself, with the same gentle message as on the stair risers. There was no other promotion of this "safety campaign".

Over the first week there was much discussion at the coffee machines about the stickers. We overheard comments like: "Do we really need to hold the handrails? No-one has fallen here for ages," and "Do they think we are kids?" Our observations revealed that even with the additional stickers, handrail use rate remained static at around 15 percent.

HEADS UP, HANDS DOWN

The following week, a Board meeting was held on the top floor of the building. Carefully timing the closure of the meeting with the workers' lunchbreak, we asked the senior leaders to each walk carefully down the stairs, holding the handrail.

As the leaders filtered down the stairs one at a time and holding the rail, employees headed upstairs towards the lunchroom. Without any prompting, we observed almost 80 percent of workers instinctively take hold of the handrail as they neared the leaders. The executives had not mentioned the handrail as they passed their colleagues. They simply shared a warm greeting and carried on with their descent.

The next day, observations at the staircase revealed a very small number of employees using the handrails, with the majority having reverted to their usual hands-free approach. Only when one of the senior executives used the staircase – again briefed by us to hold the handrail – did the employees take the rail themselves. It didn't matter who the leader was, the reaction was the same, and the employees instinctively reached out for the rail almost every time.

Pleased with the initial impact of this experiment, we decided to ratify our hypothesis. Could we really change the behaviours of people only by setting an example that subconsciously encouraged them to emulate their leaders?

FORWARD-FOCUSED

Our second test was in the company car park. Of the 200 cars there, 95 percent of them had been driven forwards into the parking space, meaning that they



would have to reverse out at the end of the day. Just ten cars had been parked in reverse, and these were scattered randomly across the entire car park.

While it may be trickier for some to do, the benefits of reverse parking are known to most people: easier departure, clearer vision on leaving the space – yet, despite the obvious safety advantages, most people choose not to park in reverse.

A simple message from the president's office encouraging drivers to park in reverse was dispatched by email to all staff. A sign on the final exit door to the car park was also created to remind people as they left the building.

Over the next couple of days, several people heeded the message – they clearly understood the safety benefits, or respected the voice of authority, and were happy to comply. The majority of people, however, continued to park facing forwards.

On day three, each member of the leadership team parked their cars in reverse. The neat row of twelve shiny vehicles was easily visible across the carpark. By lunchtime of that same day we noticed that several other cars had parked in reverse – notably the following seven cars that appeared in the spaces after the executive cars, but also cars in other places around the parking area.

The next day, the executives all arrived early and again parked in reverse. By lunchtime 25 percent of cars in the carpark were parked in the same way. At the end of the week, over 50 percent of cars were reversed into their spaces.

By the end of week two (with leaders continuing to set the example) the number of cars reverse parked exceeded 60 percent, and by the end of week three it had reached 75 percent. As with the staircase experiment, we had not promoted the "new rule" in any other way than the simple request message at the beginning of the experiment.

There was no reward offered for compliance.

People parked their cars in reverse because they observed their respected leaders doing this, and then they noticed their peers and workmates doing the same. Suddenly, it was the right thing to do.

INSPIRATION OVER INSTRUCTION

Both in the carpark and on the stairs the approach and the results were exactly the same. So what caused this sudden adherence to the advertised "procedures" we had created?


First, we began with a gentle, respectful, polite message encouraging a specific simple behaviour. Our language choice was crucial here – it was important to inspire rather than instruct.

We also made sure that the signage we used was not unnecessarily overbearing, flashy, or appeared "mandatory" in any way. There were no safety logos or gimmicks used, and no rewards or prizes offered.

Next, we asked the senior leaders to set the tone from the top by demonstrating the behaviours each time they used the stairs or the car park. The key here was consistency in the executives demonstrating the desired behaviour every time.

Then it was down to the respect and faith in the leaders as the influence of social imitation shone through and created a desire for people to "fit in", to "be like the bosses". It mattered not whether this was a conscious or subconscious thought, only that it became "the way we do things around here" – a simple way of describing culture.

Social imitation forms a strong part of who we are and how we live. It's often the force behind us as we strive for that shiny new car, the classy watch, those cool running shoes, the latest hairstyle. It is also an invaluable tool for driving great safety behaviours in the workplace.

In simple terms, we copy those we want to be more like, or who we respect. So, who is copying you today? 

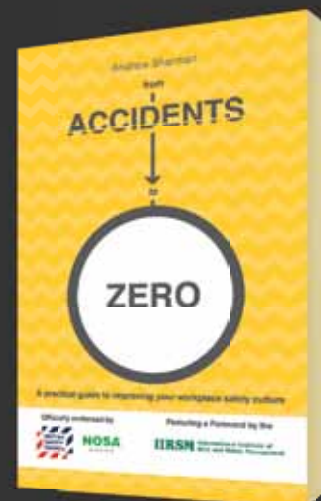


Sharman on Safety is based on ideas and concepts from **Andrew Sharman's** book: *From Accidents to Zero: a practical guide to improving your workplace safety culture*. Andrew is an international member of the South African Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (SAIOSH) and the Chief Executive of RMS – consultants on leadership and cultural excellence to a wide range of blue-chip corporates and non-government organisations globally. More at www.RMSswitzerland.com.

From Accidents to Zero

A practical guide to improving your workplace safety culture

This month, SHEQ Management readers can buy the e-book of From Accidents to Zero with 30-percent off usual price. Just go to www.FromAccidentsToZero.com and enter the code **AROUNDTHEWORLD**. Your E-Book will arrive by e-mail link immediately!



THE UNDISPUTED ROLE OF RISK CHAMPIONS

NO MATTER THE ORGANISATION, THE RISK LANDSCAPE HAS NEVER BEEN EVEN. THAT IS WHY DECISION-MAKERS ARE ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT ISSUES RELATING TO RISK OWNERSHIP

Since risk ownership cannot be assigned to only one particular individual, risk champions need to be appointed to facilitate the risk agenda across their respective departments. Let's look at some of the distinctive role(s) of risk champions in this context (the insight into this discussion is not limited to the following roles).

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL INTERFACE AND INTERACTION

The challenges encountered by risk champions cannot be underestimated. As they facilitate the risk management processes, their interface and interaction with staff will inevitably collide with "friendly fire" from risk owners.

In this instance, they need to build mutually beneficial relationships as fighters for a good "risk agenda". Thus, to further foster this relationship, each department ought to appoint a risk champion.

PROACTIVE MINDSET

In an era when risks might emerge from predictable or unpredictable sources, risk champions must always be "on the lookout". This is not done in isolation; it requires continuous dialogue with colleagues on challenging the risk landscape.

They need to ask what it is that could assist or stop them from achieving the departmental or organisation-wide risk objective. This might sound straightforward, but is fundamental to achieving this goal.

COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Risk champions are privileged to have an insight into

an organisation's risk profile. This enables them to influence and facilitate a risk-based mindset through communicating, building rapport and taking part in evaluating risks and associated controls.

DETERMINE LEVEL OF ASSURANCE

When planning assurance activities, it is a daunting exercise to determine assurance coverage in the respective departments. Risk champions should be seen as good allies by internal or external assurance providers, as they have to have their "ears to the ground" when ensuring operational, supervisory and oversight controls are effectively implemented.

