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PRESS RELEASE

IMPRESSIVE REDUCTION IN TIMBER TREATMENT PLANT “SHE” RISKS

There has been a further welcome and impressive general improvement in Safety, Health and Environmental (SHE) standards at South African timber treatment plants.

The improvements are reflected in the latest of the unique SHE Risk Assessment programme for the clients of leading timber treatment chemical manufacturers, Arch Wood Protection.

The programme arose from the need to raise the bar in terms of the safe and responsible operation of timber treatment plants and the latest results reflect the outcomes of the third successive year since its implementation.

“Improvements in SHE compliance at timber treatment plants have become a priority in terms of the South African National Standard (SANS) 10005 - ‘The Preservative Treatment of Timber’ in South Africa” says Denise Conradie, Compliance Manager of Arch, who heads up the Arch assessment programme.

“The legislation recommends that timber treatment plants in South Africa should comply with the provisions laid down in SANS 10255 – ‘Health, Safety and Environmental Guidelines for the Construction and Operation of Timber Treatment Plants’.

“Indeed, safety and health and environmental risk identification and compliance with national SHE specifications is crucial for the continued existence of all

treatment plants in today's intensified, rapidly changing SHE environment" adds Conradie.

The Treatment Plant Risk Assessment programme is a non certified audit, aligned with the relevant occupational health and safety and environmental guidelines as prescribed in SANS 10255 she explains.

A comprehensive list of SHE aspects in and around a given plant is carried out with the intention of identifying problem areas and recommending appropriate interventions.

Each plant is duly issued with two reports: a summary report that consist of a completed checklist as prescribed by the SANS 10005:2006 specification on the preservative treatment of timber and another report, identifying each specific risk on the basis of High, Significant or Insignificant.

Each plant's report is supported with visual aids to indicate the exact risk and to help the customer to understand the underlying problem with suggestions on how to resolve the risks are provided either during discussions, as part of the report or in follow up telephonic discussions or emails.

Areas of conformity, or non-conformity assessed include:

- Occupational hygiene - the availability of emergency facilities within the bunded area, (a concreted bund will not allow leakage of chemical if a spill occurs inside it) warning signage and identifying ways and means to ensure the diversion of uncontaminated water around the plant area.
- Different aspects of safety at the treatment plant including safety of the workers, safety of the chemical and the plant, plant emergency equipment, accident prevention methods, general safety and first aid aspects.

- Identification of risks pertaining to the vessel itself, the vessel door, electrical control panel, valves, tanks, sampling taps, pipe work, valves, pumps, water supply, the mixing process as well as the compliance of the bunded area.
- The safety of the site involving the identification of possible risks related to the safety of the treatment and chemical storage areas, the drip pads, bogie rail, normal housekeeping in and around the treatment plant area, stacking after treatment, chemical off-loading and treated timber storage areas.

Upon completion of the assessment, discussions are held with the plant operators and plant managers regarding the management and safe disposal of waste and any other contaminated material.

Moreover, post treatment handling of treated timber, the importance of the use and maintenance of personal protective equipment (PPE) forms an integral part of the assessment, report and discussions.

“The positive news is that in terms of the assessments, at the more than eighty plants involved there has been a significant improvement in SHE standards with a steady reduction in risks. This reinforces a pattern which began with the first such assessments undertaken in 2006 following our inputs.

For the 2008 assessment year, improvements occurred in all provinces during the year of assessment. Highlights of the latest results are:

During 2008 data from 66 out of the 72 plants (6 new plants were not part of evaluation) visited were analysed. A total of 2311 risks were identified at these 66 plants. With advice and assistance from Arch Wood Protection an average of 42% improvement in all risks (including high, significant and insignificant) was recorded nationally between 2006 and 2008 compared to the 29% improvement between 2006 and 2007.

The Mpumalanga and Swaziland plants showed a decrease of 54%, Gauteng and Limpopo regions an decrease of 52%, the Cape a decrease of 38% and KZN a 30% decrease in health and safety and environmental risks (See Figure 2).

Adds Conradie: “The reduction in SHE risks is very encouraging, but still shows that there is some work to be done. The SHE Risk Assessment initiative reflects the commitment of the management and employees at the treatment plants, supplied by Arch Wood Protection, towards decreasing the health and safety risks for their people, as well as ensuring greater responsible care towards the environment around treatment plants.

“Also, by identifying the Safety, Health and Environmental (SHE) risks, Arch assists its clients by providing advice.

“That, in turn, assists customers in striving towards a safe and risk-free working environment which is clearly good business practice whilst simultaneously helping to protect the environment, so that a broad beneficial effect on several fronts is derived from the whole process.”

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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