

## **SABS, SANS OR SATAS? SAPPMA CLARIFIES CONFUSION REGARDING CERTIFICATION BODIES**

In the well-known quote from Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare asks “What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. However, in often confusing world standards, certifications, names and their abbreviations, the Southern African Plastic Pipe Manufacturers Association (SAPPMA) makes it clear that there is a distinct difference between certification and standards bodies, and that confusion needs to be cleared up when referring to each one’s individual roles and their very specific functions.

“In recent months we have had to deal with a growing number of queries from industry role players, municipalities and the general public regarding the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and the South African National Standard (SANS). It seems that there is a misperception as to the meaning of the term “Certification Body”, e.g. SABS or National Specification Body, e.g. SANS,” explains SAPPMA Chief Executive Officer, Jan Venter.

According to Venter, the perception exists that the SABS and SANS are one in the same and that the one cannot be used without the other. “This is not the case. The SABS is a certification body that is accredited by SANAS. It is therefore incorrect to refer to the SABS as a standard, as it is a testing and certification body who is allowed to sample and test products and certify a producer’s product to a specific SANS standard, through their SANAS accreditation. SANS, on the other hand, refers to a standard that specifies the performance requirements of a specific product. A SANS standard may be either locally written or created by adopting an international (usually ISO) standard,” he explained.

One of the possible reasons for this misunderstanding might be due to the fact that the SABS was involved with the writing, development and distribution of specification in years gone by. These specifications were national specification which were published as SABS specifications.

In recent years, however, the role of the SABS has changed. Specifications are now being done by SANS – a separate, independent body that reports to Department of Trade and Industry (dti). The SABS has been divided into two different business units, namely certification and test laboratories. This was done to make way for other Certification Bodies.

“It is also important to note that SANS standards are not the property of SABS, as is often misunderstood. SANS standards may be awarded to a product by any accreditation body complying with SANAS requirements and accredited to SANS 17065,” Venter explains.

An example of such an accreditation body is SATAS (South African Technical Auditing Service), who can issue SANS certification for a product based on independent test results and results of their audit on the manufacturer.

“SATAS is therefore an alternative to the SABS when it comes to certifying products to SANS standards. A product accredited to a SANS standard by SATAS is therefore equivalent in all aspects to that product being certified by SABS,” he says.

Both SABS and SATAS have post permit inspection regimes in place, which allows them to regularly inspect certified products and thereby ensure continued compliance to the relevant SANS standard. Regardless of the certification body, the product is still certified to the same SANS standard, which governs its testing and performance.

These days, most of the specifications are done by SANS and have either been developed nationally, or are ISO adopted standards. The thinking behind this is to bring the SANS specifications in line with International specifications as far as possible.

“Some confusion might still exist with the general public, seeing that SANS specifications are still obtainable from the SABS in Pretoria and SANS uses the same building as SABS. Accredited Certification Bodies like SATAS can now also certify companies to SANS specifications and their Quality Systems. However, our view is that competition any market should always be regarded as a good thing. One positive outcome of these developments is that the industry has now been given a choice of service providers in the certification environment,” Venter concludes.