HOW MANAGEMENT CAN HELP

Those in the profession will be aware that the role of the risk champion is often undervalued in many organisations. If risk champions are to be advocates for risk management, then management at large needs to recognise their roles and responsibilities. The bottom line is: if they are recognised as change agents, influencing an enterprise-wide risk management culture, eventually the value of their roles will be undisputed!

The Institute of Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA) in its post of May 15, 2013, entitled: Risk champions are catalysts to effective risk management, summarises it well:

"The final aspect of ensuring effective risk champions is to provide platforms that will support the champs in their day-to-day activities, as well as provide a channel through which issues can be quickly reported and escalated." SM



Hope Mugagga Kiwekete is a managing consultant at the Centre for Enterprise Sustainability. Prior to his current role, he was a principal consultant: risk management at Transnet Freight Rail, and a management systems specialist and senior EHS auditor at the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

THAT SINKING FEELING



RECENTLY THERE WAS AN IMPORTANT COURT CASE, FROM AN INSURANCE POINT OF VIEW, INVOLVING A MARINE ACCIDENT. THIS PROVIDES A USEFUL OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE POSITION OF WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION FOR SEAMEN

The case is Viking Inshore Fishing versus Mutual & Federal ZASCA 2016 021. Viking owned a small fishing vessel, the Lindsay, which was valued at R4 million. In the early hours of the morning on May 8, 2005, it was sailing in an easterly direction off the Cape coast near Cape St Francis.

On the starboard side (the right-hand side of the vessel, facing forward) of the Lindsay was another ship, the Umgeni. It was bigger and faster and was overtaking the Lindsay. Sailing in a westerly direction – coming towards the Lindsay – was a very much bigger ship, the Ouro do Brasil.

It was essentially between the two approaching vessels, the Lindsay and the Umgeni. The sea was choppy with four- to six-metre swells. For reasons that are not clear, the navigational equipment on board of the Ouro do Brasil did not show the presence of the Lindsay.

The equipment had, however, detected the bigger ship, the Umgeni. In terms of the maritime Collision Regulations, the duty of the Ouro do Brasil was to change course to put more distance between itself

and the Umgeni (and presumably the Lindsay) by veering to its starboard. In doing so, it would cross the bows of the Lindsay.

It changed direction placing it on a collision course with the Lindsay. In terms of the Collision Regulations, the Ouro do Brasil was supposed to give way as the Umgeni and the Lindsay were stand-on vessels. They were obliged to maintain their direction and speed as the Ouro do Brasil took the necessary evasive action.

Probably because the presence of the Lindsay had not been detected, the evasive action was too gentle, and, instead of crossing the bows of the Lindsay, it collided with it; resulting in the loss of 14 lives. The captain, who was asleep in his cabin at the time, and a spare hand were the only survivors.

As a result of the death of people on board the Lindsay, and the fact that the captain was asleep at the time, it was difficult to get a clear picture of what happened aboard the Lindsay before the collision.

The vessel's first mate was in charge of the bridge at the time of the collision, but it appears he was not actually on the bridge. For this and other reasons, the

insurer, Mutual & Federal, came to the conclusion that the marine safety regulations had not been complied with at the time of the collision, and the insurance policy required the insured to warrant it would comply with the regulations.

Mutual & Federal concluded the insured had breached the warranty and repudiated the claim. The Supreme Court of Appeal carefully analysed the policy and concluded that the warranty had not been breached and ruled in favour of the insured.

It should be noted it took 11 years to resolve the case, which is surely a matter of concern as one of the main reasons for taking out insurance is to be efficiently indemnified.

We are more concerned here with the workmen's compensation position, which presumably was settled efficiently. The reason why this can be considered is that the legislation contains specific provisions dealing with seamen. Section 24 is a relevant section which reads:

This Act shall apply to a seaman or airman:

- (a) while employed on a South African ship or aircraft;*
- (b) while, subject to section 23(3), employed in the Republic on any other ship or aircraft.*

One can wonder why this section is necessary. An obvious reason is that it is generally accepted that the laws of a country apply only within the territorial limits of the country, unless the law is specifically extended to operate outside of the territory.

So, if the ship is on the high seas and a seaman is injured, some may argue that the injured seaman, an employee, is not covered. Take the case of an employee who is injured in a foreign port, say an English harbour; it could be argued it is the laws of that country which are applicable. Section 24 removes this doubt.

A South African ship is also defined, and means a vessel used in navigation which--

- (a) is registered in the Republic in terms of any law/ governing the registration of ships and is not registered in any other state in terms of a similar law; or*
- (b) is owned or chartered by a person whose head office or place of business is in the Republic, or by a person who resides in the Republic.*

As indicated, the real issue is not the ship, but the fact the injured person may not be working within South Africa at the time of the injury, and hence Section 23(3) needs to be taken into account. It reads

as follows:

23 Accidents outside the Republic

(1) ...

(2) ...

(3) (a) If an employer carries on business chiefly outside the Republic and an employee of his ordinarily employed outside the Republic, meets with an accident while temporarily employed in the Republic, such employee shall not be entitled to compensation unless the employer has previously agreed with the Director-General that such employee shall be entitled to compensation and, where applicable, has paid the necessary assessments in respect of him.

(b) An employee, referred to in paragraph (a), who is temporarily employed in the Republic for a continuous period of more than 12 months, shall be deemed to be ordinarily employed by such employer in the Republic.


In terms of Section 23, if a seaman of a foreign ship is injured in South Africa he is unlikely to receive workmen's compensation in South Africa, as would be the position of a person employed on a South African ship injured in a foreign port. As indicated, the person employed on a South African ship will receive compensation via the South African system.

So, in an accident such as the one involving the Lindsay, the dependants of the seamen should receive compensation – hopefully in less than ten years. Survivors may also be entitled to compensation depending on the injuries suffered.

It should be noted that, historically, the fishing industry has the highest accident rates of all categories. This could be because the fishing industry trends to operate under different rules.

The arrangement is often that the boat owner engages a captain to do the fishing and they share the catch. The captain then appoints the crew and shares his portion of the catch with them. The crew are thus not employed full time and so their safety training may not be in line with that which could be gained in a factory, for example.

One of South Africa's leading cases involves fishing. This is the case of Silva's Fishing Corporation versus Maweza 1957 (2) SA 256 A. At the time, liability was based on positive acts – there was no liability for omissions.

In this case, the fishing vessel went missing and no steps were initiated to find out what had happened to it, or to launch a rescue operation. The question was whether or not this omission could lead to a legal claim. The court set a precedent by ruling it was possible. 



Legally Speaking is a regular column by **Albert Mushai** from the school of Economics and Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand. Mushai holds a master's degree from the City University, London, and was the head of the insurance department at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe before joining the University of the Witwatersrand as a lecturer in insurance.

BEWARE THE RISKS OF SMALL ENTERPRISE

WHILE BEING AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET, EMPLOYEES OF MICRO AND SMALL BUSINESSES ARE OFTEN THE VICTIMS OF INEFFECTIVE RISK MANAGEMENT



SANJAY MUNNOO

South Africa has advanced occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation and regulations, together with best international practices. However, the country continues to have a high "injury on duty" accident rate.

