



Norman Khoza

SAIOH president's message

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SAIOH ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

Early this year we received the resignations of prominent SAIOH office bearers, Kenneth Hlungwane and Sean Chester. Kenneth was one of our Professional Ethics Committee trailblazers and a former SAIOH president. Sean was the Professional Certification Committee (PCC) chairperson who, during his tenure, was the driving force in establishing numerous new PCC procedures, and a champion for occupational hygiene. We also bid a sad goodbye to Julie Hills, a former PCC chair, former president and SAIOH Fellow who is relocating to France with her husband. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Kenneth, Sean and Julie for serving this noble profession and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Luckily for us, they remain SAIOH members and we know we can seek their valuable insight and advice going forward.

We are excited to officially welcome Dr Hennie van der Westhuizen as the new SAIOH vice-president. Hennie brings with him a wealth of consulting and academic experience. I know that his contribution will bring a noticeable change to SAIOH and the occupational hygiene profession. Hennie is one of the original SAIOH founding members and we are indeed blessed to have him as part of our team.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome Karen du Preez as the new PCC chairperson. Karen is a registered occupational hygienist who graduated from North-West University (Potchefstroom). She is a long-serving member of the PCC and has actively participated in the Gauteng-South branch since its inception. With the departure of Sean Chester, and with Karen taking over the position of PCC chairperson, the PCC will elect a new vice-chairperson in due course.

We congratulate Maryke van der Walt who has been appointed as the PCC chief examiner (in training). Maryke is a registered occupational hygienist, safety practitioner and educator with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

Our three new council members have been allocated their portfolios, i.e. Deon Swanepoel – Technical Committee co-ordinator, Moses Mokone – Branch and Discussion Group co-ordinator, and Naadiya Nadasen – co-ordinator for National and International Liaison, and the Website. Mr Oscar Rikhotso was appointed as the new chair of the Professional Ethics Committee. We wish all of you fortitude in the tasks allocated to you and trust that the profession will grow from strength to strength under your leadership in these strategic portfolios. We are extremely grateful, and warmly welcome our new and old colleagues who volunteer to serve SAIOH, our members and the profession.

SAIOH STRATEGY SESSION

The council held a workshop on 27 February 2020 to review SAIOH's current strategy and develop a new five-year strategy. Work in this regard is ongoing and is spearheaded by Jaco Pieterse (co-opted

council member for Strategy). We would like to acknowledge the excellent contributions from our members. These contributions were considered and implemented where appropriate.

INNOVATION CORNER

Pardon my laziness and personal belief that nothing is new under the sun; hence I define innovation as "an amalgamation of two products to make a completely new and efficient product". Kevin McFathing said that it is "the introduction of new products and services that add value to the organisation". Stephen Shapiro defines it as "staying relevant", and David Burkus stated that it is "the application of ideas that are novel and useful". If you have any innovative and noteworthy occupational hygiene achievement/results/lessons learned that have an element of human interest, please send a (200 or fewer words) summary to president@saioh.co.za.

REGIONAL STRUCTURES' AGILITY

To accelerate the growth of SAIOH, we call on our long-serving SAIOH members to adopt a branch or discussion group. The objective is to support the branch with strategic direction, alignment, fundraising and mentorship of branch chairs. This function is critical in building the organisation from grassroots. Part of the initiative is to develop leaders and prepare them for council nomination. This will create transparent and effective promotional pathways; council members need to be built from the branch level. Members who have participated at the branch level have a better understanding of how to strengthen our organisation. Where discussion groups are already in place, we ask that you notify the SAIOH administration, allowing us to keep communication channels open and support your initiatives.

INTERNATIONAL DAYS

On 28 April 2020, the world celebrated the World Day for Safety and Health at Work with a revised theme, *Stop the pandemic: Occupational safety and health can save lives*. The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and International Labour Organization (ILO) hosted an Africa Webinar with participation from the African Union, Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ACDC), the Department of Employment and Labour RSA, the International Congress for Occupational Health (ICOH), the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB), OSHAfrica, and others.

On 8 March 2020, the world celebrated International Woman's Day, where the ILO calls for action on accelerated gender parity. Without degrading the work of good men out there, we acknowledge that

women are the backbone of any economy, and we see that in our own organisation. I take a moment to honour the women who are at the forefront of occupational hygiene. Issues in women's occupational health should be examined within the context of gender-specific issues.¹

National Freedom Day wrapped up the first term of 2020 on 27 April. This year's theme was *Celebrating 25 years of freedom*. The term 'freedom' brings up many contentious issues in many corners of this country. The question I ask myself is 'how can I contribute to free workers from the scourge of occupational diseases and injuries?' The ILO estimates that, globally, 2.3 million workers die each year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases, of which about two million deaths are due to occupational work-related diseases.² How will SAIOH contribute to reducing this number?

