

Responsible Refrigeration - No.37

The requirement of registering of air conditioning and refrigeration installers and artisans remains an obligation and registration continues to be a slow process for SAQCC Gas. To date close to 2400 practitioners have been registered out of an estimated 6000 persons working in the air conditioning and refrigeration industry. The practitioners who are directly working on the pressure portion of the refrigeration circuit and refrigeration associated with air conditioning must be registered. This has a direct influence on the safe working of the installation.

Pressure Equipment Regulations in particular regulation number 2 states that the regulations shall apply to the design, manufacture, operation, repair, modification, maintenance, inspection and testing of pressure equipment with a design pressure equal to or greater than 50 kPa, in terms of the relevant health and safety standard in the Regulations under section 44 of the Occupation Health and Safety Act.

The regulations refer to an authorised person, this means a practitioner who is registered as competent within the scope of refrigeration work for which SAQCC Gas and SARACCA are mandated and approved by the chief inspector to register that person. Non registered persons working on gas systems raise serious concerns for users, clients and for themselves from a legal, financial and insurance perspective and can be legally challenged in law

If you are a user of gas in a refrigeration system or refrigeration associated with air conditioning you need to ensure that only an authorised card carrying gas practitioner is working on your installation and that should this not be the case, report this practitioner and the contractor to the SAQCC Gas for further action. The cards issued by SAQCC Gas to Practitioners are classified by the area competence generally as laid out in SANS 10147. The categories at present are;

Category 'A' Practitioners

The card holder is authorised to operate a refrigeration plant and is aware of plant operation and safety. The card holder is authorised to install and maintain air conditioning units up to 18kW cooling capacity. The card holder is authorised as an air conditioning & refrigeration Apprentice/Learner

Category 'B' Practitioners

The card holder is authorised to work with synthetic and Hydro Carbon refrigerant gases on refrigeration and air conditioning systems.

The card holder is authorised as an Ammonia (R717) specialist refrigeration practitioner.

The card holder is authorised as a specialist motor vehicle air conditioning practitioner.

The card holder is authorised as a specialist refrigerated transport practitioner

The card holder is authorised as a specialist marine refrigeration practitioner on all types of refrigerant gases.

Category 'C' Practitioners

The card holder is an authorised Inspector of refrigeration installations

The card holder is an authorised inspector of refrigeration associated with air conditioning installations

The card holder is an authorised Designer refrigeration and air conditioning installations

Category 'A' and 'B' are two particular categories of competence for those persons working on installation and/or maintenance of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment. These are divided into those who might be termed as semi-skilled installers or apprentices who do not yet have a trade qualification, in Category 'A'. Then there are those who are artisans by qualification of a trade test who are in Category 'B'.

It is a requirement that a Certificate of Conformity be provided to the client or user after an installation or maintenance by a registered practitioner. Contractors and installers are finding that the end users are asking for a CoC. There are a number the installations that are not done by a competent and registered persons

which have been found to be faulty and not fit for purpose. The client/user cannot get satisfaction because the installer was not registered and there was no way of taking action against the person except to report the installer to the Department of Labour via SAQCC Gas for the investigation and legal action.

It is in everyone's interest to become compliant with registration and to offer a quality service through being registered as an authorised competent person in terms of the Pressure Equipment Regulations.

September 2017