Although occupational accidents and work-related diseases have been of interest for a long time, there has been a lack of research into the effectiveness and economic aspects of accident-prevention activities of emerging contractors.



Unskilled workers are more likely to work in high-risk occupations. This increases the risks and consequences of work-related hazards and may lead to permanent disabilities and premature death.

Within the current context of negative growth in employment creation by both large enterprises and the government sector, emerging micro and small-business contractors have a major socio-economic role to play in job creation.

Studies have proved that they absorb a significant part of the unemployed labour force, which helps to reduce crime and government expenditure. However, the sad reality is that there is a high failure rate of start-up companies in South Africa. Most of these companies experience severe cyclical financial difficulties.

As a PhD candidate in Construction Management, these are some of the critical challenges I aim to understand and find solutions to through my studies.

In small and micro enterprises a lack of available funding results in a lack of resources to implement

safety and health initiatives and interventions. There is also less time and energy available for "non-core" tasks, which safety and health management is sometimes perceived to be.

Risk assessments can be costly and confusing to complete, particularly if a business lacks the resources to do so effectively.

Employing unskilled labour is often hard to manage and may be risky. As my study progresses, I will include information of possible solutions and recommendations relating to emerging contractors in articles going forward.

Workers must constantly be reminded about what would happen to their family if they were to be seriously injured at work. **SM**

News from Saioosh

Saioosh successfully held free OHS continuing professional development (CPD) workshops. All five events were fully booked and, to enable a larger audience, the workshop was broadcast as a webinar. The link was emailed to all Saioosh members and viewed by more than 2 700 with the benefit of automatically earning one CPD point.

The next round of Saioosh OHS CPD workshops, during October, has been secured and Advocate Raynard Looch will be the main presenter.

Saioosh members are urged to ensure their membership is paid up and that they practice according to their professional registration.

It has been brought to our attention that certain members have provided health and safety services, issuing legal compliance certificates by using their suspended Saioosh membership certificate as proof of professional registration.

In accordance with a notice issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training, only Saioosh Graduate Members, or higher, are allowed to conduct audits for registered private higher-training institutions.

A majority of the members voted that they wanted Saioosh to negotiate and secure adequate professional indemnity insurance on their behalf. The Saioosh Council decided to recommend Marsh and Widesure to its members for professional indemnity insurance. Please visit the Saioosh website for further information.



PROGRAMME IN SAFETY MANAGEMENT (72435)

This programme introduces line managers and safety practitioners to the very basics in safety management. Such basics comprise the sciences of safety management and the roles of line and staff functionaries pertaining to safety risk assessment, safety management in industry and the analysis of safety incidents.

MODULES:

- Introduction to Safety Management (PSMP015)
- Assess Safety Risk (PSMP026)
- Manage Safety in the Workplace (PSMP038)
- Analyse Safety Incidents (PSMP049)

REGISTRATION DATES:

December - March

FEE:

R7 200

(Prescribe/Recommended textbooks not included)

COURSE DURATION:

12 Months

NQF level 6, Total 48 Credits

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

A senior Certificate, equivalent qualification or appropriate experience.

CONTACT PERSON:

Mr NJF van Loggerenberg

Email: psmp@unisa.ac.za

Tel: 012 352 4357

PROGRAMME IN ADVANCED SAFETY MANAGEMENT (76914)

This programme investigates the advanced elements of safety management. These elements include the management of safety culture, the role and importance of safety supervisors, system safety engineering and the system safety programme plan; the importance of managers in safety and a more advanced understanding of hazards.

MODULES:

- Managing Safety Culture (APSM01N)
- Safety Supervisor (APSM02M)
- Safety Systems (APSM03O)
- Design for Safety (APSM04P)

REGISTRATION DATES:

December - March

FEE:

R8 000

(Prescribe/Recommended textbooks not included)

COURSE DURATION:

12 Months

NQF level 7, Total 48 Credits

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

A senior Certificate, equivalent qualification or appropriate experience and completed Programme in Safety Management (PSMP) with the Centre for Business Management.

CBM CONTACT DETAILS:

Email: cbm@unisa.ac.za

Tel: 012 352 4288

Website: www.unisa.ac.za/cbm

NOSHCON NOW THREE TIMES BETTER!



FOR THE FIRST TIME, NOSHCON WAS HOSTED AS THREE, ONE-DAY EVENTS IN GAUTENG, THE WESTERN CAPE AND KWAZULU-NATAL. THIS WAS PART OF NOSHCON'S RESTRUCTURING THAT HAS DELEGATES EXCITED

The annual occupational risk management conference hosted by Nosa – a health, safety and environmental risk management service provider – was a little different this year. In the past, Noshcon was a three-day event held in one province, most recently in the Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal.

Health and safety officers and managers travel from across South Africa to attend the conference, which has been around since the early 1960s. It is one of the oldest of its kind in the world.

"This year, Nosa embarked on restructuring the profile of Noshcon. As Africa's flagship occupational health and safety conference, we realised the time was ripe to retool the platform in our efforts to continue to innovate within the training expo space," said Nosa CEO Duncan Carlisle.

"Our endeavours yielded highly successful regional, one-day programmes in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, with key industry players attending several presentations and breakaway sessions presented by a range of expert speakers," he added.

The Johannesburg conference had the most delegates, with around 250 health and safety specialists in attendance. Carlisle noted that this is an indication of the demand from Nosa clients to bring Noshcon closer to where they live and work.

"To have Noshcon as a one-day event, and to integrate it with the Nosa Regional Awards event, has worked well. Hopefully, it will continue to grow in the years to come," Carlisle added.

Many delegates emphasised Carlisle's point by noting the convenience of having the event in three major cities. Siphindile Khumalo, a SHEQ coordinator at Magalies Water, said: "The conference in the Drakensberg was much bigger, but it was good to split the event as our company can't afford to send us away for two or three days."

The one-day structure made it possible for her to attend. However, she still feels the conference should be held over at least two days. Regional health and safety manager at Nokia, Kobus de Beer, echoed Khumalo's sentiment.

"Breaking the conference down into three events is an improvement. Many managers don't want their officers to be away for so many days. This way it is easier to attend and it takes away the excessive travelling," he stated.

As the event was split among three cities, each conference was much smaller, although just as informative. The Johannesburg conference consisted of four breakaway sessions with three speakers in each session. Delegates had the opportunity to pick sessions related to their industry.

"The presentations at this year's Noshcon were relevant, especially the updates on the standards," noted Khutso Rankapole, Khumalo's co-worker and fellow SHEQ coordinator. She referred to the presentation by NQA Africa chairman, Michael Timberlake, on the migration from OHSAS 18001 to ISO 45001, which is expected in 2018. Timberlake was one of 14 speakers who presented at the conference.

Other speakers included managing director of Expectra, Lebeaux Mulder, who discussed organisational behaviour modification, and executive head of business development at Isometrix,

full reconstruction of his face, and Saiosh CEO, Neels Nortjé, who discussed professional registration for health and safety practitioners.