International days falling in the second quarter of 2020 include International Nurses Day (12 May), National Youth Day (16 June) and International Father's Day (21 June). I salute our healthcare workers, including SAIOH members who have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes all fathers, young people and mothers who were infected and affected by the disease. We continue to pray with you; we know we will prevail. Happy Father's, Youth and Nurses Days to you.

OUR MEMBERS

Congratulations to Dr Hennie van der Westhuizen and Dr Daniel Masekamani for completing their PhDs (Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and University of Johannesburg, respectively), and Mr Oscar Rikhotso who received his MTech degree from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), in 2019. Oscar recently joined TUT as a lecturer to give back to the community, after a long spell with SASOL. We would also like to congratulate Dr Leon Harmse, who completed his DTech in 2017; we are fortunate that Leon joined the PCC this year.



Daniel Masekamani
Photograph: SAIOH



Hennie van der Westhuizen
Photograph: SAIOH

COVID-19

2020 brought us an unprecedented situation, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting our lives and bringing new challenges. However, it also brings opportunities and calls on us to reflect on how and why we do certain things. More information on SAIOH's position, operations and activities are provided below.

SAIOH'S POSITION ON COVID-19

SAIOH, through the president's office, issued several messages regarding its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, both to members and stakeholders. SAIOH supports the restrictions and measures implemented by the South African president, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, to protect the public and prevent the spread of the virus. SAIOH and occupational hygiene practitioners are classified as essential services during the lockdown phases, allowing SAIOH and its members to

contribute to society by combating the virus, i.e. through COVID-19 risk assessments, evaluation of personal protective equipment (PPE), control measures, etc.

SAIOH's operations

SAIOH may be affected by COVID-19 but continues to function as normal, as detailed below:

- SAIOH will continue to fulfil all daily duties and obligations. Administrative staff will be working from home until further notice, providing continued support through remote means. Communication channels (e-mail, phones) remain open as per usual.
- SAIOH's public activities have been suspended/deferred, including the SAIOH Annual Conference, branch meetings and workshops (more details follow).
- SAIOH will continue to provide information on the pandemic to its members through the various communication channels.

SAIOH's activities to combat COVID-19

SAIOH and its members are key in the fight against the pandemic, with regard to risk assessments, prevention, control, and management of COVID-19 in the workplace. The role of the occupational hygienist now, more than ever, is fundamental.

Activities that SAIOH is currently involved in are summarised below:

- SAIOH's Technical Committee is preparing position papers on issues concerning COVID-19, which will be made available to members for comment and use.
- SAIOH issued guidance to its members on measures to take against the virus whilst performing duties in the field:
 - One of the recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is social distancing which means keeping a distance of at least one meter apart (ideally 1.5 to 2 m). SAIOH suggests that care be taken to not spread the disease through sharing of sampling equipment and standing close or making contact when putting samplers on workers. We would recommend that static samples be used in preference to personal sampling, or that sampling be avoided at this time. If unavoidable, then sampling equipment should be disinfected (before and after use), and gloves and N95 masks (FFP2 respirators) should be used when in close proximity to the person being sampled.
 - All equipment should be disinfected before being used, and after it is collected.
 - Occupational hygiene staff must be trained to take the correct precautions when conducting surveys, i.e. practise physical distancing wherever possible.
- SAIOH hosted a webinar on 'Post-lockdown workplaces and the role of the occupational hygienist' on 14 May 2020 to share information and knowledge regarding challenges and opportunities, and the role of the occupational hygienist in ensuring the health and safety of workers returning to their workplaces in the presence of COVID-19. The session was led by Prof. Cas Badenhorst and other SAIOH members who have been involved in COVID-19-specific risk assessments, assisting the Department of Health and the Department of Employment and Labour. The intention was for attendees to use the shared information and material to initiate discussions at the branch and regional levels (a 'train the trainer' approach) to reach a wide audience and multitude of workplaces.
- SAIOH supported the Department of Health's Health and Safety Unit's call for volunteers to conduct pro-bono baseline health risk assessments at some of their test laboratories. The SAIOH PCC Exco

praises this selfless task and has undertaken to award one CPD point (per practitioner, per facility) to each SAIOH member who can demonstrate volunteering and rendering such pro-bono services to the department.

