

Deon Jansen van Vuuren wins IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award 2024

TRIBUTE FROM SAIOH

Naadiya Mundy: SAIOH President

The Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) is proud to announce that Deon Jansen van Vuuren, General Manager of SAIOH, has been awarded the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award 2024 by the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA).

Over the past few decades, occupational hygiene professionals and regulatory bodies around the globe have dedicated significant resources to improving methods and assisting with knowledge related to assessing workplace exposures. Within this realm, the IOHA bestows its most prestigious honour: the Lifetime Achievement Award. This accolade serves as a beacon, highlighting significant contributions of occupational hygiene (OH) professionals who have dedicated their careers to advancing OH practices and improving the lives of workers worldwide.

This award not only offers global acknowledgment, but also symbolises a tribute to dedication, expertise, and impactful service. To merit consideration for this honour, an individual must have devoted at least 15 years to the field of occupational hygiene, demonstrating unwavering commitment and ongoing involvement. Moreover, the recipient's endeavours must have significantly advanced the discipline, whether through pioneering research, the establishment of comprehensive hygiene programmes, advocacy for service quality enhancement, or contributions to the standardisation of best practices.

One hallmark of the award is its alignment with the objectives outlined in the Association's Memorandum and Articles. Each recipient's accomplishments serve as a testament to these guiding principles, demonstrating a commitment to excellence, collaboration, and the advancement of occupational hygiene on a global scale. By honouring individuals whose work exemplifies these ideals, the IOHA underscores the importance of collective action in pursuit of safer and healthier workplaces.

Keeping these requirements in mind, we at SAIOH are proud to acknowledge that Deon Jansen van Vuuren (a proud South African) has been awarded this prestigious title. Deon has devoted nearly 43 years to the field of occupational hygiene. He is widely recognised within the international occupational hygiene community for his advocacy for worker health protection, especially in his early years, when he served in the military and developed various occupational health and safety (OHS) training courses and workshops throughout South Africa.

Deon has occupied high-level managerial roles with worldwide responsibilities in several multinational companies, prominently in the National Occupational Safety Association (NOSA), a local government council (Roodepoort City Council), Columbus Stainless, Gencor, Anglo American, and Gijima. Throughout his tenure at SAIOH, he led the professional advancement of his team, with approximately 45% registered as occupational hygiene assistants, 25% as occupational hygiene technologists, and an impressive 30% as registered occupational hygienists. When Deon retired at the age of 65, the occupational hygiene Business Unit (BU) boasted 85 individuals, making it the largest of its kind in South Africa, with numerous others passing through its ranks.

Letter from the IOHA

The IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award honours individuals who have made significant contributions to the promotion and development of occupational hygiene practices that improve the health and welfare of working men and women. Special consideration is given to candidates from regions without an established tradition in occupational hygiene.

This year, four strong applications were received by the Lifetime Achievement Award Committee, which is comprised of the last three IOHA Presidents. After reviewing each of the candidate submission materials and documenting the results on the IOHA Nomination Evaluation Scoring Tool, the Committee determined that one candidate in particular excelled at meeting and surpassing the ranking criterion.



Deon Jansen van Vuuren
Photograph: courtesy of SAIOH

Deon Jansen van Vuuren was selected as the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient for 2024. His rousing nomination from the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) can perhaps be best described by a quote from their letter of recommendation:

"It is truly difficult to overemphasize Deon's worthiness for a "lifetime" achievement award in Occupational Hygiene. His consistent and enduring contributions have left an indelible mark on the field, impacting the lives and well-being of countless individuals. Deon's legacy is one of selflessness, expertise, and a profound passion for the improvement of occupational hygiene standards."

In addition to a long career in occupational safety, risk management, and occupational hygiene, Deon has been on the SAIOH Executive Committee or Board for more than 21 years. Active in the SAIOH Professional Certification Committee (PCC), Deon was an early participant in the IOHA National Accreditation Recognition Committee (NARC) and was the NARC Chair for four years from 2011 to 2015. In addition to teaching numerous seminars and courses on occupational hygiene, Deon has been an active member of the American Industrial Hygiene Association and the British Occupational Hygiene Society.

Congratulations to Deon for his latest award and "Thank You" for your lifelong leadership and commitment to worker safety and our profession!

