

## **Responsible Refrigeration – No 38**

*The Practitioners who are competent and validly registered to comply with the Pressure Equipment Regulations and South African National Standards on refrigeration must feel aggrieved that there are so many installers and mechanics who flout and ignore the regulations.*

*I was recently told that the assessed number of installers doing air conditioning and small refrigeration work is not the 8000 we were lead to believe, but closer to double that if not more. Many of these installers are poorly trained and incompetent in that they do not do a neat and safe air conditioning unit installations in line with requirements. Regularly, I hear of air conditioning unit installations where the workmanship is shoddy and downright bad. This is detrimental to the industry as a whole and reflects badly on contractors, manufacturers and suppliers. The guilty installer or contractor is then not able to issue a Certificate of Conformity in terms of the Pressure Equipment Regulations. The customer remains blissfully ignorant and is faced with a poor installation that may not operate efficiently and present later problems. As has been publicized by SAQCC Gas these clients could face rejection of an insurance claim if the installation or maintenance is not done by an authorised person registered with SAQCC Gas.*

*Therefore we can only encourage mechanics and installers to improve their skills and knowledge so that they are registered with SAQCC Gas and be compliant with the OHS Act and regulations. There are numerous complaints about installers who are not able to do installations beyond the basic mounting of the units on a wall and connecting the pre charges piping.*

*On the positive side there are various initiatives to improve the skills of air conditioning unit installers from the main suppliers promoting and offering product specific training to installers. There is the training by recognized training providers with skills courses at all levels of competency. Many companies do carry out in house training in conjunction with their suppliers on aspects of refrigeration, air conditioning and ventilation to ensure the quality of their work and their standing as a reliable contractor.*

*An exercise has just been completed by MerSETA and QCTO where industry specialists were able to contribute on the realignment of the refrigeration trade and to create a new trade for air conditioning, ventilation and refrigeration. These courses covering Knowledge, Practical and Work Place Experience Modules up to a trade test will hopefully be in place by mid-2018. A new air conditioning trade will cover basics of refrigeration, aspects of electrical installation, piping for refrigerants and water, as well as duct and equipment installation and testing and commissioning skills. There are efforts to promote and recruit a large number learners into an apprenticeship program. For too many years apprentice training has been neglected and 2018 presents an opportunity to play a serious catchup game for contractors to recruit apprentices. The time of poorly and partially trained installers doing shoddy installation work must end.*

*The qualified and trade tested refrigeration mechanics by and large do good work on new installations and in carrying out repair and maintenance work across the refrigeration and air conditioning industry. The companies in the commercial and industrial refrigeration side of the industry are committed to training their staff in the skills required for refrigeration. This training in refrigeration has specifically been aimed at new installations using Carbon Dioxide in supermarkets. The construction work and maintenance is very specialized and requires new work skills that ensures quality and reliability.*

*It is with anticipation that we can look forward to the new refrigeration and air conditioning trades and the opportunities this will offer to school leavers in an industry with so much to offer to those who are dedicated and not afraid of hard work.*

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