- SAIOH supports information sessions, training and webinars scheduled through the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), South African Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Saiosh), and Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB).

EVENTS

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many national and international events within the occupational health space, including occupational hygiene, will not occur as scheduled this year. Please confirm dates with the relevant entities. Concerning SAIOH 2020 events, please see the alerts below:

• SAIOH Conference

As per the communication issued on 8 May 2020, SAIOH council has cancelled the 2020 SAIOH National Scientific Conference which was to be hosted by the Western Cape branch in November 2020. The 2021 conference will now take place from 26 to 29 October 2021 in Cape Town; details will be communicated shortly. The decision to postpone was not taken lightly. Factors that were considered included uncertainties associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown phases, state of the South African economy, economic viability, speaker availability and the need for an annual general meeting (AGM) in 2020.

• SAIOH workshops, branch meetings, etc.

In line with measures instituted against the spread of the novel coronavirus responsible for COVID-19, scheduled SAIOH workshops, branch meetings and discussion group meetings planned for the near future will be deferred. Relevant information will be communicated to members. The branch meeting and workshops contact person is Tracy Mphaphuli who can be contacted at tracym@saioh.co.za.

The IOHA 2020 Scientific Conference that was scheduled for October 2020 in South Korea will now only take place from 21 to 26 August 2021 – still in South Korea. We will notify you about all relevant IOHA 2021 information as we receive it. The IOHA 12th Scientific Conference official website is <http://www.ioha2020.org/>. Information about the SAIOH competitions that relate to the conference (the Hans Thore Smedbold and Nanozen Competitions) will be communicated in due course.

FROM THE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE (PCC)

The PCC conducted their first written assessments for the year on 6 March 2020. After the directive issued on 31 May 2019,

regarding evaluation criteria, 75 candidates wrote the assessments. Disappointingly, several candidates (especially at hygienist level) did not pass the written examination. This outcome gives credence to the reason for the new criteria at the technologist and hygienist levels, which are available on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za).

Following the written assessments, oral assessments were held remotely for the technologist and hygienist candidates who passed the written assessments. The PCC Exco, in view of COVID-19, discussed various options on how to proceed with the oral assessments whilst ensuring that integrity remained our highest priority. Our PCC assessors rose to the occasion and digital oral assessments went ahead country-wide. We are proud to announce that most of the candidates passed their oral assessments. The PCC Exco thanks both the assessors and those assessed for adapting to and ensuring an effortless assessment, in line with COVID-19 control measures.

Table 1 summarises the outcome of the oral and final assessments. All those who passed will be certified and registered at the respective levels.

Congratulations to all our members who passed their assessments! We wish you the best in your professional development journeys and trust that you will continue to seek to learn new skills and improve existing ones. We encourage those who did not pass to persevere and to seek a mentor through SAIOH's mentorship programme, to assist in developing their competencies.

The PCC Exco is currently reviewing options to ensure that PCC assessments scheduled for the remainder of the year will continue as originally planned. Oral assessments will continue to be conducted via digital means (using Zoom meetings or similar platforms). The candidates will be advised shortly about the arrangements for the June written assessments.

Lee Doolan, PCC administrative officer, can be contacted at lee@saioh.co.za with regard to matters mentioned above, as well as other matters related to the PCC and assessments, registration and certification. Information is also available on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za).

REFERENCES

1. Kane P, editor. Women and Occupational Health. Issues and policy paper prepared for the Global Commission on Women's Health. World Health Organization; no date. Available from: https://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/en/oehwomenandoh.pdf (accessed 11 May 2020).
2. International Labour Organization. World Day for Safety and Health at Work, 28 Apr 2015. Global trends on occupational accidents and diseases. Available from: https://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/osh/en/story_content/external_files/fs_st_1-ILO_5_en.pdf (accessed 11 May 2020).

Table 1. Oral and final assessment outcomes, 2020 year to date

Category	No. assessed	No. passed	No. failed	Pass rate (%)
W201 (Assistants)	25	18	7	72.0
Technologists	11*	8	3	72.6
Hygienists	3*	2	1	66.7
Overall	39	28	11	71.8

*Hygienists and technologists include those who were assessed via oral examinations, i.e. those who passed the written assessment and then sat the oral assessment