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MALE-SPECIFIC CANCERS AND THE WORKPLACE



OUR READERS NEED NO INTRODUCTION TO ISSUES OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, BUT WHAT ABOUT A VERY REAL HEALTH CONCERN THAT IS AFFECTING COUNTLESS MEN AROUND THE COUNTRY?



Men – in fact, ladies too – did you know that worldwide South Africa has one of the highest rates of metastatic prostate cancer (MPC) – meaning it has advanced to other parts of the body and is incurable?

No? Neither did I... However, given that information, it's probably fair to assume that this is a risk faced by many men in just about any economic sector you wish to name – whether you're a safety auditor, occupational health practitioner, shop steward, or the editor of a magazine... I was, therefore, inspired to write about this after attending the launch of the 2019 Hollard Daredevil Run, which will take place on March 15.

According to Andrew Oberholzer, CEO of the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF), if prostate cancer is detected early, 98 percent of men will still be alive after five years. In the case of MPC, the survival rate after five years is just 30 percent. That's a frightening statistic.

Oberholzer rightfully points out that in the First World scenario, when employees are required to go for their annual corporate wellness checks, a prostate-specific antigen (or PSA) test will be conducted. This is the only

way to detect prostate cancer – but the majority of South African men will only have the chance to be tested when they display symptoms; and by that point the cancer will have already spread.

"The treatment for prostate cancer has a massive impact on a man's life... If it's advanced MPC, the only way to stop the cancer is to remove the testosterone from the body. Testosterone is the male hormone; it gives men their drive, energy and muscle mass. The negative effects of this treatment are immense," Oberholzer explains.

Happily, teaching any man to detect signs of testicular cancer is far easier. Lucy Balona, head: marketing and communication at the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), explains that while prostate cancer generally affects older men, testicular cancer tends to affect younger men. "It's affecting a lot of guys in their 30s," she says.

In both cases, early detection is vital especially, Oberholzer notes, if you're a black male...

"The majority of the South African population is black and, while black males are unlikely to get testicular cancer, their risk of prostate cancer is about 70-percent more than that for white men.

"We don't know why, it's probably genetic, but it's essential that black men start screening for prostate cancer by the age of 40 (especially if there is a history of cancer in the family). All other men should start screening from the age of 45," he says.

David Lucas, a cancer survivor and the original instigator of the Daredevil Run, issues a reality check: "Cancer doesn't know age or race, it doesn't care who you are.

"In the old days, cowboys didn't cry. In the old days, saying 'cancer' was like swearing. You didn't talk about it, and today this is still very much true. People still believe it's because of something they've done wrong in their life, but once you are told you have cancer, your life is turned around," he relates.

Oberholzer comments that getting conservative South African men to feel comfortable with these issues has never been easy. "We don't talk about our issues. It's the 'I'm fine syndrome'. Men have had to be taught that if they have a problem, they must feel comfortable enough to talk to their doctor about it."

To try get the message out to as many men as possible, Hollard and CANSA created the Hollard Man Van to reach men in the rural areas. The Man Van provides community testing (even of blood pressure and blood sugar), and information to men on how to be healthy. In its first year, the Man Van tested 4 000 men, and the most recent figure is 18 000 – a portion of whom have been referred for further consultation.

Last year, Hollard donated more than R500 000 to CANSA and the PCF thanks to the Daredevil Run. It's also launched the Guynae campaign to remind men throughout the year that early detection saves lives.


Most importantly, the sight of thousands of men of all



If prostate cancer is detected early, 98 percent of men will still be alive after five years. In the case of MPC, the survival rate after five years is just 30 percent.

ages and races running through the streets of Johannesburg in purple speedos has opened the conversation around male-specific cancers and helped to take away some of the shame and stigma around them.

As Nikki Belford, Hollard sponsorship manager, points out, testing saves the lives of men who are not only breadwinners, but fathers, brothers, sons and husbands.

No man should be left out. Let's do our bit to beat another disease that threatens the lives of the men that help make the South African economy tick. 

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MEN'S HEALTH AND THE
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MERIT REBATES PROVE EFFECTIVE FOR FEM MEMBERS

Every year, the the Federated Employees' Mutual Assurance Company (FEM) awards merit rebates to those of its 5 000 members with a favourable track record of upholding good health and safety standards for their employees.

During 2018, a sizeable R290 million was re-invested in the policyholders by way of rebates on their premiums. The incentive scheme was established by FEM to foster the proactive protection of workers from avoidable accidents, injuries and fatalities.

"The merit rebate system rewards policyholders in order to instil a culture of prevention rather than remedy," comments CEO of FEM, Ndivhuwo Manyonga.

"At the discretion of FEM's board, and in accordance with the company's articles of association, a member may be eligible for a merit rebate on any assessment paid by the employer for that period.

"The ratio of claims-costs to premiums-paid determines the loss ratio. A favourable loss ratio could result in a merit rebate and the converse could lead to a loading or increase in the standard rate," Manyonga explains.

During the 81 years that FEM has served the construction industry's assurance needs, members have come to embrace the rebate incentive, while mitigating the possibility of a loading.



Rudi van Deventer, CEO at FEM, notes that over the years the effect has been that the number of accidents among FEM's policyholders has been reduced from eight to only 2,5 employees per 100 being injured.

The 2018 rebate season was preceded by the FEM Annual Health and Safety Awards. The recipient of the coveted platinum "Special" award was Amanzi Abantu, with the Gold award going to Shula Construction CC, the Silver award to Robert Skinner Construction and the Bronze to Cladcon CC.



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ALLEVIATING THE SKILLS DEFICIT IN AFRICAN ENERGY

Being rich in natural resources for power generation and demonstrating an increased interest in low-carbon technologies, battery storage, distributed generation solutions and integrated grids, Africa's energy space is experiencing a progressive evolution.

According to The World Bank Energy project portfolio, there are currently 48 energy projects lined up on the continent, totalling US\$ 3 billion. This demonstrates the need for related skills to match those positions that will become available to successfully implement these projects.

There is a concern that Africa lacks the sufficient number of job-ready workers and entrepreneurs capable of developing, installing, operating and managing off-grid renewable solutions. Added to this is the challenge of sourcing talent that is adaptable to a considerably dynamic sector.

It is critical that this talent is developed in a holistic and sustainable manner, meaning that those establishments that are proficient in identifying and retaining suitable talent will surface with a competitive advantage in the marketplace, due to accumulated institutional knowledge.

To empower today's African youth, the 2019 African Energy Indaba will host the third African Youth Energy Innovator Showcase, giving 18- to 35-year-old individuals from across Africa the opportunity to be seen by industry experts and energy decision-makers.

Five winners have been chosen and will be able to showcase their innovations both locally and internationally to increase publicity and exposure. They will meet potential investors, key public and private-sector stakeholders and will possibly attract funding for their winning innovations.

The funding provided by the Africa Energy Indaba has helped past winners to develop sustainable energy businesses in Africa.

There is a vast array of speakers lined up for the 2019 Africa Energy Indaba – many of whom are global and African energy experts. Sean Cleary from Strategic Concepts will be facilitating the opening plenary discussion around regional collaboration and developing the Africa Power Vision.

Contributors to the discussion will include Minister of Energy Jeff Radebe; Christoph Frei, World Energy Council; Matar Al Neyadi, Ministry of Energy of the United Arab Emirates; Ibrahim Mayaki, NEPAD Agency; as well as Amandou Hott, African Development Bank Group.

The discussion around disruptive energy

business models will be led by Anton Eberhard of the University of Cape Town, alongside panel members including Musse Mohamud Ahmed, University of Malaysia, Sarawak; Rod Crompton, Wits Business School; Wendy Poulton, Eskom; and Eng Abel Tella, Association of Power Utilities Africa.

Further discussions will highlight the energy sector's innovations in Africa, exploring upcoming and long-term prospects for technological advancements such as blockchain, where decentralisation and digitisation play a more prominent role within the continent.



The emergence of energy trading platforms: Securing energy supply and the importance of African Power Pools, will be acknowledged and prioritised across key players. Regional integration will be a significant theme as well as the role of the private sector in innovation and financing of energy initiatives in Africa.

The 2019 Africa Energy Indaba takes place at the Sandton Convention Centre on February 19 and 20, and will certainly provide a multitude of opportunities for anyone interested in the energy sector – especially those aiming to be future leaders of this sector...



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LOOK OUT FOR LOLLY BINS ON SA BEACHES

Plastic sticks (such as those typically used for earbuds or lollies) and straws form one of the biggest pollutants on our country's urban beaches...

To help fight the scourge, a joint collaboration between Seadog Sport, PlasticsSA and DPI Plastics has led to the creation of a new retrieval project. Almost 400 "lolly bins" (made from PVC pipe off-cuts that were donated by DPI Plastics) are being installed at selected Blue Flag beaches and other coastal areas throughout South Africa.

John Kieser, sustainability manager at PlasticsSA, says that these sticks are made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and polypropylene (PP) polymers, which are both recycled in South Africa.

"If enough of these sticks are collected, they can be used to create a wide range of different products, such as non-food-grade packaging, rope, toys, piping, recycling bins



and other household items," he explains.

Kieser therefore urges members of the public to help pick up any of these sticks that they see lying on the beaches and throw them into the bins. "The white lolly bins are easily visible and the black and brightly coloured labels highlight their usage," he says.

The lolly bin project follows the success of a similar project of fishing-line bins that were aimed at removing discarded fishing line from beaches. These were also made from PVC pipes donated by DPI Plastics.

"This collaboration represents another step towards helping in the conservation and safety of our marine and coastal life, which goes hand in hand with cleaner beaches. If the material can be collected on a large scale, it can be recycled instead of ending on a landfill and in the environment as it is at present," says Simon Brooker, co-founder of Seadog Sport.

