

Responsible Refrigeration number - 42

Based on the latest registration numbers the progress in new registrations is encouraging, but the rate of renewals over the months of February March and April is disappointing. Out of 300 possible forecast of renewals only 77 practitioners have renewed their registration with SAQCC Gas. While the total number of registered persons is reasonable the apathy regarding renewals is of concern.

Some practitioners use the excuse that they are never asked to show their registration card so why should they bother to do the training and be assessed as competent and maintain their registration. That is not the point. The reason for registration is to show your client and the end user that the installation is safe and can be operated with confidence. The client or user of an air conditioning or refrigeration system does not need to ask for a practitioner's card, the card holder should show his card with pride and give the client confidence in the installation, repair or maintenance being carried out. The motivation of the Pressure Equipment Regulations is to ensure that systems under pressure are installed and maintained by competent persons and no safety issues can occur.

The question of potential leaks of refrigerant gases into the atmosphere is of global concern with regard, in particular, to global warming. The Montreal Protocol and the latest Kigali Amendment draws' attention to Ozone Depletion and Global Warming and the worldwide plans for the phase-out of potential harmful substances.

We have seen the phase-out of CFC refrigerants such as R12 and South Africa is presently in as phase-out program for the HCFC gases. The importance of this phase-out cannot be over emphasized. We are seeing a major shift to the natural gases in refrigeration such as Carbon Dioxide and Ammonia. The ammonia sector of refrigeration is seeing the development of low charge systems which makes this an even more attractive proposition for commercial systems.

Major air conditioning manufacturers are looking at using R32 or R1234ze as alternative to the present refrigerants for small units and heat pumps because of their low global warming potential. We will see a race between manufacturers to market equipment using low Global Warming Potential gases as the phase-out programs are brought into force and take effect. This trend will become even more important in South Africa when the HFC phase-out plan kicks in.

Therefore registered practitioners in the air conditioning and refrigeration industry must be part of the process of limiting the loss of refrigerant gas to the atmosphere with the relevant skills and competencies in the new refrigerants.

Practitioners are today required to learn the skills required for the new refrigerants being introduced and adopted for various applications. In South Africa we are still to feel the impact of the phase out of HCHC and HFC refrigerants. The Phase-out of R12 went through without too much difficulty because there were a host of then new refrigerants brought into the design of refrigeration systems.

The registered Refrigeration Gas Practitioner is also obliged to issue a Certificate of Conformity in terms of the Pressure Equipment Regulations for each installation or repair to a refrigeration system. The registered practitioner again, can with pride issue a Certificate of Conformity and establish confidence in the client to the work done by a valid practitioner.

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