

SAIOH newsletter

SAIOH PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Hennie van der Westhuizen: SAIOH president
e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

Having read a short biography of Dr Grigory Perelman – a Russian mathematician – I was struck by his humbleness and integrity, despite his genius. In recognition of his cognitive contributions to geometry, Dr Perelman was offered the Fields Medal (the mathematics equivalent of the Nobel Prize). Verbally denouncing money and fame, he declined the award, which included a minted gold coin with his profile embossed on it. Likewise, in 2010, he declined the Clay Fields Prize of \$1 million for his work in proving an almost 100-year-old mathematical theorem. This theorem was conjectured by a French mathematician, Henri Poincaré, in 1904. The reason he gave for declining the prize was that he felt that he worked no harder than any other mathematician did on proving this theorem.

It appears that society places a large premium on success and material gain. With these social values in mind, the question arose as to whether the traits exhibited by Dr Perelman prevailed in the health profession. Although a question like this could be answered by formal research, I believe that these traits do prevail. From my years in the academic environment and the occupational medicine, occupational nursing, and safety disciplines, I recall individuals who selflessly immersed themselves in their proficiencies. Surely this is true of professionals in the other occupational health disciplines? I have witnessed this in our own profession – occupational hygiene – where individuals in the foreground and background passionately slave away to improve their chosen professions. These individuals are either using personal time and declining compensation, or receiving compensation but have dedication, loyalty and integrity way beyond expectations. An example is the many hands through which an article like this passes before reaching publication. Another is the SAIOH National Council members and many individuals, present and past, who give freely of their intellect, time, dedication and integrity. Ultimately, these are the qualities that establish, maintain and promote a profession such as occupational hygiene. If this collegial and serving spirit prevails within and between professions within our cluster, growth and mutual advancement are inevitable, as is promoting our goal of providing healthy and safe workplaces for South Africans. To read more about Dr Perelman, visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Perelman.

INTRODUCTION

The Management Board and the National Council's activities continue to drive the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene's (SAIOH's) goals for 2021. In this newsletter, updates on Council activities, the SAIOH Annual Conference, Professional Certification Committee (PCC) matters, and other aspects of SAIOH, are provided, as is feedback on IOHA matters.

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COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Hennie van der Westhuizen: SAIOH president
e-mail: president@saioh.co.za

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH general manager
e-mail: deon.jvvuuren@gmail.com

Kate Smart: SAIOH chief administrative officer
e-mail: info@saioh.co.za

Nico Potgieter: SAIOH marketing and communication
e-mail: njpotgieter101@gmail.com

1. SAIOH Technical Committee

SAIOH's Technical Committee is up and running. The committee consists of members of all three registration levels and is responsible for researching and drafting all SAIOH position papers and technical papers. Deon Swanepoel is the Council's technical co-ordinator, and he commenced with presentations at the SAIOH Gauteng branches meeting on the workings of the committee and topical occupational hygiene issues, as a soundboard for several technical and position papers.

Make your mark

The SAIOH Council invites topics and inputs to the Technical Committee, from members. If you have any suggestions or contributions in this regard, please e-mail them to our president at president@saioh.co.za or to the chief administrative officer at info@saioh.co.za.

2. SAIOH Annual Conference

The 2021 SAIOH Annual Conference will once again be held virtually from 18 October to 5 November 2021. It will comprise six three-hour webinars over a three-week period (two sessions per week). The conference will be hosted on the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) Zoom platform. The programme and first notification have been issued to members. Professional development courses (PDCs) will also be presented in webinars. Two PDCs will run concurrently in the morning, followed by two in the afternoon. There will be a fee for registration for each webinar (R250 excl. VAT for SAIOH members, and R350 excl. VAT for non-SAIOH members); space will be available for sponsors. Recordings will be available at the end of the conference (R350 excl. VAT).

An appetiser of what is to come

- Theme: *Navigating Occupational Hygiene in unchartered waters*
- Keynote addresses: 6
- Presentations: 23
- PDC sessions: 4 (PCC-identified competency training, globally harmonised system (GHS), ventilation, and implementation of the Health and Safety Guidance (HSG) 248 for Asbestos)
- International speakers: 12 (USA, UK, and Belgium)
- Local speakers: 23

The SAIOH annual general meeting will take place on the afternoon of 5 November, coinciding with the closure of the 2021 conference.

