

SAPPMA HOSTS 15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*GROWING IMPORTANCE OF A DEDICATED, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
THAT OFFERS TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND CO-ORDINATES ACTIVITIES*

Johannesburg, October 31, 2019. Despite a struggling economy, the Southern African Plastic Pipe Manufacturers Association (SAPPMA) reported a growth in membership and influence this past year. Speaking at the Association's 15th Annual General Meeting held in Johannesburg recently, Chief Executive Officer Jan Venter said the importance of having a dedicated, non-profit organization that offers technical support and co-ordinates activities in the plastic piping industry, cannot be over-emphasized.

The crucial role of plastic pipes in infrastructure

"Judging by the growth in the market and new applications we have seen in recent years, it is clear that plastic is no longer seen as "an alternative" pipe material. It has grown to a dominant position in piping systems worldwide, with an estimated share of more than 50 %. In South Africa alone around 150 000 tons of plastic pipe (PVC and HDPE) are produced annually and used across a wide spectrum of many industries, including mining, civil, irrigation, industrial, telecommunication and building.

Plastic piping systems are relied upon to provide integral, long term and extremely important infrastructure to the country – including sewage, telecommunication, gas and electricity supply. Moreover, South Africa is rapidly becoming arid country where water is a scarce resource. With increasing demand and inconsistent rainfall, we can no longer afford the huge losses in pipelines (estimated to be of the order of 40%). We need piping systems that are reliable, leak-free and durable. HDPE and PVC pipes answer this call with distinction as they won't rust or corrode over time. They are more cost-effective in applications where soil is aggressive, offer extended lifetimes of up to 100 years and are highly suitable for the rehabilitation of old pipelines," Venter said.

Growing need for an independent standards body

SAPPMA was formed sixteen years ago with the purpose of creating absolute customer confidence in the plastic pipe industry and to ensure the long term sustainability of the industry with top quality piping systems. According to Venter, the importance and scope of this task continues to grow each year as the industry develops both in complexity and competitiveness.

"Never before has the need for technical development and maintaining quality been so prevalent. In the past, manufacturers only needed to focus on one standard per product line, and then perhaps only superficially. These days, there are around 124 national standards that they need to satisfy," Venter said.

Because SAPPMA's sole focus is on a relatively small (but crucially important) sector of industry, they are in a unique position to detect and address problems much earlier than any other organization. Through closely monitoring the quality of the products their members produce, SAPPMA ensures full adherence to all relevant national standards. Only pipes that were independently tested and audited are allowed to bear the SAPPMA logo as assurance that they meet international benchmarks of safety and quality.

Technical marketing and problem solving

Apart from focusing on product standards and long-term quality, SAPPMA also fulfills an indispensable need in the marketplace for technical marketing and problem solving. This service is not only offered to its own members, but extends throughout the industry.

“We have become a repository of technical information and are frequently called upon by municipalities, engineers and decision-makers to assist with scoping a project, specifying standards or making technical decisions,” Venter says. For this reason, SAPPMA has appointed a Technical Manager to assist with queries and offer professional advice, whilst the association’s Technical Manual for PVC and HDPE piping systems (regularly updated and distributed) continues to be indispensable to designers and decision makers in the piping business.

“In addition to our hugely successful PIPES XII technical conference that took place in August this past year, SAPPMA has also begun hosting regular workshops for both members and non-members alike that focussed on different aspects of quality. These events were all very well attended and is clearly addressing a very big need that exists in the market. As a result, we will be hosting similar sessions in other main centres during 2020,” Venter revealed.

Factory audits

Factory audits will continue to be a key factor in the success of the Association and is seen as an important differentiator that sets members apart from non-members. Announced and unannounced audits were completed on all manufacturing and installing members during 2019 and SAPPMA has reported an increased in quality awareness and compliance.

New SAPPMA Board and recognising contributions

SAPPMA announce the names of its new Board of Directors that will be responsible for leading the Association in the next financial year. Jan Venter will remain Chairman and CEO, assisted and supported by Terence Hobson (Sun Ace SA), Don Coleman (Sizabantu Piping Systems), Renier Viljoen (Rare Plastics), Mark Berry (Safripol), Trevor Woolward (Pipe-Tech Manufacturing) and Lizl du Preez (PipeFlo).

Alaster Goyns (Pipes CC), Lesley Geyser (Rare Plastics) and George Diliyannis (Safripol) received the SAPPMA Merit Awards for 2019 – an annual award that was instituted in 2008 with the aim of recognising and rewarding the input and effort of individual SAPPMA members.

Looking ahead

“We are excited about the opportunities that await us in the year ahead, but also mindful of the challenges our members are facing. I once again urge them not lose their long-term view, particularly in terms of quality, and not be tempted to take short cuts that will later come back at a cost. Difficult conditions always provide new challenges – also to an association such as ours. At the same time however, it reinforces the need for a central organization such as this. We therefore appeal to them to continue participating in all our activities – together we are making a difference!” Venter concluded.

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