Workshop on the ramifications of the new proposed South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) to Authorised Inspection Authorities (AIAs) in South Africa: Feedback report

The Southern African Institute for Occupational Health (SAIOH) arranged a workshop on 21 and 22 January 2013 to facilitate a discussion amongst Department of Labour (DoL) affiliated and future Authorised Inspection Authorities (AIAs) in South Africa. The workshop was hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand School of Public Health. The aim was to discuss the new proposed DoL requirements that all AIAs in South Africa must be South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) accredited in order to conduct and report on any occupational hygiene measurements, by January 2014. An additional aim was to clarify the documentation associated with these requirements, i.e. SANAS TR84-01, the DoL AIA information brochure, and the SANS ISO/IEC 17020 guideline. These documents describe the AIA application and accreditation processes, as well as the role of SAIOH in the AIA accreditation process.

Approximately 50 potential AIAs attended the workshop in search of knowledge, information and guidance on the process to become an SANAS-approved AIA by 2014. Several experts were invited to present the details of the SANAS accreditation and audit processes:

- Mr Phillip Van Dyk from Poltech Pty Ltd welcomed all AIAs and speakers and described the scope and purpose of the workshop. He presented the details and implications of the TR84-01 and DoL AIA information documents;
- Mr Martin Kellermann from MMK Sollutions cc conceptualised the role of SAIOH in the SANAS accreditation process;
- Mr Brian Watson from MMK Sollutions cc discussed the impact that the SANAS accreditation system will have on electronic business management systems; and
- Mr Jimmy Van Der Merwe, MMK Sollutions cc, discussed the advantages and limitations of the generic International Standards Organisation (ISO) 17020 management system document.

The speakers had experience and knowledge about the ramifications and implications of the SANAS accreditation and application processes on potential AIAs.

Several concerns were raised by many of the AIAs about these processes, particularly with regard to the financial implications to their businesses as, the financial impact on small to medium sized AIAs is potentially severe.

The workshop concluded with the development of a general action plan by all attending AIAs, and the technical committee. The aim of the action plan is to assist potential AIAs with the processes that are required for them to become accredited AIAs by 2014. All the documents discussed by the technical committee at the workshop will be uploaded on the SAIOH website (www.saioh.co.za) by 31 March 2013.

In summary, the workshop was well attended and valuable information was shared between colleagues. The new proposed SANAS accreditation system by DoL poses some challenges, both financially and operationally, to future AIAs, but this system is needed to ensure quality work in the occupational hygiene profession.

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