RTMS DRIVES ROAD SAFETY

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The implementation of RTMS in South Africa has yielded tangible benefits including overload reduction; improved compliance with the road regulations; greater awareness of driver health and wellness; enhanced vehicle safety; promotion of defensive driving and a reduction in crash rates.

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It's simply doing the right thing.



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WHEN RISK CONTROLS FAIL

DURING DECEMBER 2018, I EXPERIENCED A SCENARIO THAT COULD TRIGGER A DEBATE ON WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RISK CONTROLS FAIL

One of the critical skills needed by a bank teller is the ability to recognise potential risks related to cash transactions, as well as the ability to utilise the controls that are in place to mitigate these risks.

The scenario I experienced involved a cash transaction. After all my details were verified at the information desk, I was issued a bank cheque, which I filled in and submitted to the teller for processing. The teller followed the routine operational procedure of requesting authorisation from the line manager.

However, when the teller issued the cash, I was given ten times the amount written on the cheque.

A quick examination showed that there was "a lack of verification of the amount on the cheque before the cash was issued". There could have been underlying causes that one could consider during an investigation.

It is clear that despite the rigorous operational risk controls in a banking environment, some of these controls do fail. Line management and supervisors have to constantly assess the risk exposure while performing critical activities. The same is expected of the frontline personnel. Although risk controls are developed to mitigate this exposure, some of them do fail.

Risk mitigation requires different strategies such as avoiding, accepting and transferring the risk. In the context of the banking environment, it is not possible for the bank teller to avoid issuing cash. Despite the potential consequences that almost manifested in my case, banks are required to perform the crucial task of issuing cash.

It is important to pay attention to how controls are

designed and implemented. For example, preventative controls should be applied frequently to detect the likelihood of inaccuracies occurring.

Management should also recognise that there are potential risks that could manifest even when risk-mitigation strategies are in place.

During my interaction with the bank teller, I noticed a lack of alertness caused by fatigue. What I did not mention earlier is that this all happened during the festive season!


This leads us to the risk register. Let us assume that the supervisor in the bank is the risk owner and the bank teller the risk-control owner. Hence, as the risk owner, the supervisor should at that point remember to update the risk register to ensure that risk-mitigation processes are appropriate to control incidents such as the one that occurred when I was in the bank.

A culture of constructive feedback is encouraged to communicate lessons learned and potential impacts when risk controls fail.

LESSONS LEARNED

This scenario reminds us that, even if we have all the ideal risk controls in place, the moment of truth is when these controls are tested. As a customer, I had the task of testing the controls that should not have been overlooked by the bank teller.

Furthermore, risk-control failures tend to originate from those routine tasks where they may sometimes be overlooked.

My conclusion in this case was that risk controls had failed and the obligation was now on me to avert the undesired consequences. 



Hope Mugagga Kiwekete is a managing consultant at the Centre for Enterprise Sustainability. Previously he was a principal consultant risk management at Transnet Freight Rail, a management systems specialist and senior EHS auditor at the South African Bureau of Standards. He has practised as a management systems consultant, trainer and auditor in the fields of risk management, environmental, energy, occupational health and safety and quality management in various industry sectors in eastern and southern Africa and Southeast Asia.

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In sharp contrast, the person wearing **ORANGE/RED** is unsighted and you need to be more careful. This simple **Come n GO™** system is about to do for safety, what traffic lights did for the flow of road traffic and safety in general.

By educating our youth and adopting the **COME n GO™** system nationally on our roads, in industry, mining and forestry, we could reduce our national accidental deaths dramatically – making South Africa a far safer place.

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MINING

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF INFLUENCE

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE HUMAN BRAIN WORKS, AND HOW THE HORMONES IT PRODUCES AFFECT OUR ACTIONS, IS A KEY TOOL IN FOSTERING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND POSITIVE ATTITUDES

While chatting with a senior engineer about his safety strategy I noticed that he was completely distracted. Clearly something else was bothering him. I paused the conversation to ask what was wrong. Emotionally he blurted out how he could not deal with his boss's aggressive, unsympathetic and demeaning manner.

He admitted that, despite wanting to be committed to safe production, he had come to a point that he had had enough. Here was a person who loved his job and believed in the importance of safety yet, despite this, he was resigning for a lower-paying job for one reason only – to get as far away from his boss as possible.

How we lead our people has a tremendous impact on their emotional well-being, loyalty to the company, commitment to quality work and focus on working safely.

The good news is leaders can intentionally interact with their people in a way that builds healthy relations, dedication, promotes a positive attitude and helps reframe workers' mindsets towards safety.

Now, the dynamics of the brain's functioning is more complex than what is outlined in this article. However, by understanding just a little of what is happening in their peoples' brains, leaders can dramatically improve their

ability to influence the mood, performance and decision-making of their teams.

SEROTONIN

Amongst other things, serotonin plays a key role in balancing our mood and social behaviour. If a person is feeling good, it is primarily because of serotonin. Loneliness and depression are often the repercussion of low serotonin levels.

Serotonin is released when one feels important. Since that sensation is enjoyable, the brain will search for ways to repeat the behaviours that brought about that result.

Listening to people's ideas, inviting suggestions, being respectful and demonstrating care are all easy and potent ways that send signals to your people that you don't take them for granted and that they are valuable to you and the company.

Bolstering people's self-worth and confidence by appreciating them and setting them up for success are excellent ways of discharging healthy doses of serotonin in their brains.

We have the privilege to influence our people in such a powerful way. The question we should be asking is how often are we doing this proactively and in a positive way?



DOPAMINE

Dopamine gives us the drive to take action. It provides us with the energy to reach our goals. When we accomplish these goals, we receive a pleasure rush so that we are enthused to do it again. Dopamine is discharged when we expect to achieve a target or receive a reward. It gives us a boost of energy to keep going. Procrastination and a lack of eagerness are often symptoms of a lack of dopamine.

Leaders can help their workers by setting them up for regular small wins as they move towards the bigger goal. It is imperative that, as each goal is met, there is some sort of celebration (not necessarily a reward or bonus) or recognition of the success. This increases motivation.

So-called stretch targets usually don't work. If workers do not believe the targets are achievable, they will become demotivated as they feel they are being set up for failure.

Another question we should ask regularly is: how am I motivating and making my team feel like champions?

OXYTOCIN

Oxytocin is emitted when there is a connection and positive interaction with others. It is essential for galvanising relationships, better-quality social interactions, loyalty and trust. Having social moments like sharing lunch and celebrating important events such as birthdays go a long way to accelerate oxytocin.

When someone feels betrayed, relational expectations are not met, or trust is broken, then the brain withholds oxytocin.

Getting everyone involved in the toolbox talks is an ideal time for a team to bond. Having passive participants is missing a prime opportunity. In what ways are you connecting and creating community with your crew?

ADRENALINE, NOREPINEPHRINE, CORTISOL

These hormones are the body's natural warning system and are primarily secreted in times of stress. They are connected to our fight or flight reactions and are vital in times of emergency.

When the brain perceives imminent danger it jumps into action. If we encounter a lion charging us, there is no time to analyse the situation. Without thinking, the brain gives us a burst of adrenaline to run away as fast as possible.


This can be very concerning when it comes to safety. In times of stress, the brain quickly wants to respond to the threat and will literally bypass the prefrontal cortex. This is the part of the brain that deals with our higher thinking processes. It is responsible for planning and judgment.

Prolonged stress impairs brain function, dulls our memory and clouds our judgement. That is why we sometimes do "silly" things.

As leaders we cannot afford having our people working with impaired judgment. Prolonged stress can produce the same effect as being intoxicated. Using techniques to reduce stress and defusing the fight/flight response is crucial.

Barking out orders, especially in a threatening tone, to get people to spring to attention is one of the worst things we can do from a brain perspective. The work needs to get done and problems need urgent attention. However, communicating in a calm systematic way is considerably more beneficial.

As leaders we have an abundance of chances to influence people's attitudes, moods, motivation, as well as the ability to focus and work safely.

How many times are we doing this in a destructive way? How often do we miss opportunities because we are not as intentional as we could be? What can we do this week to deliberately interact with our people in a more effective and brain-friendly approach? 



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.

BEING PART OF “GROUP SAFETY”

IT'S HUMAN NATURE FOR PEOPLE TO NEED TO “BELONG” AND “BE ACCEPTED”, AND THIS HAS A DIRECT EFFECT ON THEIR BEHAVIOUR

All of us want to belong to a group of some form or function. This could be a family group, religious group, a university or college, a sports club, a particular sports team, boy scouts or girl guides, or simply a group of friends. It's human nature.

Regardless of the form or function, many of us will have memories of wanting to be part of a group when growing up.

In my case, growing up in Pretoria, South Africa, and riding motorcycles from a young age, I always wanted to be part of a bikers' club called the Scorpions. One of our older friends was part of this club, and members got to wear a jacket with the prestigious Scorpions insignia. Much to my father's relief, I never did become a member of that club, but it was very much what I wanted to do as a young boy.

Some years later, I met a soldier-to-be on the train en route to Upington, in the Northern Cape. His name was Deon and, with a train trip as an introduction to our two-year conscription military service together, we quickly became great friends.

Deon had never jumped out of an aeroplane (obviously with a parachute on his back), but he had one objective and that was to join a parachute battalion (Parabat) at the end of his basic training.

For him, the thrill of jumping out of an aeroplane was the second objective. His primary objective was to be part of the Parabats, and to wear the coveted maroon beret and the wings on his chest. Not unlike me and the Scorpions, Deon simply needed to be part of the Parabats.

