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“Adherence to building regulations not only saves lives but also contributes to economic development,” says the dtic deputy minister Gina

Delivering the keynote address at the 12th Annual Building Control Officer's Convention in Durban, Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition Nomalungelo Gina made an impassioned plea to local authorities and stakeholders alike to ensure that adherence to building regulations is made a top priority to save lives and stimulate the South African economy.

“The Built Industry suffered massive loss over the past years due to many challenges such as the effect of climate change, delays in completion of construction projects owing to limitations imposed by the global Covid-19 pandemic as well as the new phenomenon called construction mafias that demand percentage of work before construction projects can commence and it is in forums like this where new ideas should emerge and ensure that it recovers in order to stimulate economic growth and create jobs.” Adherence to these building regulations should therefore be made a top priority to maintain structural credibility and avoid past mistakes,” added Deputy Minister Gina.

Echoing the Deputy Minister's sentiments, Executive Mayor of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality Cllr Mxolisi Kaunda said that the importance of adhering to regulations cannot be over emphasised in times where the effects of climate change are there for all to see. “We have seen building collapsing in our city, people losing lives due to non-adherence to regulations and I therefore urge all stakeholders to work together to ensure that we save lives and infrastructure,” concluded Kaunda.

Held under the theme - ***Building Resilience in Changing Times***, the Convention was

attended by BCOs from various municipalities and addressed by speakers from different organisations including the South African Council for Architectural Profession (SACAP), World Bank, eThekweni Municipality and the University of Cape Town, among others. academics from various universities, experts within the Built Industry as well as Building Control Officers from various municipalities across the country.

Inadequacies and the amount of time it has taken national government to review the Act are some of the issues raised at the Convention. While addressing the convention, the NRCS ACEO Duncan Mutengwe said that the NRCS continuously engages with the relevant stakeholders to highlight changes published in **SANS (South African National Standard 10400)** as the short-term mechanism to address some of the issues identified in the application of the National Building Regulations at the Local Authority level.

On matters around the reviewing of the Act, Mr Mutengwe indicated that NRCS continues to interact with **the dtic** regarding the re-writing of the Act however the interactions have focused in the main, to ensure full compliance with the constitutional framework and post-1996 transversal national legislation.

“Let me also emphasise the importance of all Municipalities to adhere to the Act to ensure uniform implementation. The perception that the NBR&BSA is a hindrance to development will lead to the demise of more building sector players, as well as the loss of jobs, skills and expertise”, Mutengwe retorted.

The 12th annual Building Control Officer's convention was Jointly organised by the NRCS and EThekweni Municipality, providing platform to various stakeholders within the Built Industry to discuss current challenges and propose solutions for the future.

Some of the solutions proposed at the convention among others include, investing in modern technologies in buildings, cutting red tape with regard to issuing of building plans and permits, finding new innovative ways to adapt to the ever changing environment to mention just a few.

Below are the pictorials:



NRCS takes action: confiscating second-hand or refurbished domestic geysers to ensure the safety of citizens

In a bid to safeguard the well-being of South African households, the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) has intensified its efforts to confiscating second-hand/refurbished domestic geysers to ensure safety standards. This proactive approach stems from the NRCS's commitment to ensuring that consumers have access to products that meet stringent safety standards.

The Safety Imperative

South Africa, like many countries, has seen a growing market for second-hand and refurbished appliances, including domestic geysers. While the allure of cost savings attracts many consumers, the NRCS emphasizes that compromising on safety standards can have severe consequences.

Domestic geysers play a crucial role in providing hot water for various household activities, and any malfunction or substandard product can pose serious risks, including electrical faults, leaks, and even potential fire hazards. Following numerous tip-offs from consumer and industry alerts regarding the unlawful sale and advertisement of acid washed refurbished domestic geysers, the regulator has conducted several raids in warehouses and confiscated hundreds of refurbished geysers offered for sale to unsuspecting consumers.

Several inspections conducted by the NRCS across the country revealed that refurbished geysers do not comply to VC 9006, Compulsory Specification for hot water storage tanks and do not have a Letter of Authority (LOA) to be traded in the South African market and can cause severe damages to households and human life. The regulator's move to confiscate second-hand and refurbished domestic geysers aligns with its broader goal of safeguarding public health and safety. By tracking down non-compliant products, the NRCS aims to create a market environment where consumers can have confidence in the safety and reliability of their purchases.

To enforce compliance, in 2023 NRCS removed hundreds of second-hand geysers in Kwa-Zulu Natal and in Gauteng.

Selling substandard, refurbished geysers exposes consumers to hazards such as:

- Explosion
- Leaking water from shell
- Acid exposure as some are acid washed
- Compromised quality of stored water due to acid used
- Electric shock
- Tempered insulation causing consumers to pay high electricity bills

NRCS has thus far issued directives preventing the sale and advertisement of these non-compliant geysers and further steps to confiscate and destroy such geysers.

Impact on Consumers and Industry Players

While some consumers may initially be disappointed by the confiscation of second-hand or refurbished geysers, the NRCS's actions ultimately benefit them in the long run. By eliminating substandard products from the market, the regulator contributes to the overall safety of households and reduces the likelihood of accidents caused by faulty appliances.

The NRCS's measures serve as a reminder of the importance of adhering to compulsory specifications and maintaining high-quality standards. The Regulator further warns all industry players, contractors, insurance companies, consumers and other interested parties not to manufacture, sell, buy or use non-compliant second hand or refurbished domestic geysers.

Manufacturers, importers, and retailers are encouraged to work closely with the NRCS to ensure that their products meet the necessary safety requirements, fostering a culture of responsibility and accountability within the industry.