"I've been to every Noshcon," Nortjé noted. "The format change is exciting and a breath of fresh air. It allows more delegates to benefit. It is an honour and privilege for Saiosh to be part of all three events this year. Having the event in all three capitals is exciting."

Even speakers who attended Noshcon for the first time were excited about what the conference offered. Bachulal said: "It is my first Noshcon and I find it very informative. Having the event in all three cities is brilliant as it gives delegates a better insight into the clients in each region."

It seems Noshcon will continue to grow with its new format. De Beer commented: "As always, the event is very informative and well-represented. The speakers are also knowledgeable. The topics are relevant and the organisers are very hospitable. I look forward to coming back next year and bringing along my managers."

Each conference, was also used as a platform to host the Nosa Regional Awards ceremony.

Carlisle noted: "The awards give recognition to companies and individuals that have gone the extra mile to advance



Steven Simmonds, who discussed achieving excellence through integrated management systems in the first breakaway session.

The first session also included learning-solutions consultant Armand Nel, from The Training Room Online, who discussed the shift to digital learning.

The second session featured Timberlake, the head of department at Assmang, Khumani Mine, as well as Andre Johnson and Mark Andersen from the research and development division at Nosa.

SHEQ manager at Hensoldt Optronics, Werner Schierschmidt, discussed the increased knowledge of human factors in safety management systems in the third session, while Jonathan Leeming, author and conservationist, discussed the road to sustainability and Johan du Toit, director at Height Safety, presented on updates and guidelines for working at a height.

The fourth session featured Tshinanne Mutshatshi and Geoffrey Small from Eskom, who discussed environment and social management in the construction environment, and managing director at Aspirata, Venisha Bachulal, who discussed food safety and certification.

The keynote sessions were shared by Mdu Mathenjwa, from Grashyo Health and Safety, who shared his own workplace accident that led to the



their health and safety programmes and ensure compliance to health and safety best practices. Part of Nosa's success is our awards and recognition; the liberty to compare companies; to compare sites; and the ability to recognise individuals."

"It is often a difficult task to be in the occupational health and safety industry, certainly in a tough economy when budgets are being cut. For companies and individuals to maintain their health and safety programmes is extremely commendable," he added.

Winners of the regional awards stand a chance to also win at the Noscars international banquet for Nosa clients, which will be held in Johannesburg on October 13. Some regional winners for various categories follow on the next page:





The following companies were some of the recipients of the NOSA Regional Awards.





INTEGRATED RISK AND HSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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Product video

KITE 2017 SHOWS THE VIBRANCY OF KZN



THE KWAZULU-NATAL INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION (KITE) 2017 PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE PORTAL FOR INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS, AND WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A HIT WITH EXHIBITORS

Held between July 26 and 28 at the Durban Exhibition Centre, KITE once again proved that it is the only place in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) to source and experience a comprehensive variety of industrial technology solutions under one roof.

With a total overall attendance of 4 470 of the country's industry professionals (97 percent from KZN), KITE 2017 was lauded as the definitive interactive industrial technology equipment showcase.

"With an average of 1 490 visitors per day, compared to the daily average of 1 289 in 2015, all three days of the exhibition were extremely busy. The 150-plus exhibitors (up 30 exhibitors from 2015) welcomed visitors from across a number of industries and, interestingly, 55 percent of all visitors had never attended KITE previously," says John Sterley, portfolio director at Specialised Exhibitions.

Feedback from the visitors clearly indicated their satisfaction for the wide selection of technology available. Kosheek Surajpal of Hulamin says: "We run a very large plant and, because we are responsible for general maintenance, we need a variety of equipment. I am a regular visitor to KITE and find the show very informative. We found lots of new equipment and amassed valuable information."

Avishkar Madhan, Avi M Consulting, adds: "I have attended the last four KITE events and in all instances I found products that suit our company's needs. This year I was looking for mechanical fluid control and flow technology such as pumps, valves and accessories.

"There is a very good coverage of a number of the sectors in which we operate, such as mining, sugar and general industry. We found a number of new suppliers from whom we will be ordering in the coming months. What makes this so valuable is that they all have a local stockholding and supply capacity and capability."

Similarly, exhibitors at the event were enthusiastic about the calibre of visitors in terms of procurement decision-making capabilities. Jo van Aulock, of Schneider, says: "We were previous exhibitors at KITE and returned after an absence of about six years. The show has exceeded our expectations in terms of visitor quality and general organisation.

"We used this opportunity to introduce our packaged industrial solutions – known as our Industrial Ecostructure – to the market, and we have had a really good response. This is the perfect branding opportunity for us in KZN."

Graeme Cox of Omron notes: "Omron returned



ABOVE AND BELOW:
KITE 2017 attracted more than 150 exhibitors and 4 470 visitors.




“ This year, exhibitors at the event were enthusiastic about the calibre of visitors.

to KITE after an absence of a few years. We have realised the potential of the show and the great value in the target market it attracts. We had lost contact with a number of previous customers and have used our presence at KITE to reconnect with them on a very positive level.

“We were definitely able to interact with the right people and we have had a great response to our customised integrated network capabilities solutions. Our Johannesburg team were pleasantly surprised at how vibrant and large the KZN market is.”

According to Sterley, the new Propak Africa Pavilion was very well received by the visitors.

“We have developed a great mix of visitor attractions and the free-to-attend SAIMechE Seminar Theatre, the Manufacturing Enterprise Solutions Association (MESA) special interest group and the Lifting Equipment Association of South Africa (LEEASA) conference were all extremely well attended.

“Such was the response to the MESA special interest group that the organisation has expressed an interest in presenting a special interest group at the 2019 event,” he points out. 

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GOOD TRAINING, BETTER PROSPECTS, BEST EMPLOYEES



WITH A CONSTANT BARRAGE OF NEW WORKPLACE REGULATIONS AND THE NEED FOR EMPLOYEES TO PROGRESS TO HIGHER LEVELS, SHEQ MANAGEMENT FINDS OUT WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERY COMPANY TO INVEST IN GOOD SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMMES

While there are numerous skills and training programmes offered in South Africa, it is important to ensure that the training provided is of the best quality. Companies need to take care when sourcing a training provider as there are many unrecognised institutions offering unaccredited qualifications.

In 2016, the Department of Higher Education and Training released a list of occupations in high demand. The purpose of the list was to help plan processes of the Department of Higher Education and Training with respect to the post-school education and training system; particularly in relation to enrolment planning, resource allocations, career advice and development of qualifications.

Some of the occupations in high demand are for skilled employees at management level. A possible reason for such shortages could be that individuals who are semi-skilled, or who have a low level of skills, are enrolled into positions with a belief that they will acquire their skills and knowledge while on duty, but during their career they do not obtain any recognised form of skills training.

A report by the World Economic Forum, entitled Matching Skills and Labour Market Needs, states that the notion that new employees will acquire all the job skills required during the course of their career is unrealistic. The report further notes that the employers need to be actively involved in ownership of skills, and should help employees to develop and maintain their skills by fully utilising them.

During his address at the National Skills Conference, Deputy President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa stressed the need for more channels for skills development, saying: "If the post-school system is to serve the country well, we need more places and different avenues for people to learn."

