



# OHS practices in the Western Cape improving

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**F**oreign investment is driving improvements in occupational health and safety (OHS) practices in the Western Cape, health and safety training provider Action Training Academy (ATA) director for coastal branches **Andre Lotz** tells *Engineering News*.

He says that there has been a marked improvement in OHS practices in the province over the past two years and believes that this is owing to foreign investors demanding that local companies adhere to strict international safety standards before investing in those companies.

There has also been an increase in awareness by the employees of their rights in terms of safety in the workplace.

Further, new legislation states that a com-

pany's CEO or management may be fined or jailed for neglecting his or her responsibilities in terms of employee safety. This has prompted high-level management to also take action to prevent occupational injuries.

Former Minister of Labour **Membathisi Mdladlana** said in the 2010 Budget vote speech that, at face value, the levels of noncompliance in the country seemed alarming, yet, the reality drawn from inspection data shows that 80% of the workplaces visited complied with the OHS legislation.

He added that, based on statistics from the Compensation Fund and private assurance company Federated Employers Mutual Assurance, high-risk sectors included the iron and steel, construction and chemicals industries.

Equally important, incidents in the high-risk areas were reduced by 63%, compared with the previous year.

The level of safety awareness varies from industry to industry; however, Lotz has noticed that few employees are given proper training on health and safety in the workplace.

"While every industry requires a number of trained first aid providers and firefighters, safety in the workplace affects every employee in an organisation. Every employee must understand the importance of health and safety and adhere to safety policies," Lotz says.

Further, the ATA emphasises that all companies need to be legally compliant. Companies often require assistance with training, as management is often so focused on the core business aspects that the provision of health and safety training and awareness is neglected.

"ATA noticed a gap in the market, in 2000, where companies required assistance with OHS and legislatively compliant criteria, which were enforced by all businesses by the DoL," says ATA director of inland branches **Alastair Farish**.

ENGINEERING NEWS COUPON ON PAGE 66 E217972