



**MEDIA STATEMENT
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Professional Incompetence: The Construction Killer

Western Cape, South Africa; 22 February 2023: Incompetence of professionals in construction is a matter of life or death. This was the hard-hitting message of the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP), speaking at the 2023 National Occupational Health and Safety Conference presented by the Department of Employment and Labour in Cape Town this week.

“It is important to realise the sheer danger of incompetence to the boots on the ground at a construction site”, said Ms. Sindi Kwenaithe, the SACPCMP’s Executive: Operations, who spoke at the OHS Conference. “In many cases, the construction workforce is a modern pioneer ... working in remote, inhabitable environments to create safe, habitable environments for others. So, the question arises, who keeps them healthy and safe?”

Kwenaithe addressed OHS conference-goers on the importance of competence to ensure professionalism within the construction health and safety sector. Noting the massive risks faced by those working in the construction sector, she said that construction workers faced extreme environments and, in many instances, under horrendous conditions. Coupled to such hazards were risks of harassment and violence for the female workforce.

“This sector needs competent professionals who are driven to achieve healthy and safe construction sites. Not every occupation has the risks of falls, being caught in or between objects, machinery or equipment, electrocutions, and being struck by an object as frequently as in construction. Expertise and a special understanding of this environment are required to ensure that the construction workforce is protected as well as the public around construction sites,” she said.



The recent disasters faced by communities in the Northern Hemisphere following earthquake devastation brought this message forth even more: “Watching buildings crumble like sandcastles following the recent earthquakes brought into sharp focus the importance of competence and professional ethics in the professions responsible for the construction of infrastructure and buildings that people use, live in, and through which they attempt to eke out a living for themselves and their communities. This also extends to the competence required throughout the phases of construction, which impact the workforce, and may ultimately impact on quality.”

Kwenaite noted that the SACPCMP had recently reviewed the way in which it measured and assessed competence for construction professionals. The Council has established mechanisms to establish whether or not a person is capable of providing the services required and, while so doing, protecting the public.

“A little over a year and a half ago, we embarked on a journey to develop competency standards and frameworks for all its professions. Our approach was to move away from the reliance on peer review,” she said. “Looking at the required competencies of the Construction Sector, the move ensures a common language and understanding of standards to conduct competency assessments in a structured way. This competency modelling conveys ability, personal characteristics, skills, knowledge, and behaviour, to ensure an assessment process that is objective and inclusive.”

In addition, the SACPCMP has also included three additional competencies to ensure responsiveness to socio-economic issues. These are *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* (the ability to work effectively with people from different backgrounds, culture, gender, race, ethnic origin, age etc); *Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection* (to embrace environmental, social and economic objectives to deliver long-term equitable growth that benefits current and future generations); and *Leading Digitization* (to stay abreast of digital trends to leverage new digital technologies and optimize their application).



“The professionalisation of the Construction Health and Safety Professions is a matter of life and death,” said Kwenaithe in closing her address. “Families have been left destitute after losing their sole bread winners because enough was not done to keep them healthy and safe at work. These tragedies cannot be ignored and those who are assessed as competent are required to work according to a high ethical standard. They are the champions of the health and safety of construction workers, and they are what this sector needs.”

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For more information or media interviews, contact:

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About the SACPCMP

The South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) is empowered by section 18 of Act No. 48 of 2000 to certify, register and regulate the Project and Construction Management Professions. The SACPCMP registers professionals in 14 categories under the Construction Project Management, Construction Health and Safety and Building Inspector sectors.

For more information on the SACPCMP, visit www.sacpcmp.org.za.

To register with the SACPCMP, visit <https://mychs.sacpcmp.org.za/> (Construction Health and Safety) or <https://mypcm.sacpcmp.org.za/> (Construction Project Management) or <https://mybi.sacpcmp.org.za/> (Building Inspectors).

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