Several institutions, such as the Institute of People Development (IPD), offer occupationally directed and management programmes and qualifications (some of which recognise prior learning), as well as customised programmes that are suited specifically to the individual needs of their clients.

"The programmes are developed to increase the competence of the learners within their work environment, which makes them more engaged and productive," says Gizelle McIntyre, director at IPD.

Skills in the oil and gas sector

The adherence to strict safety standards, having the latest technology and skilled personnel available, as well as the relevant certification, has stood access specialists Skyriders in good stead in tackling major projects in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries in South Africa.

Skyriders has certification in ISO 9001, OSHAS 18001:2007 and ISO 14001 – all of which are mandatory in the sector. In addition, major petrochemical companies will conduct their thorough audit of safety procedures and processes at Skyriders before awarding any contracts.

"The fact that we have been involved with some major projects in this sector is a testament to the high standards we maintain in terms of health, safety, and environmental awareness," says Mike Zinn, marketing manager at Skyriders.

Apart from the standard risks associated with working at heights and with oil and gas, the petrochemical industry is a particularly hazardous environment, due to potentially

toxic and explosive materials. This means that all equipment brought to the site has to be intrinsically safe.

Services rendered by Skyriders range from the installation of new walkways and hand railings to deluge fire-suppression systems, high-pressure water-jet cleaning and general inspection services.

A recent project undertaken by Skyriders involved a company that was contracted to undertake the specialist maintenance work itself, which meant careful interfacing and planning. "We were requested to provide a fall-arrest solution to allow the appointed contractor to carry out the necessary work safely, in addition to having a team on standby for any rescue situations," says Zinn.

"Skyriders works in close collaboration with its oil, gas and petrochemical customers to ensure that the highest standards in health, safety and environment awareness are maintained at all times," Zinn concludes.

“ The onus is on the employer to ensure that the course will satisfy the company's workplace skills plan and the requirements of the SETA.

McIntyre explains that difficulties encountered by employees, who may lack in skills required in the workplace, include feelings of incompetence and low self-confidence. "If an employee wishes to move to another environment, without the skills, or the papers to prove they have them, they are pretty much stuck. Having an unskilled workforce also has a huge impact on the ability of a company to reach its strategic goals," she adds.

Group manager for training and certification at Pinnacle OSH, Joep Joubert, notes that the consequence of lack of skills and knowledge at management level is critical as managers have the power to change the conditions in the workplace.

The lack of management skills can lead to unsafe practices and workplaces and workers not being



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provided with the necessary personal protective equipment, all of which could negatively impact the workforce.

Joubert explains the difficulty found within the occupational safety and health (OSH) discipline when it comes to skills and training: "There are a number of training programmes (presented by accredited or non-accredited providers), which are not accredited, for whatever reason. It often happens that a whole

(OECD) conducted a survey of adult skills in 2013, which indicated that underutilisation of skills implies lower labour productivity, and that employers in many countries are not making the most of their workers' information-processing skills. This includes reading, numeracy, information technology and problem-solving.

OECD drew an example from the low use of reading and numeracy at workplaces in Japan, which ranks highest among countries for adult



range of courses presented by an accredited provider, do not have accreditation.

"The onus is on the employer to ensure that the course will satisfy the company's workplace skills plan and the requirements of the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

"Training that is customised for a specific client is generally not accredited, although, if it still covers all the outcomes and is managed correctly, may retain its accreditation. Employers sometimes tend towards non-accredited training, because it takes less time, as the accreditation requirements do not have to be met. The danger is that the training could be inferior, as it is often rushed and no practical work is done to cement the theory that has been presented."

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

proficiency in literacy and numeracy. On the other hand, employers in the United Kingdom and the United States use their workers' skills rather efficiently, despite their adult populations having below-average proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, both of these countries have significantly higher labour productivity than Japan.

When investing in skills and training programmes, it is vital for companies to find relevant institutions that offer the best skills and training to suit the specific workplace requirements. Employers should also create an environment where learning takes place continuously, in order to improve learning and skills development in the workplace.

Furthermore, individuals who are responsible for OHS in a workplace should have sufficient skills to help ensure best practice in terms of health and safety. SM

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GET READY FOR ISO 45001

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDISATION (ISO) 45001 STANDARD FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IS EXPECTED IN 2018. MARISKA MORRIS REVIEWS HOW COMPANIES CAN PREPARE

The Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series (OHSAS) 18001 Standard is the current OHS management standard used worldwide. However, an OHSAS Standard and Certification Survey in 2015 found that there were around 40 different versions of the standard among the 90 000 certifications for the standard issued.

ISO 45001 aims to standardise OHS management systems across the globe. It also introduces three new management concepts.

In addition to the policy, objectives, internal audits, management reviews and continual improvements – which are integral to OHSAS 18001 – ISO 45001 also introduces context of the organisation, leadership and documented information as part of the management systems.

The standard follows the same management system approaches as ISO 9001, which is an internationally recognised quality management system standard that is the preferred solution for more than a million organisations across 150 countries.

The draft of ISO 45001 is currently in its second enquiry stage and ISO hopes to publish the standard by March 2018. However, Ian Osmond, business development manager and country coordination of Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) – which provides independent assessment services including certification – notes that the standard might be available in South Africa only by the second quarter of 2018.

"The global publication date is planned for early 2018, but the exact date has not yet been confirmed. If the standard is published in early 2018, then

accredited certification bodies will need to prove to their respective accreditation bodies that they are capable of delivering this new standard based on ISO/IEC 17021 criteria.

"Once a certification body is approved to deliver accredited certification to ISO 45001, they can then contact their clients to start the transition phase," Osmond says.


Some companies will only start migrating to the ISO 45001 in 2019. OHSAS 18001 certified companies will need to migrate to the standard to maintain a valid certification.

"If a company is ISO 9001 registered and it wants to migrate to ISO 45001, there will be a three-year window in which to do that," NQA Africa chairman, Michael Timberlake, says.

