

Sabita launches Health, Safety and Environmental Charter

IN A BOLD MOVE aimed at entrenching a culture of global health, safety and environmental (HSE) standards in southern Africa's bituminous products industry, Sabita used the international stage of September's Conference on Asphalt Pavements for Southern Africa (CAPSA'07) in Gaborone to launch its Health, Safety and Environment Charter.

Launched at the first ever HSE plenary at CAPSA, the Charter commits all Sabita members to the implementation of best available HSE techniques during the handling and application of bituminous products. The Charter – detailed in the box below – underscores the now widely accepted principle that worker well being and conservation of the fragile environment is no longer a choice. It is an obligation.

In his landmark plenary session address at CAPSA'07, which followed presentations by international delegates Mike Acott (NAPA), Knut Søråas (Eurobitume) and Jurgen Sturm (EAPA), Sabita CEO Trevor Distin said the principles of an HSE Charter were first formulated by a steering committee, comprising the managing directors of some of the major participants of the bituminous products industry, on 18 June 2007 and subsequently approved by Sabita's Council.

'The perceived purpose of the Charter was to develop a set of objectives to be used as a framework for developing a schedule of requirements to endorse membership of Sabita, and to formulate an awards scheme to incentivise members to continually strive for improved performance on the health, safety and environmental front,' he said.

'In terms of the Charter, all members of Sabita are obliged to implement the best available techniques to protect the health, safety and well being of all employees, and to conserve the environment during the handling and application of bituminous materials. It is understood that the pursuit of this objective will operate in parallel with the pursuit of corporate proficiency and cost-effectiveness.'

Distin said that, in essence, conformance to the requirements of the Charter demanded that members operate in accordance with both the occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation and the constitution of South Africa. Sabita through its Centre for Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental Conservation (COSHEC) had undertaken to develop the necessary tools to assist its members in the attainment of these objectives. Subsequently, non-compliance with the principles of the Charter could result in the cessation of a company's membership of Sabita.

The next stage was to develop and implement an award scheme to incentivise members to comply with the principles of the Charter. The introduction of such a scheme would facilitate the advancement of the industry towards self regulation, and the criteria for the award scheme would be based on measurable requirements as and when they are developed by COSHEC. An example of such envisaged criteria would consist of, inter alia;

- Reporting of all HSE-related incidents
- BitSafe training of all personnel
- Non-use of coal tar products
- Material Safety Data Sheets for all bituminous products
- Disposal of waste at approved sites only
- Optimal use of RAP and asphalt waste
- Compliance with the haulier's code of practice for loading bitumen at refineries
- Loading and receiving asphalt from tippers which are within the legal payload of the vehicle

'Such criteria will be used to measure conformance, and members achieving the appropriate standards will qualify for an award according to a rating system,' Distin said. 'The primary intention is that the award system should encourage members to strive towards voluntary compliance with best practice in HSE, and such members should set industry benchmarks for others to emulate in their efforts towards profitability through safe and responsible practices. Secondary objectives aim at providing members with an appropriate reward through a prestigious annual industry award function, and encouraging Sabita's consulting engineering members to implement these requirements in their project designs and specifications, and to monitor the results during their supervision of these projects.'

Distin proposed the following timeframe for self regulation on HSE issues in South Africa's bituminous products industry:

| Activity | By when |
|---|--|
| Develop measurable criteria for and implement an award scheme | January 2008 |
| Implement an incident reporting scheme | January 2008 |
| Discontinue use of coal tar primes and stone precoating fluids | January 2008 |
| Complete permitting of disposal sites for bitumen waste | January 2008 |
| Develop and implement codes of practice for: Loading bitumen at refineries; Offloading bitumen; Heating and storing of bitumen. | January 2008 July 2008 December 2008 |
| Implement a load accreditation program for asphalt tippers as part of an award scheme | January 2008 |
| Promote the use of RAP in HMA by: Developing guidelines and specifications; Target recycling of 50% of total available RAP in HMA (that is, use up to 15% in new mixes Recycle 80% of total RAP (that is, use up to 30%) | May 2008 January 2009 January 2010 |
| Develop guidelines for safer alternatives and processes for cleaning, conducting binder contents tests and extraction for bitumen mixtures | December 2008 |
| Conduct assessments and make first award for achieving the requirements of the award scheme | March 2009 |
| Host the first industry conference on HSE in South Africa with international speakers | July 2009 |



► Presenters of CAPSA plenary session on HSE (ltr): Piet Myburgh (session chairman), Mike Acott (president NAPA), Knut Søråas (director general Eurobitume), Jurgen Sturm (secretary general EAPA) and Trevor Distin (Sabita)