Lifetime Achievement Award Committee:
Thomas P Fuller, Maharshi Mehta, and Norhazlina Mydin



Samantha Connell (IOHA President) handing the IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award to Deon Jansen van Vuuren at the IOHA 2024 Conference in Dublin, Ireland

Photograph: courtesy of SAIOH

"Deon has been an integral part of SAIOH, spanning many years, and his leadership stands out by the nature of his commitment and the integrity of his character."

The period under Deon's leadership has left a lasting, positive influence on occupational hygiene in South Africa. He became proactive in the professional occupational hygiene field and initially joined the Occupational Hygiene Association of South Africa (OHASA) in 1980, where he was voted onto their Council. He also joined the Institute of Occupational Hygienists of Southern Africa (IOHSA) in 1993, where he soon joined the Examination Board. SAIOH was formed in 2001 when OHASA and IOHSA joined ranks. On the international front, Deon became the IOHA National Accreditation Recognition Committee (NARC) Chair, a position he held for four years. Although retired, Deon participates as the General Manager for SAIOH, where he contributes significantly to the promotion of occupational hygiene.

Thus, this award is not just a certificate; it acknowledges the profound impact of its recipients on the promotion and development of occupational hygiene. These individuals are not merely practitioners; they are trailblazers who have left an indelible mark on their profession and the broader community. Moreover, it fosters a sense of community and camaraderie among practitioners, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and shared purpose in achieving common goals. The IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award stands as a symbol of excellence in occupational hygiene – a tribute to those whose contributions have elevated the practice and advanced the wellbeing of workers worldwide.

"Earlier this evening, I was marking SAIOH exam papers and whilst looking at the quality of the papers it occurred to me that SAIOH has come a long way since the OHASA days. We as an Institute are operating within the international arena and our members, including yourself, have featured in leadership roles in IOHA. Since the dawn of occupational hygiene as we know it in South Africa, you played a key role in the navigation of our Institute to where we are today. Congratulations – your award is a token of local and international recognition of your lifelong dedication in establishing and honing our profession."

Hennie van der Westhuizen, Past SAIOH President

The prestigious award was conferred on Deon during the 13th IOHA International Scientific Conference (IOHA 2024), in association with the Occupational Hygiene Society of Ireland (OHSI) and the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS).

IOHA COLLABORATION AWARD WINNER

The Collaboration Award Chair and Jury

The 2024 IOHA Collaboration Award is a recognition bestowed upon groups and projects that exemplify exceptional collaboration within the occupational hygiene community. There were four submissions of exceptional quality and, after thorough evaluation by the jury, the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) was chosen for its outstanding achievement.

The submitted projects were scored on the following criteria:

- Size of the population directly involved and reached/impacted by the project
- Originality of the topic and methodologies used within the project to enhance collaboration
- Level of inspiration for other occupational hygienists worldwide
- Direct impact on working conditions in the country where the project was carried out
- Level of collaboration between the parties
- Level of continuity for the future; can the project be promoted as a good practice for cooperation; did the cooperation lead to sustainable improvement(s)?
- How well is the project in line with IOHA's mission to "Enhance the international network of occupational hygiene organisations that promote, develop, and improve occupational hygiene worldwide, providing a safe and healthy working environment for all"?
- Quality of three-minute video which tells the story of the collaboration

The jury was chaired by Samantha Connell (IOHA President, and Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene, SSOH) and three IOHA Board members: Mariella Carrieri (Italian Industrial Hygiene Association, AIDII), Ellen Jensen (Norsk Yrkeshygienisk Forening, NYF), and Kerry Cheung (New Zealand Occupational Hygiene Society, NZOHS). The Chair abstained from voting.

The OHTA impressed the jury with the remarkable impact of its project, which scored high across all evaluation criteria. The project, which focused on improving worker health protection in the developing and developed world, through training in the basic rubrics of occupational hygiene, demonstrated a profound commitment to enhancing collaboration and promoting occupational hygiene on a global scale.

From the size of the population directly impacted to the level of inspiration it offers to occupational hygienists, worldwide, OHTA's project excelled in every aspect. Moreover, the Association's long-term collaboration efforts and dedication to sustainable improvement truly align with the mission of the IOHA to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all. [👉](#)