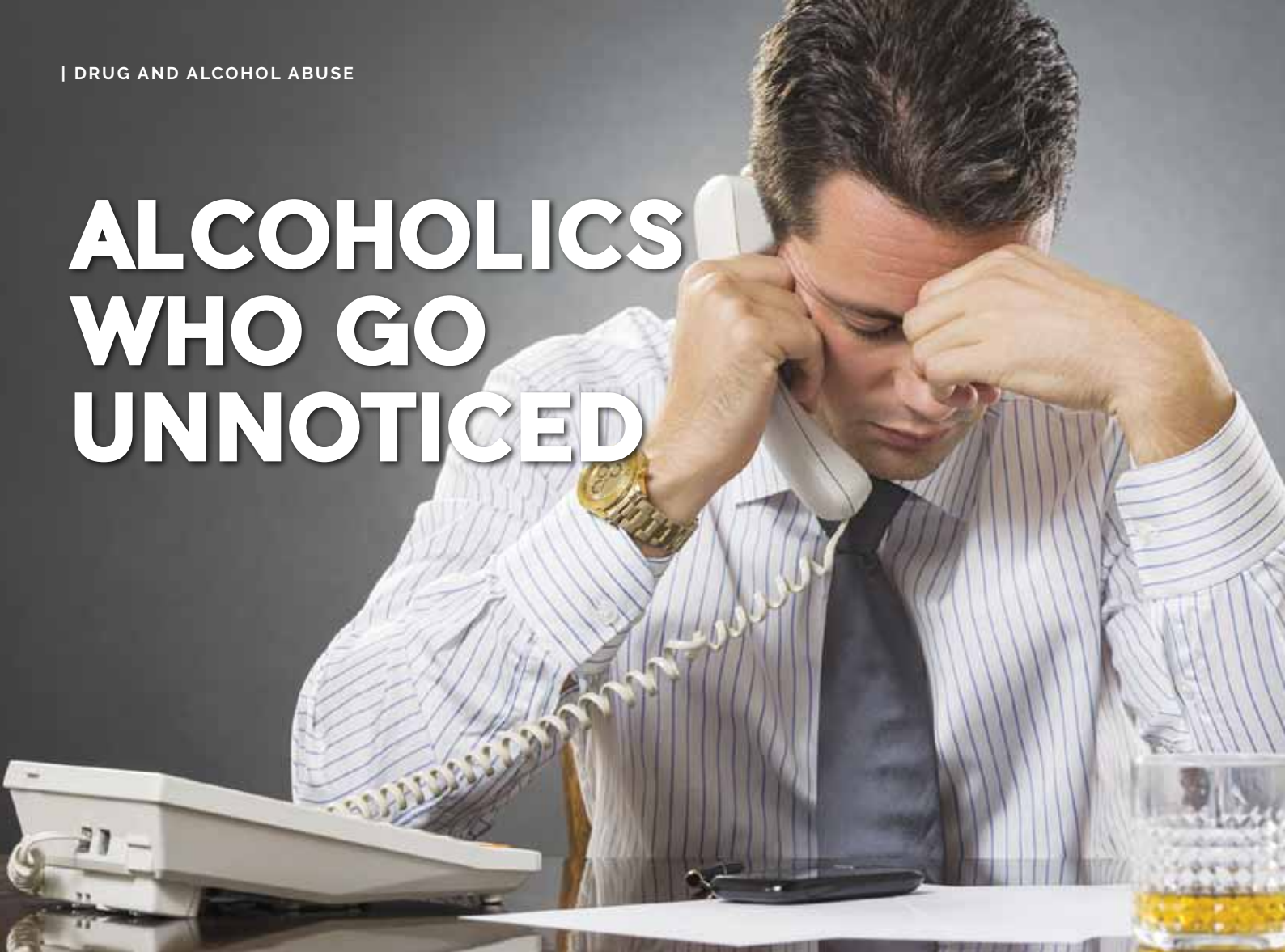
Although there is still plenty of time to prepare for the standard, companies should already start planning for the migration. Timberlake and Osmond note the importance of getting a copy of the standard as soon as it is available on the ISO website.

"Once ISO 45001 is published, companies should attend transition training to ensure they are aware of all the changes. They should also purchase a copy of the standard and start with the implementation as soon as possible. Even though the transition period is three years from publication, it is always advisable to implement the changes sooner rather than later," Osmond says.

Timberlake advises companies to compare the standards and do a gap analysis before implementing the ISO 45001 standard.

"Be prepared, but remember that the migration of certification is not possible until the ISO 45001 has been published," Timberlake concludes. 

ALCOHOLICS WHO GO UNNOTICED



THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ALCOHOLISM AND FUNCTIONAL ALCOHOLISM. MANY EMPLOYEES ARE AFFLICTED BY THE LATTER. MARISKA MORRIS EXPLAINS WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO TO HELP THOSE STRUGGLING IN SILENCE

Each year around 2.5-million deaths worldwide are caused by the harmful use of alcohol. It is the third-largest risk factor for disease burden in Africa. The average alcohol consumption per capita on the continent between 2008 and 2010 has been estimated to be 6.2 litres of pure alcohol per annum.

According to statistics published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2014, the average consumption per capita of pure alcohol in South Africa is 8.2 litres per year. This number drastically increases when considering only the drinking population. While a smaller percentage of South Africans drink, those who do often drink more than people in other countries.

The South African drinking population consumes 27 litres of pure alcohol on average per year. Around 25 percent of the drinking population participates in regular heavy episodic drinking.

Ten percent of male drinkers are prone to a disorder with a 4.2-percent prevalence to dependency. Recognising alcoholism is easy when one is faced with a full-blown alcoholic. However, this is not

always the case with functional alcoholics.

Director at Alco-Safe, Rhys Evans, notes: "There is a perception that the signs of alcoholism are easily identifiable through certain traits and characteristics. However, there is a stark difference between identifying a 'full-blown' alcoholic who displays all of the signs, and a 'functional' alcoholic, who may display none of them."

Functional alcoholics tend to hide in plain sight. They are able to perform all their daily tasks, despite drinking just as much as full-blown alcoholics.

HOW TO IDENTIFY A FUNCTIONAL ALCOHOLIC

Functional alcoholics, unlike their full-blown counterparts, mask any smell of alcohol with excessive cologne, breath mints or chewing gum. They often find any excuse to have a public drink and are full of excuses for being late, not completing a task, or being absent from work.

Functional alcoholics will be absent from work frequently as a result of illness as alcohol lowers the immune system. Common complaints include liver problems, stomach illnesses and headaches.

They are prone to frequent outbursts, poor memory or total memory loss and are often overly sociable. They have erratic schedules and often find a reason to leave work early or to have a "drinking lunch".

"Even if organisations suspect a drinking problem, they tend to not address it, as the functional alcoholic seems to have a handle on their work and social life," Evans points out. However, not addressing the problem could lead to irreparable damage to the company.

While these alcoholics might seem capable of managing their tasks, they are still intoxicated and prone to making mistakes as their senses are dulled and reaction time is affected. In the manufacturing, mining and transport industry, this could lead to costly or even deadly mistakes.

In 2015 the Lysblink Seaways ship grounded in the Ardnamurchan Peninsula near the Scottish village of Kilchoan. The officer managing the bridge had drunk half a litre of rum earlier in the evening and had turned off the warning system that would have alerted him of danger.

The ship had to be scrapped after it ran aground and 25 t of marine gas oil spilled into the ocean. The officer was simply dismissed. Evans also points out that the mistakes aren't always outrightly costly. It could be a series of small, seemingly inconsequential errors that add up.

HOW TO ADDRESS ALCOHOLISM

According to the Occupation Health and Safety (OHS) Act, companies have a responsibility and a right to do alcohol testing at the workplace. Evans says: "Companies have a responsibility to create a safe environment and allowing an intoxicated employee to work under the influence is wrong."

He suggests businesses include alcohol testing in their company policy and employee contracts. A company needs to prove that there was some alcohol in the employee's system before taking action. Evans suggests that a police-grade breathalyser should be used.

"Once an employee has been identified as having alcohol in their system, they are taken to a private room. They are asked not to eat, drink or smoke anything for 15 minutes. Any alcohol from another source, such as cough syrup, will have left the body during this time, while alcohol from an alcoholic beverage would need an hour to leave the blood stream," Evans adds.

