

WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK
(28 APRIL 2018)

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is intended to focus international attention on promoting and creating a safety and health culture at work, and to help reduce the number of occupational-related fatalities, injuries, and diseases.

It is significant that the 28 April is the day after the day on which South Africa celebrates the anniversary of the first democratic elections. Significant, because there is no real freedom, including security and human rights, till the threat from injury and disease is removed from workplaces.

South African construction continues to receive unfavourable media coverage due to trench collapses, building, support work, and slab collapses, fatalities, injuries, disease, and damage to public property. Furthermore, the focus is still on safety; health and ergonomic issues receiving limited or no attention. Although there is a need for a paradigm shift from compliance to better practice, including the addressing of primary health issues, there is still the elementary need for basic compliance.

Based upon extensive research, publishing, course, seminar, and workshop development, conference organising, lecturing, community service, and professional registration and association, the author advocates the following to realise substantial change in South African construction health and safety (H&S):

- 'Respect for people' is a prerequisite for the value below;
- The value 'People are our most important resource' (value is a constituent of H&S culture);
- Optimum H&S culture, among other, a vision of fatality, injury, and disease-free projects, and a goal of zero deviations as opposed to incidents or accidents;
- Optimum status for H&S – greater than, or at least equal to that afforded cost, quality, and time;
- Focus on H&S regardless of circumstances – H&S is a value, not a priority;
- Elimination / Mitigation of 'excusitis' (mind deadening thought disease manifested in excuses), and 'shifting the blame', and
- Consciousness and mindfulness – constant cognising with respect to the surrounding environment, attention relative to H&S, and mindful with respect to the implications of actions or omissions.
- Leadership in terms of H&S;
- Management commitment, participation, and involvement in H&S;
- Integration of design and construction in general, but especially in terms of H&S;
- Implementation of documented quality management systems in design and construction;
- Implementation of documented H&S management systems in design and construction;
- Multi-stakeholder contributions to H&S – architects, clients, construction project managers, contractors, engineers, interior designers, landscape architects, material manufacturers and suppliers, quantity surveyors, and unions;
- Multi-stakeholder project environment, H&S, quality, and risk management plans;
- Supply chain management within the context of environment, H&S, quality, and risk management;
- Comprehensive H&S education and training of all stakeholders (designers included);
- Competence accompanied by, among other, appropriate values and an exacting philosophy – the core competencies (self-image, traits, and motives) differentiate between superior and average performance i.e. at best, the surface competencies (knowledge and skills) can only realise average performance, and
- Sound construction management (*bona fide* as opposed to pseudo) i.e. management of construction by construction managers.

Professor John Smallwood
Professor of Construction Management