Calling all sponsors

- Sponsors/exhibitors: names and contact details will be advertised during each sponsored webinar, followed by a Mailchimp to every participant after each webinar. Sponsors can send advertising material, brochures, etc. directly to SAIOH. Information will be loaded onto the SAIOH website with a hyperlink to the sponsor's website, and will be sent to conference participants, on a separate Mailchimp, together with the presentations and recordings of the webinar.
- Sponsorship: R350 excl. VAT per webinar.
- For more information and assistance, contact Kate Smart at info@saioh.co.za.

3. Continuous education

SAIOH recently hosted two successful training webinars.

- 29 July 2021: Globally harmonised system (GHS) and how this guides the occupational hygiene practitioner's (OHP's) scope of occupational hygiene services
- 25 August 2021: Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents and guidance on how to comply with the Regulations

The KwaZulu-Natal branch and Harold Gaze of Occutech started negotiations with Adrian Sims (UK) to host a paid local extraction ventilation (LEV) training course early in 2022. More information on this will follow.

Make your mark... again

The SAIOH Council invites topics for webinars, as well as feedback on previous webinars, from its members. If you have any suggestions or contributions in this regard, please e-mail them to our president at president@saioh.co.za or to the chief administrative officer at info@saioh.co.za.

4. Ethics

SAIOH is entering into an agreement with a well-known legal non-governmental organisation (NGO) to represent SAIOH when required. Their first task will be to review the SAIOH Ethics Policy and Procedure, thus empowering the Ethics Committee under Oscar Rikhotso.

From January 2022, all SAIOH certified members will need to provide proof of ethics training. There will be a two-year phase-in period. SAIOH will facilitate an online test and, on qualifying, members will receive a certificate of recognition, valid for three years. During our upcoming conference, Terry McDonald from the British Occupational Hygiene Society

(BOHS) – a world-renowned expert in this field – will facilitate a session on ethics.

5. Administrative and finance matters

SAIOH's financial position is still sound, thanks to the strict management of expenditure and support from members (e.g. attending paid webinars). We thank everyone who played their part in this.

SAIOH engaged website administrators to overhaul our website, while still allowing integration with our Member Management System (MySAIOH). A guidance document has been developed by our administrative team and is undergoing review by Council. Watch this space!

BRANCH ACTIVITIES

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH general manager
e-mail: deon.jvvuuren@gmail.com

Moses Mokone: SAIOH branches co-ordinator
e-mail: moses.mokone@nioh.ac.za

Nico Potgieter: SAIOH marketing and communication
e-mail: njpotgieter101@gmail.com

Due to COVID-19, all branch meetings and workshops are currently online. **Virtual meetings and workshops present opportunities for SAIOH members to attend and participate in any branch meeting, regardless of their branch affiliation.** We urge all our members to support their branches and to participate in branch activities. Members can submit topics for discussion to the various branch chairpersons for consideration in future webinars, meetings and/or workshops.

The Gauteng North and South branches hosted their combined branch meeting on 10 September 2021. The Western Cape's branch meeting took place on 17 September 2021. The Northwest and KwaZulu-Natal branches hosted their meetings in August 2021.

During the recent Gauteng branch meeting, Maryke van der Walt (PCC assistant chief examiner) gave an informative and comprehensive presentation regarding the PCC certification process. Deon Swanepoel, the Council's technical co-ordinator, gave a presentation on the technical team set-up and objectives, and another on welding fume compliance. Jaco Pieterse gave a presentation on hazardous chemical agents (HCAs) air sampling planning. Approximately 125 members attended this meeting.

The two Gauteng branches commenced the groundwork to constitute the organising committee to plan their hosting of the 2022 SAIOH Annual Conference. This will be a hybrid conference, i.e. both face-to-face and via live streaming. The theme and venue will be announced in due course.

We need you!

COVID-19 took its toll, and we have several near-stagnant branches. Members who would like to assist with or contribute ideas about reviving some of the SAIOH branches are urged to contact Moses Mokone (branches co-ordinator) or Nico Potgieter (marketing and communication) at info@saioh.co.za.