In much the same way, people in the workplace also tend to want to be accepted as a member of a group ... be it a group of shift workers, a maintenance team, or simply

a group of colleagues who sit together for their daily lunch break.

While the type and nature of groups can vary quite substantially, the motivation is the same: needing to belong and be associated with a particular group of people. This strong need for a sense of belonging is typical of human nature, and often impacts (or even dictates) our behaviour.

GROUP PRESSURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES – A REALITY

While wanting to belong to a group is natural, the behavioural pressures that this often brings to members of the group is also a reality. The workplace is not immune to these trends which include, for example, the pressure to complete a task on time (or even ahead of schedule), to start up a machine or to return to normal production, or the pressure of wanting to prove to team leaders and/or colleagues that you're a person that “gets things done”.

The pressure of needing to belong or be accepted unfortunately often negatively impacts our behaviour. For example, when a shift leader prioritises production results ahead of the safety of his or her team, it can develop a working group that accepts (and sometimes even encourages) at-risk behaviour within the team (in the pursuit of higher productivity).

As a direct result of the shift leader's priorities, his or her team will do just about anything to maintain production ... even if it means breaking the rules or failing to adhere to the safe work procedures.

In addition, any newcomer to the team, in pursuit of their need to belong, is likely to follow the team's poor example. They may even be exposed to on-the-job training that is

not conducive to a safe working environment – all further compounding the problem.

SOME PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Some years back, I saw footage from a surveillance camera within a coal mine where employees were jumping onto an operating coal conveyor to move through the mine without having to walk.

This was, without doubt, not permitted behaviour, but at some stage an employee took the chance and rode the conveyor, with others following suit. Whether all team members actually agreed with the behaviour or simply conformed for fear of not being part of the "group", the result was the same: the at-risk behaviour was condoned by the team and became the norm for all.

While privy to the footage, I unfortunately don't know if there was an incident or if action was ever taken for the mining misconduct. However, had the investigative team considered the real issue – of wanting to belong to a group and the impact that had on the team's behaviour – it may have developed actions to address the behaviour of the conveyor riders, as well as the real issue of them needing to belong.

In another case, I recently enrolled to study Social Psychology of Risk at an Australian institution. During one of the course modules, we were discussing the impact that groups have on individuals and how people tend to want to be part of a group and/or follow the example of a specific group in order to be accepted.

To demonstrate this, we were shown a number of videos where individuals followed the behaviour of a group without ever really understanding the reason(s) behind the group's actions. I was sceptical, thinking that much of the video footage was staged ... because surely a person wouldn't be that silly?

One of the videos, for example, showed a person entering an elevator that was already carrying three people. Unbeknown to the fourth person having just entered the elevator, all three were actors. When the elevator doors closed, the three actors turned around to face the rear side of the elevator. To my surprise, it wasn't long before the fourth person also turned around!

He had no understanding of why the other people (actors) had turned around, but it was clear that he did not want to be the only one facing the front and so "blindly" followed the actions of the others.

At a team dinner later that evening, with the video footage still bothering me, I laid down a challenge to our professor and the other students: one of our fellow students had not arrived for the first day of the course, and we agreed that, at the start the second day while the professor summarised the previous day's work, we would all arbitrarily take off our shoes and place them in the corner of the room. We would then see if the newcomer would follow the actions of the group.

The second day commenced and, as agreed, as the professor started to recap on the previous day, I took off my shoes and placed them in the corner of the room. Our professor and the other students did the same.

To my surprise, and despite a very confused expression on his face, it didn't take the new person long before he, too, slipped off his shoes! While he didn't place his shoes in the corner, he had sufficiently demonstrated the point that the professor had been making: that it's human nature for people to "blindly" conform to the actions of others simply to "belong".

DEVELOPING THE RIGHT GROUPS – A LEADERSHIP ISSUE

As leaders (be it managers, supervisors, foremen or team leaders), we have a responsibility to develop teams that regard safety as a value. We need to ensure that we, and all our teams, work hard and continuously to entrench good safety habits and adherence to the safety rules and requirements in all that we do.

At times this is more difficult to achieve than simply allowing a group to be established that disregards safety, takes short cuts and tolerates risk taking. As leaders, we need to remind our teams that the reward for developing an exemplary safety culture far outweighs the effort it takes, and that it's the only way to effectively reduce the number of injuries and incidents.


Being part of the group that takes safety seriously is how together we can achieve better production results, better efficiencies, fewer incidents and ensure a sense of order in the workplace.

SUMMARY

It is fact that people want to belong to a group, regardless of whether such groups are well-intended or destructive, respected or feared, liked or disliked. There is much evidence to prove that people will often "blindly" follow the actions of those groups just to ensure their acceptance.

Leaders therefore need to work hard and continuously to provide a safe working environment for employees, contractors and visitors. They need to actively invest in the development of workplace groups (shifts and work teams) that take safety seriously.

Just as parents attempt to guide, sway and convince their children to belong to the "right" friendship groups, so, too, leaders in the workplace must guide their staff into the "right" groups.

This can be achieved if senior line managers, together with their safety professionals, are trained and coached in how to identify "problematic" groups that are not taking safety seriously. Through ongoing training and coaching, those groups can then change their habits and align their behaviour with the safety objectives of the company. 



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.



PRODUCT RECALL AND LIABILITY OF MANUFACTURERS IN CLASS-ACTION LAWSUITS

WITH THE TIGER BRANDS LISTERIOSIS OUTBREAK STILL FRESH IN OUR MINDS AND NOW THE CENTRE OF A CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT, IT'S PERTINENT TO STUDY A REMARKABLY SIMILAR EVENT THAT OCCURRED IN CANADA A DECADE EARLIER

In early 2018, there was an outbreak of listeriosis in South Africa involving mainly products made by Tiger Brands. The outbreak was traced to the company's Polokwane plant. An estimated 200 people died from listeriosis and there was a large-scale recall of ready-to-eat cold-meat products across the country.

Later in the same year, the High Court certified that class-action litigation could proceed against Tiger Brands. The exact number of claimants in the class action was not clear at the time of writing this article. However, given the nature of the product involved (a mass-consumed product), the number of claimants could be substantial.

The parallels between the outbreak of listeriosis in 2018 in South Africa and the outbreak in Canada in 2008 are remarkable. The focus of this article is on the Canadian event and the lessons it may provide for those involved in the Tiger Brands litigation in South Africa.

In 2008, hundreds of people fell sick after consuming contaminated ready-to-eat meats manufactured by a company called Maple Leaf Foods Inc. This culminated in the class-action case of 1688782 Ontario Inc versus Maple Leaf Foods Inc. The case made its way up the Canadian judicial system until it reached the Court of Appeal in 2017.

Claimants in this case were businesses or retailers who had franchises with Maple Leaf to sell its products. The claimants alleged that Maple Leaf was negligent when it supplied contaminated ready-to-eat meats to their businesses. Consequently, they sought damages for lost sales and impairment to their reputation arising from the recall of Maple Leaf's products.

As is typical in cases of this nature, there was no direct evidence proving who among the claimants actually received contaminated products, because some of the recalled products were probably not contaminated.

There is one major point of difference between the Maple

Leaf case and the yet to be filed class action against Tiger Brands in South Africa. In the Maple Leaf case, the claimants were business people trading in Maple Leaf products, who were claiming for pure economic losses suffered as a result of the product recall.

By contrast, the claims against Tiger Brands are by people who allege to have suffered physical harm, or dependants/guardians of those who died from consuming listeria-contaminated food. This distinction is important because it has implications on how the test for liability is applied.

Liability of a manufacturer – in cases where an unsafe product harms many consumers and other parties – hinges on two fundamental questions. The first question is: was the harm reasonably foreseeable? In English law, the same question revolves around the issue of whether the defendant owed the plaintiff a duty of care.

Harm is more likely to be foreseeable the closer the victim is to the manufacturing process. Thus, if a manufacturer distributes a contaminated food product that harms a customer it would be very difficult to argue that such harm was not foreseeable.

Things may well be different if a retailer claims for lost sales arising from the same contaminated product following a recall. A second question on which liability depends is: are there any public policy reasons suggesting that liability should not attach to the manufacturer? In simple terms, this question seeks to ascertain whether making the manufacturer liable for the harm is socially desirable.

In the Canadian case of Maple Leaf, the trial court found that Maple Leaf owed the claimants a duty of care and that there were no public policy reasons militating against imposing liability. Accordingly, the court ruled against Maple Leaf. The company then appealed the decision to the Ontario Court of Appeal. This court ruled that Maple Leaf did not owe a duty of care to the claimants.



The court made it clear that there is a difference between owing a duty of care to supply consumers with healthy and safe products on the one hand, and owing a duty of care to retailers against reputational harm arising from unsafe products.

The court went further to state that the reputational harm alleged by the claimants was not reasonably foreseeable. On the question of public policy reasons, the court found that there were no pressing public policy reasons to warrant legal protection against the losses incurred in this case.

The decision by the Ontario Court of Appeal confirms yet another reality that obtains in most common-law jurisdictions in as far as claims for pure economic losses are concerned. A pure economic loss is a financial loss that does not arise from any form of physical harm. This is what the Maple Leaf class action was about. As a rule, most countries place significant restrictions on claims for damages for pure economic loss.

Economists and legal scholars have advanced different reasons to justify why pure economic losses should not attract damages. Economists argue that liability rules should seek to impose damages only for wrongs that result in socially relevant externalities or harm. Most wrongs that cause pure economic loss fall outside this category.

Lawyers, on the other hand, argue that pure economic loss as a type of harm is difficult – if not impossible – to foresee, therefore it would be unjust to find someone liable for unforeseeable harm.

