

PRESS RELEASE

## TOP QUALITY, TRACEABLE WELDS ARE CRUCIAL TO ENSURING HIGH PERFORMING PIPELINES

**Johannesburg, 7 June 2021.** The Southern African Plastic Pipe Manufacturers Association (SAPPMA) and its subsidiary, the Installation and Fabrication Pipes Association (IFPA) understand the importance of the thermoplastic systems approach and are combining its marketing efforts to drive important messages to various markets, such as the mining, civils and industrial sectors.

Although these markets all have very different needs and life expectancies when it comes to their specific plastic pipe requirements and pipe installations, they also do have a lot in common. This includes an uncompromising adherence to component standards, certification, system standards, assessment standards and welding standards.

Ian Venter, SAPPMA's Technical Manager, states that both SAPPMA and IFPA members are aware of what these stated standards are and have the necessary processes and systems in place to ensure top quality systems with life expectancy exceeding design expectations.

"From the end-user's perspective, both these industry bodies play a crucial role through their ability to assist with master specifications and simplification of component and welding standards. This gives end-users an inside tract to system life expectancy and substantial whole life cost savings," Venter says. He adds that a failure to adhere to the specified standards inevitably results in poor quality workmanship, internal and external failures and escalating costs.

Both SAPPMA and IFPA members abide to a strict Code of Conduct which differentiates between quality producers and others in that it prescribes that only top quality products are produced and marketed which are fully compliant to all relevant standards and specifications. Members also agree to promote and ensure ethical business activities in all areas of their operations.

"The cost of good quality is made up of prevention cost on the one hand and repairs cost on the other. SAPPMA and IFPA's Code of Conduct ups the stakes by reducing premature product failure. However, product cost is a very small component of the total cost of quality and is often not well understood by the designer specifier and end user," Venter expounds.

For this reason, the pipes bodies advocate for information on system components to be included into the design, and for component manufacturers, machine suppliers, auditors and inspectors, service providers and testing houses to all form part of one team working together to ensure that the product (i.e. plastic pipe or the installed pipeline) ultimately performs as intended.

One of the elements that are crucial in this process is the validation of welder skills and competencies. To this end, IFPA maintains a centralized register of welders and their welding numbers in order to ensure that all welds and the components used by its members are traceable.

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“IFPA members are required to have their welders certified via Plastics SA and must identify each weld with a company approved welder stamp. This measure was initiated to improve traceability and to further differentiate quality service providers in the plastic pipe industry. Approved member are issued with an official IFPA member number which appears on their company stamp and must be used along with the welder’s own welder number (as issued by Plastics SA). Each weld protocol is recorded and can be made available upon request to ensure quality welds,” Venter explains.

IFPA members also have to comply to the product and welding standards as set out in the IFPA Code of conduct and minimum audit requirements. This ensures that the welding equipment and processes comply with the applicable SANS (South African National Standard) for the welding operation, namely:

- The SANS 1671 “series” of standards which specify the requirements for conformance of machines and equipment.
- The SANS 10268 “series” of standards which specify the requirements for conformance of welding processes.
- SANS 10270 standard for the welding of thermoplastics and which specifies procedures and welds.

Before any welding work commences, the contractor is required to obtain approval by conforming to SANS 10269 (welding of thermoplastics: testing and approval of welders), SANS 10269 (plastics welder test piece certificate) and SANS 10270 (welding of thermoplastics: approval of welding procedures and welds). The process of obtaining approval of each of the above has to be witnessed by an independent qualified welding inspector who documents conformance on completion, records the approval and issues the required certificates.

Concludes Venter: “Pipelines are at the heart of a country’s infrastructure. Water distribution, waste disposal, irrigation and telecommunications all rely on pipelines to function, with more than 50 % of the world’s piping systems relying on plastic pipes. A well-engineered pipe system is dependent on good design, high pipe quality as well as minimum standards at the downstream end, i.e. fabricated fittings and pipeline installation. For this reason, IFPA and SAPPMA members not only offer each other mutual support, but also ensure end-to-end quality offerings that ultimately benefit the entire industry. It is therefore no surprise to see that more and more specifiers and consulting engineers are insisting on SAPPMA-approved pipe and IFPA-approved fabrications and installations”.

For more information, visit [www.sappma.co.za/index.php/ifpa-hidden](http://www.sappma.co.za/index.php/ifpa-hidden)

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