Table 1. SAIOH PCC certification assessment results for 2021 YTD (as at August 2021)

Certification category	Written assessments (Mar–Jun 2021)				Oral assessments (Mar–Aug 2021)			
	Assessed	Passed	Failed	Pass rate	Assessed	Passed	Failed	Pass rate
	n	n	n	%	n	n	n	%
OH assistant	37	30	7	81.1	37	30	7	81.1
W201 – assistant	36	31	5	86.1	36	31	5	86.1
OH technologist	36	19	17	52.8	32	18	14	56.3
Occupational hygienist	25	12	13	48.0	17	8	9	47.1
Total	134	92	42	68.7	122	87	35	71.3

FROM THE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE (PCC)

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH chief examiner

e-mail: deon.jvvuuren@gmail.com

Karen du Preez: PCC chairperson

e-mail: KarenD@nioh.ac.za

Lee Doolan: SAIOH PCC administrator

e-mail: lee@saioh.co.za

Certification assessments

A summary of results of written and oral examinations year-to-date (YTD) is provided in Table 1. The YTD pass rates for registered occupational hygiene technologist (ROHT) and registered occupational hygienist (ROH) levels remain a matter of concern. SAIOH urges prospective ROHTs and ROHs to make use of the SAIOH mentorship programme – Lee Doolan can be contacted at lee@saioh.co.za in this regard.

On Friday 17 September 2021, the most recent electronic written assessments took place with more than 75 candidates across the different registration levels.

The PCC's examination committee is working with the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygiene (AIOH), and Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) to develop and share a single multiple-choice question (MCQ) database for the Occupational Hygiene Training Association's (OHTA's) Foundation Module (W201). Watch this space!

With effect from September 2021, the ROHA written assessment paper will comprise only MCQs. The PCC technical team is hard at work, updating the PCC oral assessment format to align with the requirements in the occupational hygiene self-assessment tool. This is to ensure that the ever-growing field of occupational hygiene is fully addressed in the oral assessments, also addressing the concerns raised about subjectivity and personal bias.

Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum

The SAIOH Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum (OHSF) was introduced to co-ordinate the recognition of occupational hygiene training materials, training providers and institutions, and the development and management of assessment and examination systems, where required. Another function of the OHSF is to evaluate applications from tertiary institutions for recognition of their occupational hygiene-related qualifications. The OHSF is progressing well with these accreditations. A recently-developed matrix was used to evaluate the occupational hygiene qualifications offered (in line with the 50% occupational hygiene content requirement).

Congratulations to North-West University and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), whose four-year B-degrees were recognised by the OHSF as meeting the qualification criteria at the ROH level. The University of the Witwatersrand's programmes are currently being evaluated. All tertiary institutions that offer occupational hygiene qualifications are encouraged to contact the PCC administrator, lee@saioh.co.za, for information regarding application for recognition.

The details of recognised training providers and recognised qualifications will be posted on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za). This will enable students and certification candidates to select suitable qualifications that meet SAIOH and international requirements.

INTERNATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATION (IOHA) FEEDBACK

Deon Jansen van Vuuren: SAIOH general manager

e-mail: deon.jvvuuren@gmail.com

The IOHA published its latest *Global Exposure Manager* newsletter, which has been e-mailed to all our members and is available on the SAIOH website: www.saioh.co.za.

SAIOH received a request from IOHA to host a face-to-face IOHA meeting in 2022. The SAIOH Management Board and the chairs of the Western Cape and the Gauteng branches agreed to submit a proposal to host their 2023 autumn meeting(s) in October 2023 to coincide with the SAIOH 2023 Annual Scientific Conference. The IOHA board accepted this proposal, and their meetings will coincide with the SAIOH 2023 conference, in the last week in October, in Cape Town. This is cost effective as SAIOH will not have to pay travel and accommodation expenses for the IOHA members. Costs will be covered by IOHA and the IOHA associations, and we will have conference speakers at no cost to SAIOH. Thank you, Wessel and the Western Cape Organising Committee, for again offering to co-ordinate this invaluable conference.

Have your say

The SAIOH Council invites and welcomes your feedback on how this communication is helping you as an SAIOH member, and how we can improve it. If you have any suggestions, inputs, or contributions, please e-mail them to our president at president@saioh.co.za, or to the chief administrative officer at info@saioh.co.za.