However, as pointed out earlier, although the Maple Leaf and the Tiger Brands class-action cases, in Canada and South Africa respectively, both involve an outbreak of listeriosis, the claims against the two companies are different. While Maple Leaf faced litigation for pure economic loss, Tiger Brands (from the information currently available) faces claims for physical harm, specifically illness and death of consumers who ate the contaminated ready-to-eat meats.

The Tiger Brands class action is virtually unprecedented in South Africa. Class-action litigation is not as common in South Africa as in other parts of the world, such as the United States (US). Consequently, the rules that courts will apply are not clear, due to a lack of precedents.

Despite this, listeria-induced illnesses are common in South Africa. In other words, listeriosis is a disease that occurs regularly in the general population. About 40 people die annually from listeriosis in South Africa according to the statement by the Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi

when he announced the end of the listeriosis outbreak in 2018.

This presents yet another legal complication for the claimants, because they must exclude the listeriosis that could have originated from consumption of other food products, from that attributable to the consumption of Tiger Brands products specifically. In other words, claims of this nature get complicated because of the inevitable evidentiary gaps that arise.

When confronted by an evidentiary gap, a court has two broad choices. First, it can dismiss the case on the grounds that claimants failed to discharge the burden of proof resting upon them. Most common-law legal systems including South Africa, subscribe to the principle that he who alleges must prove.

A second choice for the court is to resort to what some call judicial engineering. This term encompasses several things such as introduction of a new liability rule, reformulating an existing rule, or providing a different interpretation.

All these dimensions have the same objective – to avoid a situation where a claimant goes uncompensated. In cases such as the one facing Tiger Brands, judicial engineering is highly likely because of the consumer-protection pressures involved. This prediction is not devoid of empirical evidence.

When mass claims arising from injury and death from asbestos started to rise in the 1950s, courts in the United Kingdom introduced new liability rules such as the “material contribution” rule and the “materially contributing to the risk of injury” rule to overcome evidentiary gaps.

A similar trend emerged in the US at the height of asbestos claims starting in the 1970s. American courts introduced rules such as the “injury in fact” rule that allowed functionally unimpaired claimants to file claims.

This resulted in many asbestos companies and their insurers facing liability they could not have foreseen. In the process, many companies that faced a floodgate of claims under the reinvented liability rules filed for bankruptcy under the Chapter 11 legislation.

It remains to be seen how the Tiger Brands class action plays out. Often these cases end up being settled out of court, because not many companies want to be tied to litigation that may take years to conclude. Even then, class actions are notorious for the low amounts paid out per capita that they yield. The money that actually ends up in the pocket of each claimant is often not worth the preceding wrangle. **SM**



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.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

SAIOSH EXPERIENCED PHENOMENAL GROWTH IN 2018 WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXCITING PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ITS BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS

I'm happy to report on key highlights and achievements in 2018:

Total membership has grown to 12 382, as at December 31, 2018.

Saiosh has been the official Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Conference host at the A-OSH South Africa Expo, which is held annually at Gallagher Convention Centre, for the past eight years. This International OHS Conference is held over two days with 11 speakers, at least two of which are international speakers.

Saiosh purchased and moved into its modern new office during September.

Saiosh was re-recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in March 2018 for a further five years as the Professional Body for Occupational Health and Safety in terms of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

The amended Saioh memorandum of incorporation (MoI) that was approved by Council, earlier this year, and adopted by the members at the AGM on October 22, 2018, was accepted by Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC).

Saiosh and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) United Kingdom (UK) have built closer working relationships. Several video conferences were held between the two organisations. Saioh became a supporter of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) "No Time to Lose" campaign by signing a pledge to take action. Saioh CEO, Neels Nortje, attended the IOSH Conference in Birmingham, United Kingdom (UK).

The Saioh Health and Safety Training Advisory Committee (Shastac) was established by the Saioh

Council after Saioh had been contacted by numerous training providers asking for advice, direction and assistance related to Government Gazette Notice 1463. This notice made substantial changes to the first-aid training accreditation requirements.

The purpose for the establishment of the Shastac is for the committee to advise Saioh on all matters related to OHS short courses in order for Saioh to lobby on behalf of its corporate members that provide OHS short courses. As the result of the formation of Shastac, the notice in question has been deferred by the Department of Labour (DoL).

Saiosh signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH). The purpose of this MOU is to outline the arrangements for a closer interaction and support between Saioh and SAIOH in the interests of the field of occupational health, safety and hygiene.

In terms of the MoU, Saioh and SAIOH agree to work together to advance the knowledge and professional practice of occupational safety, health and hygiene management between the two parties. They will also support each other through dialogue and activities designed to create a synergistic strategy for both parties to increase their memberships.

More than 1 600 continuing professional development (CPD) points were earned by members attending ten free CPD OHS workshops during the past 12 months in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Durban.

Saiosh to date accredited 85 (three during the period under review) courses that meet the criteria for professional registration at TechSaioh level. The qualification level for

TechSaioosh is pitched at NQF Level 5 with ten credits (ten-day course).

Free online OHS advice and assistance for members: During the period under review, Saioosh has processed 987 queries. During the past 12 months Saioosh processed more than 13 000 online health and safety related queries (including queries received via e-mail).

Saioosh entered into an agreement with an e-learning training provider to provide Saioosh members free access to a Construction Health and Safety e-learning programme. Under the period of review 731 e-learning modules have been successfully completed by members. In total more than 13 000 modules have been completed.

We encourage members to renew their membership to continue receiving the great benefits to uplift the professionalism of OHS.

PROJECTS PLANNED FOR 2019:

- Saioosh will be sponsoring the 2019 free-to-attend seminar

theatre and will also host the ninth Annual International Health and Safety Conference alongside the A-OSH Expo on May 14 and 15, in the Main Auditorium at the Gallagher Convention Centre.

This conference and exhibition is Africa's premium health and safety event that draws around 300 delegates per day to the conference and more than 2 500 delegates to the expo.

- Saioosh will finalise the MoU with the DoL.
- It will agree on an MoU with the IOSH in the UK.
- Saioosh intends to undertake the valuable initiative of acquiring ISO 17024:2012 accreditation with South African National Accreditation System (SANAS).

The Saioosh Council and CEO, Neels Nortje, with his team, have consistently aimed to improve benefits and offerings for its stakeholders. A massive thanks to our corporate and professional members for being an integral part of this progressive membership body. 



Sanjay Munnoo has over 15 years' experience in the risk and financial services industries. He started his career at Alexander Forbes and now works at FEMA as Regional Manager. He held several leadership positions including that of chairman of the board at the Workers Accident and Rehabilitation Centre, and chairman of the KZN MBA Health and Safety Committee. Sanjay is a Chartered Member of Saioosh (CMSaioosh) and was appointed as president of Saioosh in June 2017. He is currently completing a PhD in Construction Management.



South African Institute of
Occupational Safety and Health

Is your **OHS** practitioner **professional**?

www.saioosh.co.za



Saioosh is recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as the Professional Body to register Occupational Health & Safety Practitioners in South Africa in terms of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008.

BE HERE, NOW

ON A TRIP TO ZIMBABWE, I DISCOVERED THE SECRET TO EXEMPLARY SAFETY PERFORMANCE AND THE KEY TO A HAPPIER, HEALTHIER AND MORE MEANINGFUL LIFE

When preparing for a visit to run our popular Total Safety Leadership programme – certified by the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM) – for one of our consulting clients in Zimbabwe, I learned that the country has 16 official languages.

Working as an international consultant, I've led projects in more than 120 countries now, and in the last year alone visited 55 different countries. It's always a challenge communicating across geographies and cultures, especially when delegates don't use English as often as I do.

So, after three flights and a long car drive through the bush, arriving at the client's site I was relieved to hear that English was one of their 16 languages.

My few days running the programme were sublime; the

firm revealed that, while workplace fatality rates have dropped significantly in many countries around the world, the total recordable incident rates (TRIR) have remained static for the majority of organisations. While on one hand there's progress, on the other it's abundantly clear: the way we're working isn't working.

In Zimbabwe, the leaders at the platinum mine, like many of our clients, had made solid progress in workplace safety, and were now keen to understand how to reach the ultimate goal of zero injuries and ensure that their workers go home every day without harm.

In my book *From Accidents to Zero* I introduce the concept of creating safety – a philosophy and approach designed to be the lever that shifts organisations off the performance plateau and on towards safety excellence. At the outset,



ABOVE AND RIGHT:

Could mindfulness – being in the here and now – be the secret to happiness?

site was an incredibly efficient platinum mine deep in the south western part of the country, perched on the edge of the beautiful Matobo National Park (known for its incredible rock formations and Stone Age cave art). A people so vibrantly happy, filled with energy, and deeply committed to learning as much as possible made our few days together a real delight.

Several times during our programme I had a strong inclination that here I might actually find the secret to life.

ZERO ACCIDENTS, ONE LIFE

A recent study by a leading global consulting

“ No matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position. Practising thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body.



creating safety requires a mindset shift away from the traditional approach to safety – that of preventing accidents.

At its heart, the creating safety approach centres on three things:

- Impactful leadership;
- Mindful safety; and
- A focus on the inputs to exceptional safety performance.

In other articles for this magazine I tackle the subjects of leadership and the inputs to performance, so here, inspired by the time spent with my Zimbabwean friends, we'll look at the idea of mindful safety.

ALL IN THE MIND?

In 2012, there were 477 scientific journal articles published on the topic of mindfulness. Today, a Google search of the term returns over 12-million results. Despite frequent mention in popular newspapers, magazines and an array of new book titles, mindfulness is not, in itself, a novel idea.