Looking Ahead: Ensuring a Safe and Reliable Market

The Regulator follows a rigorous administrative and technical process in evaluating LOA applications before issuing certificates. The LOA is a certificate issued to a manufacturer or importer in terms of section 5(2) (f) of the NRCS Act once compliance is determined therefore permitting the sale of a product.

Enforcing VC 9006 is in line with the NRCS's mandate of protecting human health, safety, the environment and ensuring fair trade as well as rooting out non-compliant products in the market.

In conclusion, the NRCS's decisive action underscores the importance of prioritizing safety over cost considerations when it comes to domestic appliances. Through their ongoing efforts, the NRCS aims to pave the way for a market where consumers can confidently invest in products that prioritize their safety and well-being.

Below are the pictorials:



Illegally treated timber was seized in the **Eastern Cape Province**

The National Regulator for Compulsory specifications (NRCS) inspectors seized illegal treated timber from distributors in Mthatha, Eastern Cape Province worth almost one million rand and halted all treatment due to non-compliance with the regulation. The NRCS was responding to the growing number of illegal treated timber found in the South African market as part of its mandate to protect consumers and the environment.

The organisation conducted targeted inspections and found a number of illegal treaters in Mthatha, Butterworth, Idutywa, Engcobo and surrounding areas. The treaters were unable to prove compliance to the requirements of the Compulsory Specification (VC 9092) for Treated Timber and were producing sub-standard products. They failed to produce proof of compliance and the products also failed to comply with the marking requirements.

Mr Lebuhan Longo, the NRCS's Chemicals, Mechanical and Material (CMM) inspector, said it is believed that in the Eastern Cape there is more illegally treated than legally treated poles in hardware stores and builder's depots.

"Illegal treatment of timber holds an environmental threat in that the oil used to treat the timber seeps through the soil thereby contaminating the environment. While these non-compliant products are removed from the market, but it is true that shoppers cannot tell if wood they are buying comes from illegal sources or not," said Longo.

He was speaking during the surprise inspection raiders in the Eastern Cape Province from 14 - 18 August 2023.

Illegally treated poles are typically sold by small hardware stores in rural areas and used to build shacks, fencing and kraals. Consumers, mainly from rural communities, pay considerably more for these poles than for untreated ones, assuming that they are properly treated and will endure. However, they are deceived – and soon disappointed.

He said, the growing number of illegal treated timber is a consumer demand-led market, just like anything else, so consumer response is utterly critical. Most of times we hear suppliers or hardware owners saying, "but our customers will not be able to pay more", while we know that they have been successfully adjusting people's shopping habits when it suits them.

"With the current economic situation, consumers opt for cheaper products as a substitute of bricks and legally treated timber which are deemed as expensive. Hence, lot of certified timber is not even sold as certified because the demand is low. We as consumers really need to recognise how vital our role is", He added.

As part of its findings, the NRCS Inspectors discovered that the timber is cleaned and then dipped in used oil or painted to mimic a treated timber.



The following requirement must be adhered to in order to render the products safe and compliant:

- i. A statement that the preservative treatment of timber complies with the requirements of the relevant product specification standard as set out in paragraph 12.4 of the latest edition of SANS 10005;
- ii. The type/s of preservative/s that is/are used in the preservative treatment of timber as set out paragraph 4 of the latest edition of SANS 10005 or relevant product specification standard;

iii. The hazard class/es for which timber is treated as set out in paragraph 5 of the latest edition of SANS 10005;

- iv. The preservative treatment process/es that is/are used in accordance with paragraph 8.2 of the latest edition of SANS 10005.

The NRCS would like to alert consumers on the rise of illegal treated timber and to advise against purchasing the product which is of a sub-standard quality. The NRCS will continue to monitor compliance of products and if any product is found noncompliant, the organisation will remove it from the market.

Below are the pictorials:



Compliance and enforcement are in full swing in Gqeberha as the **NRCS** shuts down businesses

During an unannounced raid recently, the National Regulator for Compulsory specifications (NRCS), together with various stakeholders, such as the Department of Health in Port Elizabeth, South African Border Police Sector (SAPS) and the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, conducted a surprise inspection and close down the bakery in Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape.

The Joint Inspection came about after the NRCS received numerous tip-offs from consumers and community members alerting them of suspected trading of sub-standard products by The Fresh Bakery Company in Port Elizabeth, thus prompting the Regulator to put up a team of inspectors to ascertain compliance of products in this company.

Subsequent to the complaint from consumers, NRCS conducted an inspection which discovered that the bakery owner is contravening the hygiene issues, short mass issues, incorrect labelling issues, unapproved measuring instruments used and safety issues. Moreover, registration as company with SARS, stealing of electricity and defrauding the community.

Furthermore, the NRCS established that the facility was in violation of various Health & Safety codes, as well as not registered with the local municipality as a business operating under the Act for manufacturing, selling and distributing food products as required.

It was discovered that all baking machines / Ovens are placed under detention and cannot be used due to it being used as an instrument to defraud consumers. Also, bread packaging in violation of SANS 289:2022.

The property owners Ms Tarren Sue-Ellen Bezuidenhout and Mr Mufti Ebrahim Kahlil (Husband and wife) also contravened Municipality Codes by engaging in the following activity: electricity meter illegal connection.

Due to the business selling and distributing short mass bread to the consumers in an already poverty riddled community as well failing all the minimum Health codes as set by local municipality, NRCS rectified the contraventions by closing down the bakery business until such time, it complies with all the NRCS Legal Metrology, and Department of Health requirements.

Doors were locked and sealed by the SAPS until all parties accepts all corrective measures that will be implemented by the owners of the bakery.

Below are the pictorials:



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