“Functional alcoholics tend to hide in plain sight. They are able to perform all their daily tasks, despite drinking just as much as full-blown alcoholics.

The response to alcohol abuse varies. Some companies will dismiss an employee on their first offence, while others will provide a written warning. The leniency of the company is very dependent on the level of risk.

"High-risk industries like mining are very strict when it comes to alcohol policies. Other industries, especially desk-job positions, are less strict," Evans says. "Alco-Safe advises its clients to give an employee a written warning and supply them with assistance and possibly some sick leave in order to recover. A lot of alcoholics want help, especially once they have been caught."

He also points out that companies that support employees who have drinking problems are more likely to retain key skills and prevent relapses.

"Alco-Safe has found that organisations that go above and beyond to assist their employees in overcoming alcoholism tend to have fewer alcohol problems among staff, have a happier and more productive work force, and experience far fewer accidents and errors in their workplace," Evans concludes. SM

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WHY PUBLIC HOSPITALS ARE LOSING THE HEALTH BATTLE

DESPITE BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS BEING REQUIRED TO CONFORM TO THE NATIONAL CORE STANDARDS AND NEEDING TO BE AUDITED, PRIVATE HOSPITALS SEEM TO CONTINUALLY OUTPERFORM PUBLIC HOSPITALS. MARISKA MORRIS FINDS OUT WHY

The majority of South Africans depend on the public healthcare sector. However, the service provided by public hospitals seems to be lacking compared to private hospitals, especially regarding cleanliness, even though both private and public hospitals need to comply with the same standards.

The government spends more than eight percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) on health, which is more than the five percent recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The health department was allocated R38,5 billion for 2016/17 and R145 billion in 2014/15.

According to a paper written by Dr Marjorie Jobson, and published by the Khulumani Support Group in 2015, private hospitals spend around R120 billion annually, which is supplied from the more than 110 registered medical schemes and 3,4-million principal members.

All healthcare facilities need to comply with the National Core Standards, the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Amendment Act of 1993, as well as the National Health Amendment Act 12 of 2013.

There are bodies that audit both private and public health facilities. The Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC) is responsible for auditing public hospitals throughout South Africa to determine their compliance with the National Core Standards.

Many private hospitals are audited by companies

such as the Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA) – a non-profit organisation that assists a wide range of healthcare facilities in Africa, including private hospitals in South Africa, to meet and maintain quality standards. COHSASA is the only African health facility accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care.

Despite this, the OHSC's 2015/16 National Core Standards Inspectorate Annual Report found that (among other things) cleanliness is a big concern in public hospitals. The OHSC inspected health establishments across all nine provinces including four central hospitals, 11 provincial tertiary hospitals, nine regional hospitals, 27 district hospitals and 567 clinics for its report.

"Of major concern is the basic cleanliness of hospitals, which does not cover only the physical cleanliness, but also the availability of cleaning materials. Not a single central hospital scored above 70 percent," the report states. Cleanliness in hospitals and clinics is especially important as a dirty environment could lead to the spread of disease and infections.

The worst-performing central hospital, among those that were reviewed, was the Dr George Mukhani Hospital in Pretoria near the township of Ga-Rankuwa, which only scored 47 percent in cleanliness.

Provincial tertiary hospitals were also plagued by poor cleanliness. Pelonomi Academic Hospital in Bloemfontein scored only 34 percent in cleanliness, followed by Dihlabeng Hospital with 38 percent.

Clinics in Limpopo scored a shocking 28 percent in the overall clinics score by province with Eastern Cape clinics scoring 30 percent. Gauteng was the only province to score more than 50 percent for the cleanliness of its clinics, at 55 percent.

The reason for the cleanliness of hospitals in the private sector could be because they are subjected to scrutiny. This is noted in a 2016 report by Scenarium Group. It states: "The private sector is generally regarded to be "hospicentric". In addition, the hospital sector is subject to scrutiny, due to the level of market concentration."

The understaffed, over-populated nature of

"COHSASA's private sector clients – including Mediclinic, which has 37 of its hospitals in the COHSASA quality-improvement and accreditation programme – have well-entrenched health and safety standards. Furthermore, their enterprise-wide risk-management systems are well executed," says COHSASA CEO Jacqui Stewart.

"The private hospitals that we work with must comply with the COHSASA standards on the implementation of health and safety systems as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This includes the provision of fully fledged occupational health services, often



public healthcare facilities also contributes to the difference in scores. Jobson notes: "The public sector is further hampered by a shortage of key medical personnel."

According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa there are 70 575 registered emergency-care practitioners in South Africa. Jobson points out that in the public sector there is one doctor per 4 219 people, compared to one doctor per 243 patients in the private sector.

She also notes in her paper that there are 4 200 public health facilities in South Africa. Each clinic (that forms part of these facilities) provides services to an average of 13 718 people, which exceeds the WHO guidelines of 10 000 per clinic.

The higher standards of cleanliness in private hospitals compared to public hospitals can also be attributed to the quality-improvement programmes provided to private hospitals.

rendered by a contracted company such as INCON," Stewart adds.

To improve quality standards, Stewart advises that hospitals should offer proper training and orientation for personnel and should assess themselves against requirements set by the OHS Act and National Core Standards.

"Systems to comply with these requirements should form part of the organisational processes and form part of the day-to-day operation of facilities. Improvements in health and safety systems can also be effected by employing appropriately qualified occupational health practitioners, or outsourcing the service to accredited service providers," Stewart concludes.

Unfortunately, despite government's high relative spend on public healthcare, this might prove easier said than done when taking into account the poor state of South Africa's public healthcare system... SM

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HARSH PENALTIES FOR POOR WORKPLACE SAFETY

FOLLOWING SOME RULINGS ON WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (UK), IT IS CLEAR THAT SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE SHOULD BE A NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. WILLIAM GEORGE SPEAKS TO LEGRICON'S ADVOCATE HENDRIK TERBLANCHE ABOUT WORKPLACE SAFETY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Companies are facing harsh penalties for not adhering to workplace safety regulations. An example of such an incident dates back to March 2014, in which three companies in a UK joint venture were fined £1 million (R16 million). The investigation found there had been a failure to properly enforce exclusion zones that would have helped protect workers from foreseeable harm.

According to *Health and Safety Practitioner (HSP)*, the three companies were fined, after workers in a Crossrail project were exposed to workplace health and safety hazards. One worker died after nearly a tonne of wet concrete was poured onto him in March 2014, reports *HSP*.

This emphasises the need for companies to rethink and enforce their safety regulations to ensure that their workers are not exposed to hazards in the workplace. Terblanche explains how South African workplace safety regulations affect companies.

What kind of laws are in place to protect workers in South Africa?

While the common law rules are mainly aimed at liability following an incident, some legislation is aimed at preventing such incidents in the first place.

One can, therefore, say that "protection" from the law covers requirements aimed at preventing

incidents, as well as those aimed at compensating people who have suffered a loss from workplace incidents (such as injury, disease or death) which will typically result in criminal and or civil liability.

The purpose of criminal liability is to punish the offender, while that of civil liability is to compensate the victim. These liabilities can arise in South Africa and other jurisdictions.

How can workers find out about their rights and the laws that protect them in the workplace?