Around the beginning of the third century AD the Anapanasati Sutra of Mindfulness stated that: "When walking, the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down. No matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position. Practising thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body."

More recently, philosopher Thich Nhat Hanh, in his elegant little book *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, recounts the story of being mindful, and its benefit to those around us:

"There was once a couple of acrobats. The teacher was a poor widower and the student was a small girl. The two performed in the streets to earn enough to eat. They used a tall bamboo pole that the teacher balanced on top of his head while the little girl slowly climbed to the top. There

she remained while the teacher continued to walk along the ground. Both had to devote all their attention to maintain perfect balance and prevent any accident from occurring."

One day the teacher instructed the pupil: "I will watch you and you watch me, so that we can help each other maintain concentration and prevent an accident. Then we'll be sure to earn enough to eat."

But the little girl was wise and answered: "Dear master, I think it would be better for each of us to watch ourselves. To look after oneself means to look after both of us. That way I am sure that we will avoid any accidents and will earn enough to eat."

A simple definition of mindfulness is "being in the moment" and focusing on the here and now.

IT'S ALL IN THE MIND!

Let's go back to our safety leadership programme at the mine in Zimbabwe. Over a smile-filled lunch one day I ventured to ask my hosts what made them so happy. A deep intake of breath gave way to a smile that illuminated our table.

"Pano!" said my client, grinning like the proverbial Cheshire cat.

Seeing my confused look, my new friend explained that *pano* – pronounced pah-noo – is a word from the Shona language (one of those official sixteen) which simply means "here".

One of the group in the class explained to me: "When we are in class with you, professor, we are here. When we are at the table eating, we are here. When we are at home with our family, we are here."

Immediately I was taken back to the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh – my client was reminding me of the importance of mindfulness, of being here, now.

SO HOW DO WE GET TO BE "HERE"?

In his best-selling book and million-times-watched TED talk, Simon Sinek explains why some people are significantly more inventive, pioneering and successful than others. I don't want to give the game away here, but he reckons it's because these people start with "why".

While Sinek's book is directed at busy professionals, his thesis stands up when we think about safety, too. We'll get to that, but first let's understand his perspective.

Sinek reckons that most folks know what to do – a company is able to describe the products it makes, and workers are able to describe their job functions. Some organisations and people know how to do what they do, in that they have a certain unique selling point (USP) or value proposition that sets them apart in what they make or do.

However, the missing detail for Sinek is the "why". He argues that most organisations and leaders today cannot clearly articulate why they do what they do.

Now, let's flip this from business into the topic of this article. Most organisations probably know what to do to improve workplace safety (have a robust management



system, comply with rules and regulations, conduct risk assessments, train employees, investigate the cause of accidents, and so on). It is also very likely that they have a pretty good idea how they should do these things, too. But are they really clear on the why?

Sinek introduces what he calls The Golden Circle, a concept inspired by the golden ratio – a mathematical relationship that has had architects, artists, biologists, naturalists and many more in rapture since the start of time.

Leonardo Da Vinci believed that the golden ratio provided a formula for proportion and beauty. Pharaohs used it to build pyramids. And nowadays, even global drinks behemoth Pepsi adheres to it in its classic logo design.

“ The smart leaders sidestep the what and how, and begin by explaining why what the workers do, and how they do it, is important.

The concept of The Golden Circle is much simpler than complex calculations – Sinek advocates that we must start from the inside and work outwards. We must start with why.

DON'T START WITH WHAT!

Most leaders don't start with why. They start with what. Performance-driven leaders concentrate on the output: what needs to be done, and by when. Some leaders add in the how – explaining to workers exactly the way they expect the task to be done.

Whether this method increases or decreases motivation will, of course, depend on the culture within the organisation, and the degree of trust placed in the leader by their team. The smart leaders though, sidestep the what and how, and begin by explaining why what the workers do, and how they do it, is important.

In the knowledge era, galvanising understanding – of both the importance of specific tasks or roles, and of the contribution of an employee – is vital to creating and sustaining a culture of care. The latest research supports this assertion, showing three key benefits for an organisation and its leaders:

Increased motivation and productivity – committed, focused workers have more energy and can perform better physically and mentally. They're also more alert and efficient.

Strong morale and enhanced teamwork – focusing on the why helps people to engage with others around a shared purpose or interest, which, in turn, helps build bonds of friendship and boosts team spirit.


Decreased feelings of pressure and work-related stress – as the trend for information overload continues and the world of work gets smaller and faster, enhanced focus and a feeling of personal value can help us all manage stress and boost resilience.

Now think about these three benefits for a moment. If your workers were more motivated, happier at work, feeling less stressed, and there was a greater sense of team spirit, what do you think the outcomes might be in the workplace? Don't skip this question. Pause for a moment, be mindful, grab a pen and notepad and jot down your thoughts. Now you're finding your why.

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that, in a family environment, if there is one person who practices mindfulness, the whole family will benefit from this and become more mindful. The presence of the member who lives mindfully serves as an active reminder to the others in the family to live in a mindful way.

In a similar way, when one person in the workplace works with safety mindfulness, this can serve as a powerful reminder to his or her colleagues, too.

So, where are you right now? Here? *Pano?*

As my Zimbabwean friends would say, "*uno ndiri kufunda pano.*" Now we are learning here! 



Professor **Andrew Sharman** is chief executive of RMS – consultants on leadership and cultural excellence to a wide range of blue-chip corporates and non-government organisations globally. He's an international member of Saïosh; vice-president of the Institution of Occupational Safety & Health; and Chairman of the Institute of Leadership & Management. Contact him at andrew@RMSswitzerland.com.

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STAVING OFF STRIKES

SOUTH AFRICA IS NO STRANGER TO STRIKE ACTION. SADLY, WHILE WORKERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE, THESE OFTEN TURN VIOLENT. IS THIS A RISK THAT CAN BE MANAGED?

It's been more than 15 weeks since the strike in the plastic convertors' industry began over salary increases and benefits. With the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) seemingly leading the charge, the most recent report at the time of writing (January 21) is that talks had ground to a halt.

In the meantime, the strike has proved to be one of the most violent South Africa has seen in a while. The violence included physical assaults on non-striking employees (one was murdered) and company CEOs (one died as a direct result of the attack on his factory); attacks on non-striking workers at their residences, which saw houses burnt down and property damaged; 17 factories were petrol bombed, vandalised or looted (one was burnt to the ground); personal motor vehicles were set alight or severely damaged; and the property of companies not linked to this strike in any way were also targeted.

Gerhard Papenfus, chief executive of the National Employers' Association of South Africa (NEASA), comments that this type of behaviour is likely to become more prevalent as trade unions fight to retain relevance.

"As resources increasingly come under pressure, with heightened desperation, the pressure on employers will increase in years to come. Apart from preparation in many areas, employers will have to mentally prepare for a prolonged struggle," he suggests.

However, while the role trade unions play requires deep exploration, the causes of strike action cannot be placed only on them. The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) notes that there are various causes

involving all role players.


On the part of the employers, these could include an unhealthy organisational culture, an autocratic management style, outdated workplace practices or inequitable employment practices.

Strikes could result when either or both parties fail to show leadership, ignore the voice of the workers, have a poorly defined bargaining unit, or fail to learn from successive collective bargaining rounds.

"Accountability for industrial action must be apportioned between business and labour, and the risk can be mitigated through strategic and operational interventions involving both employers and trade unions," the CCMA comments.

The commission adds that industrial action is an inherent risk associated with adverse consequences. How then can an employer, especially one operating in an industrial sector with union representation, mitigate the risk of a strike?

Naturally, it makes sense to ensure processes and procedures are in place to avoid a strike in the first place. These precautions include managing conflict and resolving disputes in the workplace, effective communication with staff, adopting a progressive bargaining paradigm and ensuring bargaining units are effectively constituted and represented, and institutionalising a commitment to peaceful industrial action.

However, according to the CCMA, if strike action does occur, there are key points to consider before, during and after the strike – as outlined in the table below. 

Before the strike	During the strike	After the strike
Set up a command centre	Manage the media	Continue communication and the return-to-work process
Have a business continuity plan	Constantly reassess options	Make a media announcement
Draft clear picketing rules	Be open to third-party assistance	Reflect on the causes of the strike
Have a media plan	Communicate with striking and non-striking workers	Evaluate the efficacy of contingency plans
Plan for communication with workers	Demonstrate respect to strikers	Offer counselling and support
Don't stop talking	Don't "lawyer up", keep talking	Make up, don't break up
Show visible leadership	Undertake daily intelligence gathering, debriefing and planning	



INFORMATION PROTECTED: THE P_oPI WAY

AS THE IMPLEMENTATION DATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION (P_oPI) ACT LOOMS, COMPANIES NEED TO REVIEW HOW THEY GATHER, PROCESS AND RETAIN PERSONAL INFORMATION, OR THEY COULD FACE HEFTY FINES AND IRREVERSIBLE REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE

If the Facebook-Cambridge Analytic data scandal taught the world one lesson, it is that consumers are more sensitive to personal information and governments are backing them. *Facebook* harvests consumer information for various reasons, including providing a better user experience.

However, in 2014/15, the social media giant allowed an app on its site from Cambridge Analytica, which harvested information from consumers, without authorisation, to target United States voters with personalised political advertisements. The personal information of more than 50-million people was compromised.

In 2018, *Facebook* was fined £500 000 (R9 million) for this breach. The incident took place before the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was implemented. Had it occurred after this, the fine could have been £17 million (R306 million) or four percent of global turnover, which for *Facebook* is £1.4 billion (R25 billion).

