

PUMPS, VALVES, PIPES & FITTING

Setting new labelling standards for stub ends

In line with international standards, thermo-plastic piping specialist, Plasti-Tech has introduced high-density polyethylene stub ends labelled with a Lynx laser printer using invisible laser-radiation. According to the company, this makes it the first supplier to offer HDPE butt ends with this sort of labelling in South Africa, moving away from the conventional white marker approach.

Plasti-Tech managing member Brad Chamont said there was a worrying lack of traceability in the market for HDPE stub ends in South Africa, owing to the fact that there is no identification and marking tools for these products.

This creates room for unscrupulous manufacturers to turn a blind eye on the quality of their products, bearing in mind that there is no traceability and, subsequently lack of accountability for failures that may occur as a result of



installing poor quality HDPE fittings.

Labelling stub ends using the Lynx laser machine helps eliminate this, as the manufacturer's mark, size and pressure rating markings are permanently visible, and these cannot be tampered with without damaging the butt ends.

"The labelling method currently being used across the local market is a white marker. The obvious shortcoming of this approach is that this can be rubbed off during regular handling

of the butt ends," Chamont said.

Internationally, the European Standards Association compels that manufacturer names and fittings information be clearly marked on all HDPE fittings. Barcodes also form part of the standards to facilitate easy of traceability.

In line with these international standards, the Installation and Fabrication Plastics Pipes Association (IFPA) is, in the next few months, scheduled to pass a regulation that compels labelling of stub ends using permanent markings such as the Lynx laser printer locally. Chamont is confident that Plasti-Tech's labelling model will conform to the IFPA standards.

He said these standards were crucial, given the key role of stub ends in applications in which they are used.

Stub ends form parts of a mechanical joints that comprise two components: namely, the

stub end, which essentially is a short length of pipe which has one end that is flared outwards and the other prepared to be welded to a pipe of the same thermoplastic material and of a similar wall thickness, as well as the lap joint flange, which is a ring backing flange.

The combination of stub ends and backing flanges is an alternative to the use of a conventional pipe to pipe butt-weld.

Typical applications include slurry pipelines where sections of the pipeline can be easily removed and replaced in sections due to the stub and flange mechanical connection.

"Once pipes are welded, you can't remove sections or repair them. With a stub and flange system, the stub ends are bolted together to join pipe lengths. So, basically a stub end is a mechanical connection of an HDPE pipe."