The key role player is the national Department of Labour (DoL), which has multiple labour centres throughout the country. Other avenues include labour unions, university and other law clinics, the Compensation Fund call centre, as well as the Department of Mineral Resources.

Who do workers/former workers approach if they have been involved in an accident, or were injured at their workplace?

According to the legislation, they are required to report the incident to their employer, who must then report it to the various authorities where applicable. Unfortunately, we know there are many non-compliant employers in South Africa, so there is a risk that the employee might end up without any recourse.

In terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (Coida), an incident that is not reported within 12 months can be refuted by the Compensation Fund. Therefore, the first suggested point of call will be the DoL centres.

What channels and resources are available for companies to ensure that their workers are safe?

DoL inspectors should be willing to visit a workplace on request of an employee or employer who is concerned about health and safety in their workplace. In addition, there are many private health and safety service providers that can assist companies.

With regard to resources, the legislation prescribes which resources (such as health and safety equipment, including personal protective equipment) must be provided to employees. The South African health and safety legislation also requires that workers should have access to an elected health and safety representative who should be able to assist them.

What protocols should be followed when an incident occurs in a workplace?

Ideally, employers should have a documented

emergency or incident procedure that sets out the protocols to be followed. The first step is that the employee should notify the employer. If the employee is incapacitated as a result of the incident, then the employer will, hopefully, find out about the incident through someone else reporting it.

The employer should then have the prescribed first-aid provisions in place. Where applicable, first aid should be applied on site. If the injury is serious, the employer should notify the emergency services, or take the injured employee to a clinic or hospital.

Where applicable, the employer must then immediately report the incident to the DoL. In the case of a fatality, the South African Police Services must also be notified.

How can employees instil knowledge and awareness about workplace safety to their workers?

The employer should use a combination of communication methods, as people respond differently to various forms of communication. Formal training, informal training, written work instructions, safety signs, toolbox talks, safety posters, corporate newsletters, social media messages, tutorials and other methods, all have a role in instilling such knowledge and awareness. SM

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ALTHOUGH THE WORDS “HAZARD” AND “RISK” ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY WHEN DEALING WITH WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES, THEIR MEANINGS AND APPLICATIONS OFTEN DIFFER IN THE WORKPLACE

The words hazard and risk have different meanings that could be misinterpreted. Knowing and understanding the difference between them may assist in simplifying matters when addressing workplace health and safety issues.

It is common to spot signs such as “under-construction” or “wet floor” in a workplace. These signs are there to avoid any risks in hazardous areas, which have the potential to cause harm to something or someone. Workers therefore have to be cautious around these areas to avoid the “risk” of being harmed or experiencing an adverse health effect.

The basic difference between a hazard and a risk is:

- **Hazard**

The Oxford Dictionary describes the word “hazard” as simply “a danger”, which is correct, but it needs further interpretation. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) describes a hazard as “any source of potential danger, damage or harm that can be caused on something or someone”.

- **Risk**

The CCOHS states that a risk is the chance, or probability, that a person will be harmed, or experience an adverse health effect, if exposed to a hazard. Ultimately, a hazard poses a risk in a workplace.

CCOHS classifies hazards into six categories;


- **Biological** – bacteria, viruses, plants, animals, humans, and others. For example: doctors may have direct contact with patients. They therefore have to use personal protective equipment (PPE) when they draw blood, or during an operation, to ensure that

they have no contact with bacteria or other related viruses.

- **Physical** – noise, radiation, chemical exposure and magnetic fields. For example: exposure to radiation can affect a worker, leading to cancers or other related ailments.
- **Ergonomic** – improper setup of a workspace and repetitive movements. For example: working in an uncondusive or restrictive workplace can affect the productivity levels of workers. As a consequence, the work may be poorly done, or not done at all.
- **Psychosocial** – stress, violence and mistakes. For example: a worker's stress can be hazardous in a workplace, resulting in flawed communication, or errors that could harm other workers.
- **Safety** – slipping/tripping, equipment malfunctions and lack of resources. For example: a shortage of PPE can be seen as a hazard, which could result in employees being injured.

The CCOHS says that it is important to note that risk is not the same for everyone and there are many factors that influence the degree of risk. The level of risk depends on both the nature of the hazard and the nature of the exposure.

For example, exposure to toxic fumes in a workplace may pose a high risk, and less exposure to toxic fumes may pose less of a risk. However, even a product with a low hazard rating can pose a high risk if exposure, or the number of frequent exposures, is high.

Nonetheless, the overall goal is to minimise exposure to hazards, and consequently minimise the risks. 



BLOCK OUT THE NOISE WITH QUALITY HEARING PROTECTION

ROUGHLY ONE MILLION SOUTH AFRICANS LIVE WITH A HEARING DIFFICULTY. AS THE WORLD BECOMES A NOISIER PLACE, IT IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FOR NOISY INDUSTRIES, LIKE MINING AND MANUFACTURING, TO INVEST IN QUALITY HEARING PROTECTION. MARISKA MORRIS REPORTS

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that around 360-million people, globally, have a disabling hearing loss. This is often caused by either an intense impulse sound, such as an explosion, or continuous exposure to loud sounds, such as noises generated in a mine or a factory.

A 2011 census found that around one million South Africans have mild to moderate hearing difficulties, while 288 369 people suffer from severe hearing loss. This number threatens to increase as the world becomes a noisier place.

Pieta van Deventer, director of HASS Industrial, which manufactures hearing protection, says: "A normal conversation will result in a sound level of around 60 decibels (dB). Sustained exposure to sound levels of 85 dB or higher is sufficient to permanently damage the ears. Given that the average hairdryer operates at around 100 dB and a petrol-driven lawnmower slightly higher, most of us are actually at risk of developing noise-induced hearing loss."

"The louder the sound, the shorter the time period before noise-induced hearing loss can occur," he adds. Workers in the construction, mining and manufacturing industry are especially vulnerable to hearing loss as they work alongside noisy machinery. Various industries have regulations to help prevent hearing loss.

The Mine Health and Safety Act (MHSA) limits the noise exposure in mines to no more than 85 dB. It also states that the hearing of employees, who are

exposed to these noises, should not deteriorate by more than ten percent.


Equipment also can't exceed a sound pressure level of 110 dB. These regulations are not enough, however. The best way to prevent hearing loss is to use quality hearing protection.

Among the various types of hearing protection available, Van Deventer believes custom-made earplugs perform best. These are specifically manufactured according to the user's ear canal. He notes: "An impression of the ear is taken and an ear-plug is manufactured to fully seal that particular ear canal."

This prevents loud noises from filtering into the ear. Some custom ear-plugs regulate the sound level according to the noise in the environment with the use of a filter.

However, Van Deventer cautions: "While custom-made hearing protection can offer the best protection against noise-induced hearing loss, its optimum performance depends on the correct fitting and regular functional checks."

Employees working in a noisy environment should also go for frequent hearing tests. They can take a free hearing test on the HearScreen app developed by hearZA.

The app is free to download and use with a two-minute, game-style test that requires a smartphone and headphones. The results are captured and shared with hearing-loss experts. Employees who fail a hearing test should make an appointment with a certified professional. 

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