Similar to the GDPR, the South African PoPI Act requires companies to protect the personal information of employees and customers. It states that personal information remains the "property" of the individual. Companies, therefore, need

to have the individual's permission to gather and retain the information.

The Act provides numerous conditions for processing personal information, including processing limitations, purpose specification, openness and security safeguards. Companies, for example, need to disclose why they need specific information, what the information will be used for and how long the company plans to keep the information.

Personal information includes the individual's contact details, demographic, personal history and communication records, but can also include payroll information, curriculum vitae, CCTV records and performance reviews.

If a company is found to have breached the Act, it can be fined up to R10 million and/or a jail sentence can be implemented. This does not take into account the reputational damage that a company faces. The act requires "openness" or transparency, which means a company must disclose to its employees or customers when personal information has been compromised or hacked.

Reputational damage is especially concerning with more consumer awareness. In an article for technology news website *Tech Central*, Alison Treadaway notes that

data breach complaints increased dramatically after the implementation of the GDPR, which is partly due to the media attention given to the legislation.

She writes: "In the United Kingdom alone, there were 19 000 complaints from members of the public about privacy breaches in the six months after GDPR came into effect, versus just 9 000 in the same six months the previous year."

A similar outcome can most likely be expected from PoPI, which has received substantial exposure. However, companies need not panic. While an organisation is responsible for protecting personal information, it will not be held liable if information is hacked, as long as the company took the necessary precautions and met the conditions outlined in the PoPI Act.

Unfortunately, the Act fails to provide practical steps to meet these conditions. The Small Enterprise Employers of South Africa (SEESA) suggests the following:

- Establish standards for processing and safeguarding personal information;
- Establish review policies to ensure compliance;
- Provide employees involved in processing information with the necessary training;
- Keep records of processing activities;
- Implement a system to access personal information to review, correct or delete information;
- Provide complaints handling procedures; and
- Determine effective management and reporting of security compromises.

Companies can start by reviewing who accesses personal information and how, by providing new clients with consent forms and by updating software security such as firewalls. Preparing for PoPI is vital for businesses to avoid being found to be negligent ... or they might feel the full force of the Act and angered customers. SM

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SUSTAINABLE SUBSTANCE-ABUSE POLICIES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG EMPLOYEES POSES A GREAT RISK TO EMPLOYERS, AND FELLOW EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE. HOWEVER, SIMPLY DISMISSING AN EMPLOYEE, WHO IS UNDER THE INFLUENCE, MIGHT NOT BE THE MOST SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

While it is difficult to estimate its true extent and impact, the prevalence of substance abuse is alarming. *The South African Medical Journal (SAMJ)* has estimated that the annual cost of alcohol abuse for the country is up to ten percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

These costs include absenteeism, lost productivity, health and welfare costs as well as alcohol-related crime. According to a 2009 study by *SAMJ* based on 2004 data, one in five adults abuse drugs and alcohol. More recent data shows that 33 percent of the South African population older than 15 years admitted to consuming alcohol.

Of those, 43 percent reported binge drinking, according to a study by *SAMJ* published in January titled: Self-reported alcohol use and binge drinking in South Africa: Evidence from the National Income Dynamics Study, 2014-2015.

SAMJ estimates that around 50 percent of people are able to drink socially without any negative consequences – mostly because they consume small quantities on an infrequent basis.

The other half of the population faces serious, harmful biopsychosocial effects including addiction. If this estimation is correct, the rate of abuse should be much more alarming. Rhys Evans, MD at Alco-Safe, correctly states: "Recent statistics are hard to come by, especially around the extent of the problem. This is probably due to the fact that alcoholism is a stigmatised problem."

However, substance abuse definitely has an impact on the workplace. It inhibits the employee's reaction time, rational

thinking and ability to perform. More importantly, it places other employees at risk.

Ilse Britz, product manager at Homemed, notes: "It is important to test for substances to manage risk and to obtain an objective view on the compliance of employees towards company policy."

Britz advises companies to draw up clearly defined policies and procedures around substance use and abuse in the workplace as well as procedures to deal with it. These should be legally, scientifically and ethically sound.

"Include all necessary stakeholders in the process. Use awareness campaigns to inform the workforce of the new policy before implementing testing procedures so that everyone knows what to expect. This will help increase compliance," she adds.

When an employee is found to be under the influence, the company's first responsibility is to ensure the safety of the other employees. This can be done by removing the intoxicated employee from the work premises. Thereafter, the company can take action against the employee. There are a number of approaches.

"The action taken could vary from company to company and could range from a warning, or employee assistance programme (EAP) to retesting and dismissal. Of great importance is the disciplinary procedure, which should be implemented consistently among all employees," Britz explains. While dismissal might seem like the best approach, providing an employee with support is much more sustainable.

"It will often be easier and more cost-effective for the

organisation to assist a productive employee than upskilling a new worker. Employees who have a substance-abuse problem will also be more likely to come forward if help is provided, therefore reducing the employer's risk," Britz advises.

"However, the employees can't request endless help without consequences. The extent of the assistance that will be offered should, therefore, be stipulated. There are service providers in the EAP environment that could offer assistance (for example counselling) to employees. Companies can also make use of rehabilitation centres.

"If company procedure stipulates that counselling is a requirement after an employee has tested positive, it would be viewed as misconduct (non-compliance to policy and procedure) if the employee does not attend counselling.

"However, if the employee is not addicted to drugs and has self-control, counselling might not be necessary and a written warning might be a sufficient deterrent to keep the employee from using again," she adds, advising companies to do a random or follow-up test of the employee.

The recent legalisation of marijuana also poses a risk for companies, especially following the confusion as to when and where marijuana use is acceptable.

According to Britz, employees might be inclined to make marijuana their drug of choice. She notes that Homemed has already seen an increase in positive tests for marijuana. "Organisations need to be more vigilant and need to better define their substance-abuse policies by including cut-off


level concentrations after which an employee is in breach of contract," she concludes.

Companies can also go the extra mile to reduce the probability of substance abuse by addressing some of the causes, such as stress. "Work is considered one of the top causes of stress," Evans says. "Whether it is deadlines, making targets, or simply being unhappy in a job, the work environment contributes heavily to the amount of stress a person feels.

"Furthermore, many people tend to treat stress by drinking heavily. This tends to compound the stress, as excessive alcohol consumption commonly results in inattention and can hamper productivity." He suggests dealing with stress in more effective ways including taking frequent breaks away from the desk or workstation.

Employees should also be able to communicate their stress or challenges in the workplace. To ensure employees feel comfortable to air grievances and concerns, an anonymous platform can be provided.

"This does not mean that all grievances or stresses will result in action, however, a place to simply unburden does help employees to feel heard," he says. Employees in high-stress environments should also receive frequent leave and be offered the required support, including counselling or therapy.

While these steps won't guarantee a substance-free workplace, they will empower employees, while reducing the risk to the employer and assist in providing a safer environment for all. 

DRUGS OF ABUSE

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THE SHEQ MANAGER: MASTER OF A COMPANY'S UNIVERSE

MARK DITTKE, OF MARK DITTKE ATTORNEYS, DISCUSSES THE COMPLICATED JOB OF A
COMPANY'S SHEQ MANAGER

ISO standards specify requirements for a management system that enables an organisation to develop and realise objectives such as an environmental policy and corresponding targets. It is important to take into account the legal obligations and information about significant environmental aspects and safety.

In applying this standard, the company must define the scope of its management system, document it and ensure that it is committed to complying with all applicable national laws and regulations, international laws (to the extent that they may be relevant) and all other requirements (such as industry minimum standards). This is the job of a safety, health, environment and quality (SHEQ) manager.

Legislation also sets out clear rules and procedures governing safe work practices and conditions, the provision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), clean ablution and dining facilities, access to potable water, and so on.

The laws in respect of procedures and standards for certain hazardous activities – such as working in an elevated position, or the handling and disposal of chemicals and other hazardous substances – are not always so simple and clear. Often the laws merely contain broad statements without going into much detail. This requires an employer to take certain precautions, or to develop a plan.

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that compliance auditors pay particular attention to this. The catalogue is extensive. The following are examples of questions that may be posed during an audit, and for which a SHEQ manager should be prepared:

- Is training provided for each new person assigned to a job?
- Does initial training include a thorough review of hazards and accidents associated with the job?
- Is adequate instruction provided in the use of PPE?
- Is training provided for the use of emergency equipment?
- Are resources available to deal with very hot or very cold conditions?

- Are work surfaces and grip surfaces safe when wet?
- Are hazards signalled by signs and tags?
- Have all trucks, forklifts and other equipment been inspected and maintained?
- Is there a clear fire response plan posted for each work area?

This list can be continued endlessly as a company must cover all aspects from lighting to machine guards, electrical tools and machinery, confined spaces, housekeeping, stairs, ladders and platforms, noise, material handling and storage – and many more.

When it comes to the general job description of a SHEQ manager, it can be summed up as:

He or she ensures that the company meets safety, health, environmental and quality standards with the products being produced and the employees' work environment.

By developing and maintaining specific rules, SHEQ managers help prevent work accidents and assist businesses in complying with government regulations.

It sounds both profound and easy, but there is a lot behind it! A SHEQ manager is the company's soul.

It is his or her responsibility to check safety measures or develop management strategies, programmes and process improvements within the areas of SHEQ; direct health and safety precautions; and put procedures in place for everybody's benefit. It's like a chef, who can cook up an average dish, or a storm!

Having performed over 550 safety, health and environment (SHE) legal-compliance audits, and also contracted as an external environmental legal auditor by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) to perform its ISO 14001 legal audits, I am often surprised by the differences in SHEQ managers.

Of course, as a lawyer, I may be critical when it comes to the generally accepted expectation that SHEQ managers are required to review and comprehend a host of laws.



There is no question that when they monitor the work environment, SHEQ managers must recognise potential hazards and quickly determine how to best solve observed problems. It is also important for them to use analytical skills during their scheduled inspections to determine whether the items meet established government and industry regulations.

However, to require SHEQ managers to continuously follow legal and other regulatory developments means imposing a huge responsibility on them. As a result of ongoing changes, the management system requires periodic reviews so that policies, procedures and safe working practices can be updated if necessary.

Since 1994, more than 1 500 national Acts have been passed, plus probably the same amount of Notices and Regulations, while even more by-laws were promulgated by municipalities. This is quite a lot to monitor! Therefore, there are good reasons for companies to make use of



“ To require SHEQ managers to continuously follow legal and other regulatory developments means imposing a huge responsibility on them.



LEFT AND BELOW:
SHEQ managers must be able to quickly identify problems and hazards and put measures in place to solve and prevent them.

professional legal register providers and legal experts.

A legal register is generally understood to mean a database, or compilation of legislation and legal requirements, that apply to an organisation or to a defined part of an organisation.

A comprehensive legal register must contain all the relevant legislation (for example, Acts, Regulations and By-laws) applicable to that specific organisation and other sector-specific legislation.

As the legal register is part of a company's ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 compliance records, it must be regularly maintained (as required by clause 4.3.2 of both standards).

Since it is a big task and sound legal knowledge is required to keep up with and, more importantly, understand constant legal changes, this cannot be mastered by a SHEQ manager. Even less so because of the need to interpret legal requirements in the business aspect, as well as how they will impact the risk context of the organisation.

Professional legal register providers compile unique legal registers covering legislation specifically applicable to the organisation. Too often during audits we see that the register is either an off-the-shelf package containing laws that are not relevant to the organisation, or that they were put together by someone without a legal background – thereby omitting some pertinent laws.

Legal registers, just like legal compliance audits, should be undertaken by a legal specialist. To provide an analogy, an organisation would not have its financial records controlled and audited by somebody who perhaps attended a day course in accounting. On the contrary, a properly qualified chartered accountant would be used. The same principle should apply to SHE legal audits and registers.

The legal register should also contain a so-called legal register summary, which is a commentary setting out required actions, implications and documents needed by the organisation.

This ensures that the SHEQ manager is informed about all relevant changes in the law. It will further enable the manager to prepare and take proper action before the external audit




takes place. To further strengthen compliance, regular internal audits should be performed to probe adherence to SHE legal requirements, as well as quality and occupational health standards.

If deviations or deficiencies are found, these must be discussed internally and analysed so that appropriate corrective action can be taken.

By having an up to date and comprehensive legal register, and, more importantly, maintaining its management system, the organisation can ensure continuous legal compliance. This is why I regard a SHEQ manager as being the "master of the company's universe".

SHEQ managers might often be underrated, but when they are able to focus on the development, implementation and maintenance of environmental, health and safety programmes and policies, they hold the "cosmic key" in their company.

Mark Dittke Attorneys specialises in providing environmental, health and safety legal registers and audits for companies in South Africa and several southern African countries. Mark Dittke himself holds a Master of Laws degree in Environmental Law and has been a Member of the Cape Law Society since 1995. 



TRAINING FOR A JACK OF ALL TRADES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS) OFFICERS HAVE MANY DIFFERENT ROLES IN AN ORGANISATION; FROM CREATING A SAFETY CULTURE TO ADMINISTERING FIRST AID. SHEQ MANAGEMENT INVESTIGATES THE VARIOUS ROLES AND THE NECESSARY TRAINING REQUIRED

While an OHS officer's main responsibility is keeping employees safe, the role has various subdivisions including purchasing personal protective equipment, implementing a fire safety plan, providing employees with the necessary safety awareness training and ensuring a safe work environment.

According to the OHS Act, it is the responsibility of every employer to provide a health and safety policy; provide and maintain a safe work environment; eliminate hazards or potential hazards; and provide information, training and supervision where necessary to ensure the safety of employees.

Every company, in any sector, with more than 20 employees should have a dedicated OHS representative. OHS officers take on many of the responsibilities assigned to the employer under the OHS Act.

Legislation states that an OHS officer is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of health and safety measures at their organisation, identifying potential hazards, investigating incidents and reporting findings to the employer or the company's OHS committee.


It is not necessary for an aspiring OHS officer to obtain a four-year degree. A certificate from a recognised body is sufficient and should provide the OHS officer with all the necessary skills. The University of Cape Town (UCT), for example, offers a ten-week certificate course through its online educational platform GetSmarter.

It includes subjects on risk assessment and control, managing hazards, machinery, health stressors and training, preventing and responding to fires, as well as managing health and safety performance. The certificate is accredited by the South African Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Saioosh).

Other institutions that offer OHS certificates include the University of Witwatersrand, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and National Occupational Safety Association (Nosa).

In addition to the OHS certificate, UCT suggests courses in facilities management, practical labour law, operations management, foundations of project management and advanced project management to assist OHS officers.

Many OHS officers will also be the fire marshal for their organisation. Nosa offers safety courses such as fire safety and first-aid training. For industries such as mining, construction and agriculture, Nosa offers more specific courses. Its mining course offers OHS officers more information on reptile risk management, for example.

After acquiring the basic skills, it is important for an OHS officer to get recognition by joining a professional body like Saioosh. Organisations such as Saioosh and Nosa also host numerous events throughout the year to assist OHS officers to keep up to date with regard to best practice and new legislation. 

WHEN A LADDER DOESN'T CUT IT



FALLS FROM HEIGHT ARE A LEADING CAUSE OF OCCUPATIONAL INJURY WORLDWIDE. ACCORDING TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE, THE UNITED KINGDOM'S 2018 ANNUAL STATISTICS SHOW THAT 27 PERCENT OF FATALITIES AT WORK WERE AS A RESULT OF FALLS

In a developing country like South Africa where price is king, using low-cost independent contractors for undertaking work at height has gained popular appeal. Some employers believe that professing ignorance is then an adequate defence when incidents occur.

Alti Kriel, CEO of the Institute for Work at Height (IWH), disagrees: "It is each employer's duty to ensure that he or she is doing everything reasonable and practical to make sure the company's employees are working safely!"

“ Establishing a relationship with professional bodies involved in the field of working at height can assist companies to ensure success in the prevention of accidents.

According to Nosa Working at Height, South African legislation requires employers and contractors to designate competent people to carry out risk assessments, document fall-protection plans and implement the controls stated in the fall-protection plans. However, this will not be possible if the appropriate training is not implemented.

Kriel says: "The IWH helps members develop strategies to ensure that the applicable training is provided, without it costing them an arm and a leg, or a life for that matter."

He adds: "To ensure that these standards are upheld at the required level, the institute conducts audits on its members to ensure compliance. This is not in the

form of policing, but rather as a drive toward continuous development."

Kriel says employers of people who work at height should ask themselves:

- Is our compliance for our employees working at height sufficient and are we putting our employees at risk in order to offer a more competitive rate to clients?
- Are we using the correct equipment for the specific job and complying with the appropriate standards?
- What are the legal implications if we do not comply?

Nosa lists six places where the risk of injury from falls is high:


- Rooftops
- Access ladders
- Overhead cranes and gantries
- Truck, tanker and rail loading bays
- Factory machinery
- Confined spaces

Nosa goes on to explain that engineered controls are often required to keep workers safe while working in outside loading bays or during the tarping of trucks.

In the absence of permanent lifelines, engineering controls (such as structural anchors) may be required to prevent workers from falling when working at height, or in areas where portable anchoring equipment cannot be used.

Establishing a relationship with professional bodies involved in the field of working at height can assist companies to ensure success in the prevention of accidents.

With adequate support, there should be no reason why workers can't be kept safe while working at height.

Nosa and the IWH were contacted independantly for comment - ed. 

WORKING RIGHT AT HEIGHT

Rope access systems may be used in a diverse range of industries; from commercial building to industrial, construction, power generation, mining and petrochemicals. However, the steps to ensure worker safety at height remain the same, says Mike Zinn, marketing manager for Skyriders.

A highly comprehensive and detailed planning session is conducted for every contract, taking into account all possible factors, from the overall methodology right down to task-specific risk assessment.

Each step of the project is analysed in order to be able to compile a risk profile, inclusive of the level of danger, the percentage probability of potential incidents, procedures and equipment needed, and how the total risk can best be mitigated.

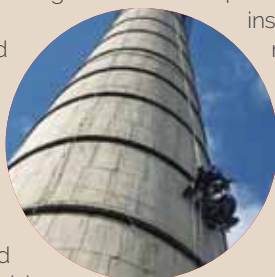
"This process of detailed, task-specific risk assessment, as well as the accompanying fall-protection planning, ensures that the rope-

access team can operate safely and complete the full scope of work successfully," Zinn points out.

Rope-access technicians are required to undertake the specific work required – including inspection, repair, cleaning, painting, or installation. This means that Skyriders' rope-access technicians also need to be qualified in trade skills such as welding, non-destructive testing and inspection, grit blasting, ultra-high pressure washing, protective-coating applications, and rigging.

Rope-access technicians are required to progress or renew their level of expertise every three years, from Level 1 to Level 3, with the total number of hours logged being indicative of the experience accumulated.

"Considering what an organisation stands to lose, it is important that companies partner with certified service providers," concludes Zinn.



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EFFICIENT AIR PURIFICATION REDUCES RISK



DUST COLLECTION IS INTEGRAL TO REDUCING RISK AND PROVIDING A SAFE AND CLEAN WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN MANY INDUSTRIES. SHEQ MANAGEMENT DISCUSSES SOME OF THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

At its simplest, a dust-collection system is designed to purify air or gas by removing the contaminants or dust particulate from the collected air. Eliminating dust through air filtration also has benefits in environments in which mechanical equipment is operated.

By default, the air-purification process has the capacity to make machinery safer and longer lasting, while workshop surfaces become less slippery, reducing the risk of falls.

In South Africa, a wide variety of industries are required to use dust collection systems to meet air-quality standards as set by the Department of Environmental Affairs. These include the mining; pharmaceutical; food and beverage; agricultural; automotive as well as industrial processing and machining industries.

SELECTING A SOLUTION

Donaldson Filtration Solutions South Africa states that each dust collection situation is unique. The company's marketing manager, Sbusiso Mahlangu, says: "Beyond determining the required air volume to capture and control the dust created in the manufacturing process, all the requirements of the operation need to be defined and understood.

"It is important to know whether there are regulatory standards that need to be met and whether regulatory limits exist on the air quality required. These considerations will all have a direct influence on the choice of collector and filter media, and may drive decisions on including secondary or monitoring filters."

Mahlangu explains that choosing between cartridges, bags or fluted media, as well as options such as intermittent or continuous cleaning, can play a significant role in the overall collector strategy. "This may include optimising the compatibility of the process with the collector design in order to reduce capital expenditure as well as operating costs.

"For example, using dedicated collectors for parts of the process, rather than centralising dust collectors, can simplify installation and make the process more efficient. At other times a centralised unit, or some combination of the two, may produce better results," says Mahlangu.

AN ONGOING INVESTMENT

In addition to the capital cost of the dust collector, the ongoing operational costs should be considered to ensure the best value over the full life cycle of the dust-collection system.

"The costs relating to replacement filters or parts, lost production due to downtime, and energy consumption during operation add up quickly.

"To find the best collector fit for a company's specific process, it is best to work with the supplier to compare initial and operational costs of different collectors," says Mahlangu.

In the end, it is worthwhile defining the needs of the organisation and identifying the different dust-collection options available. This will ensure that the investment is well-informed and initial costs can be reduced while optimising ongoing operational costs. **SM**

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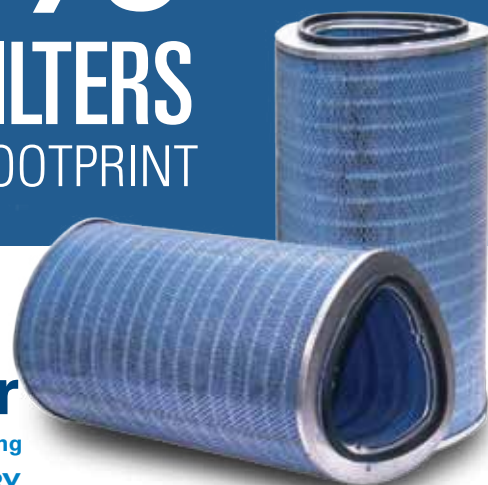
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GOLD IN YOUR RUBBISH

WHILE THE WORD GOLD CONJURES UP IMAGES OF SHINY JEWELLERY AND STACKED GOLD BARS, GOLD IS ALSO USED IN THE MANUFACTURE OF MANY ELECTRONIC GOODS, WHICH CAN BE RECYCLED FOR CASH

While there are approximately three grams of gold in one tonne of gold-bearing ore, 300 grams of gold can be found in one tonne of mobile phones. Gold is used because it is an excellent conductor of electricity and is extremely resistant to corrosion. For proof, one only need look at photographs of gold coins recovered from sunken wrecks that have been returned to the surface good as new after hundreds of years.

Globally, approximately two-billion mobile phones are sold annually and they all contain gold. Moreover, in the next ten years, those in the industry expect a growth of about 500 percent as electronic devices are continually being renewed and upgraded. If this were a train it would be long enough to span the earth.

The World Gold Council states that 75 percent of gold supply comes from mines and 25 percent is obtained from recycling. While predictions vary, it is agreed that the supply of recycled gold will one day exceed mined production in order to satisfy the world's growing demand for gold.

E-WASTE RECYCLING

More generally, e-waste comprises all electronic goods including all devices and appliances. When buying e-waste, recyclers split it into high-grade and medium-grade stock piles.

High-value e-waste contains the largest amount of gold. This includes circuit boards from consumer electronics like mobile phones and motherboards, RAM and CPUs from computers.

On the other hand, medium-value e-waste comes from appliances such as televisions, washing machines, coffee machines and DVD players.

Gold is not the only metal found in e-waste; other metals

found in circuit boards include silver, platinum, copper, nickel and tin – to name but a few.

South Africa is no longer the world's biggest gold producer and production has been slowly declining since the early 2000s. In July 2018, the Mineral Council of South Africa announced that 75 percent of mines in South Africa are now unprofitable, due to the decline in gold reserves.

At the same time, gold is infinitely recyclable and it has been estimated that 80 percent of the gold ever mined remains in circulation in one form or another.


According to Green Cape, in terms of recycling, the paper and metal industries are the most successful in South Africa. The weakest performing sector is e-waste. Of the 322 000 t of e-waste produced, only 38 000 t, or 12 percent, is diverted.

In South Africa we have to dig far below the surface of the earth to reach the gold-bearing ore in what is an extremely capital and labour-intensive process. Therefore, what is being called "urban mining" in Europe offers South Africa a great opportunity.

Unlike traditional mining, urban mining is undertaken on the surface at landfills where electronics have been dumped.

TAKING BACK OUR GOLD

While there are more than 20 e-waste recyclers in South Africa, Green Cape states that a lack of investment in the technology used to extract gold from circuit boards remains the greatest barrier to improved recycling. Still, great opportunities exist for those willing to make the effort.

Much of the gold originally mined in South Africa was exported as a raw material to industrialised countries. Now that this gold has returned, albeit under a different guise, let's ensure we benefit from its reuse. 

KEEPING DANGER IN EYE SIGHT

PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR RANGES FROM SIMPLE, IMPACT-RESISTANT SAFETY GLASSES TO ULTRAVIOLET (UV) OR CHEMICAL-RESISTANT EYE PROTECTION. IT IS, THEREFORE, IMPORTANT TO USE THE CORRECT EYEWEAR FOR THE APPLICATION

Eye protection serves many functions including protecting employees from flying objects, heat, UV rays and chemicals. However, while it is essential, finding the correct eyewear for the application and the employee can be a challenge.

Velibanti Nhlanhla Sukati, in his 2014 paper titled: Workplace Eye Injuries: A literature review, for the School of Health Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, notes that in the absence of adequate safety precautions, eye injuries in the workplace can be caused through exposure to chemicals, lasers, or heat.

He writes: "Previous studies have reported that the workplace is the most common location in which adults experience eye injuries."

According to Sukati, there are about 70 000 reported cases of temporary or permanent visual loss due to an eye injury in the United States (US) each year, with about 1 000 preventable injuries occurring in the workplace every day.

Sukati notes that the construction industry is one of the most at-risk sectors with 71 percent of injuries. These are caused by welding, grinding, cutting, hammering and drilling. Around 60 percent of incidents are caused by high-speed machinery.

Occupational Care South Africa (OCSA) suggests a few basic safety measures that can be put in place to prevent eye injuries.

The first of these is maintaining equipment and safety features such as machine guards. Bystanders also need to be a safe distance from machinery, and employees should be fitted with eye or face protection that fits properly and stays in place.

The eye protection should always be kept in a clean working condition and employees should be adequately trained in using the particular eyewear.

OCSA also suggests that personal protective equipment

(PPE), such as hard hats and eye protection, be dusted off before it is removed to avoid dust particles entering the person's eyes.

"Employees should avoid rubbing their eyes with dirty hands or clothing; first-aid procedures for an eye injury should be put in place; and an eye-wash fountain or quick-deluge shower should be provided," OCSA adds.

In addition to implementing these basic safety procedures to avoid eye injuries, companies need to invest in eye protection that fits the application and employee. The company needs to first establish whether the application requires safety glasses, goggles or a face shield.

“ The construction industry is one of the most at-risk sectors with 71 percent of injuries. Around 60 percent of incidents are caused by high-speed machinery.

Safety glasses, for example, might be sufficient for an employee working in a dusty environment (along with a half-face shield to avoid inhaling dust particles), while a full-face shield is required for an employee using welding equipment. The main factors to consider are impact, heat, chemicals, dust and optical radiation.

The latter is a risk to workers operating any form of laser (or comparable equipment) during which they are exposed to high heat, and/or UV, infrared and reflected light.

It is always advisable to contact a PPE supplier for expert advice when purchasing eyewear. Most suppliers can also fit the protective eyewear with prescription lenses. SM

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DON'T MISS THESE AMAZING FEATURES IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF SHEQ MANAGEMENT



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The advent of electric cars comes with a multitude of risks for workshops and service technicians. We explain these risks and how they are being dealt with.



SHEQ MANAGEMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Farmworkers are exposed to many health and environmental risks, which can be made worse by the fact that they are often in remote locations. We find out how farmworkers can be protected from potential danger.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

From appointing security officers to investing in monitoring systems, we take a look at how companies can ensure the safety and security of their employees.



ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Using renewable energy makes economic sense. We explore the latest advances in sustainable energy solutions.



IN THE WORKPLACE – ERGONOMICS

We investigate how ergonomic principles can be used to adapt office space to achieve the maximum amount of comfort and ensure employee satisfaction.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

From picking the right boot for the application to maintaining it, we take a closer look at safety boots.

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