



South African Qualification and Certification Committee for the Fire Industry

Reg. No.: 99/1937/08 a Section 21 Company

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SAQCC Fire TALK

May 2009 Edition



Two technicians recently received written warnings from the SAQCC at disciplinary hearings for servicing illegal extinguishers.

The SAQCC has issued warnings before, that companies were supplying illegal extinguishers in South Africa that did not adhere to legal requirements. Such units would typically display the SABS mark, but in truth the units were never submitted for approval by the SABS or the unit is still in the process of testing and a final approval permit has not been issued to the manufacturer.



Portable fire extinguishers installed in premises that have to comply with the Act on Building regulations, have to comply with SANS 10400-T and have to be approved in accordance with SANS 1910. Currently the SABS is the authority issuing the permits for SANS 1910. The current permit holders for SANS 1910 are displayed on the SABS' website. The SAQCC urges technicians to check on this website which manufacturers have been issued with a 1910 permit and thus which makes of extinguishers legally carry the SABS approval mark. The SAQCC can also be contacted to assist in this matter. Only extinguishers carrying a legal SABS approval mark can be signed off by a technician once the units fulfil all the other requirements of SANS 1475 Part 1. As is illustrated by the disciplinary steps taken against technicians servicing illegal extinguishers, the onus rests with the technician servicing and signing off the service label of a unit to ensure that is approved.

Evidence has also been forwarded to the SABS regarding such illegal units and the SAQCC is following up what progress has been made by the SABS regarding legal action against such manufacturers.



The representative of the SA Emergency Services at the SAQCC, Mr Marius Atterbury, confirmed at the April SAQCC meeting that he would forward a circular to all Chief fire officers regarding which extinguishers were currently illegal so that they could assist in counteracting this problem.

Technician training and re-assessment driven by SAQCC

The SAQCC called a meeting at the end of April for all the relevant role players to drive the four yearly re-assessment of registered technicians as well as the furthering of uniformity in training and assessments by training centres.



The chairman of the SAQCC training committee, Mr Tom Dreyer, updated the meeting about the requirement of the Department of Labour that all registered competent persons have to be re-assessed every four years. A pass rate of 70-75% would be required. Failure would result in technicians not being able to register for the next period. It is proposed that such technicians do a re-assessment at a training institute. If failing, such a technician's card will be withdrawn and he would have to do a full course again.

Confirmation was given at the meeting that the SETA gave provisional approval of units standards submitted for the technician training by the SAQCC and the FPA. The meeting accepted a proposal that all training institutions would adopt and use these standards so as to promote uniformity.

The importance of a certain level of numerical and literacy skill was also minuted at the April SAQCC meeting for trainee technicians to pass assessments. This would include registered technicians who would have to do the re-assessments and who were registered initially under the grandfather clause.

News flash & notices!

- ❖ An SAQCC committee member, Mr Duncan Boyes, attended the annual ISO meeting in Japan during April 2009. The aim was to clear certain questions regarding test procedures and minimum ratings for extinguishers. This all has a bearing on finalising the revision of SANS 1910, the national standard on portable refillable fire extinguishers. Some of the envisaged changes may have specific consequences on the supply and maintenance of fire extinguishers. The SAQCC will keep technicians informed of the final approval of SANS 1910 and the consequent implications for maintenance.
- ❖ A matter of a forged SAQCC card and SABS certificate has been forwarded to the SAQCC. The committee has decided to lay charges for a fraud case with the SAPS.
- ❖ A small supply of our NEW leaflet is enclosed for distribution to your customers and potential customers. This draws their attention to the legal requirements as well as drawing their attention to the fact that they are liable for prosecution for using a non-registered serviceman.
- ❖ A ticket to the IFSEC South Africa/SECurex Exhibition is enclosed – we will be exhibiting there, so come and visit us in Hall 2 – Stand F29

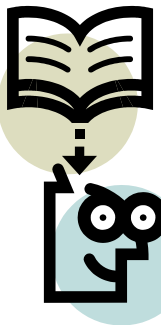
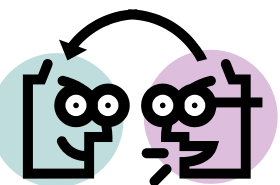
TIPS


Technicians are advised once again to take proper care regarding releasing pressure in extinguishers. The nitrogen charge in stored pressure extinguishers has killed and injured more technicians than any other aspect of fire extinguisher maintenance procedures!

Herewith safe methods to release nitrogen pressure from an extinguisher:

An important safety rule before releasing pressure

Do not believe the pressure reading on the extinguisher gauge. Faulty gauges are a common occurrence. Always assume that the pressure is present, even when the unit feels empty.






Method 1: Releasing the Pressure Through the Threads of the Head Valve Assembly

This is the least recommended method to release the N2 pressure as human error can seriously interfere with the process. However, the powder remains intact inside the unit for re-use, if required.

The head valve assembly of a stored pressure fire extinguisher is designed with flutes in the thread. When the head assembly is unscrewed from the extinguisher the N2 pressure will start to discharge once the fluting in the thread becomes exposed. Ensure that the extinguisher is secured in a vice before carrying out this operation.

The valve assembly on the extinguisher must only be turned out two revolutions from being in a hand tight position.

Do not be tempted to turn the valve out further than two revolutions to try and speed up the pressure release. Once the pressure is venting the unit can be moved to allow venting to take place. Ensure that venting units are left in a safe area in the workshop, away from other workshop activities. Do not carry the unit by the head valve assembly handle when venting pressure is taking place.



Method No. 2 Releasing the pressure by inverting (turning upside down) the Extinguisher

This is the safest method to vent the N2 pressure from an extinguisher. It is also the quickest method. Dry powder will be lost in the venting, so a recharge will be required.

This method can be done safely by holding the extinguisher. It can only be carried out in a Dry Powder Room as the powder in the units siphon tube will be initially discharged with the N2 pressure.

Invert the extinguisher and with the discharge hose still in place, slowly release the unit's pressure by squeezing the head valve handles. An empty bin can be useful to capture any powder discharged. When removing the unit's valve assembly, beware of any pressure remaining in the extinguisher, so ensure the extinguisher is secured in a vice.



Method No. 3 Releasing the pressure by using a diffuser felt Bag

The diffuser, felt bag allows the pressure to escape through the porous felt material whilst capturing the powder in the bag.



The extinguisher can be held in the normal discharge manner with the extinguisher base on the ground and, with the discharge hose inserted into the felt bag, slowly squeeze the stp valve handles to allow total discharge to occur.

Again, when removing the head valve assembly beware of any pressure remaining in the cylinder by ensuring that the extinguisher is secured in a vice.

Whatever method you use, make safety your number one priority and do not leave inexperienced or unqualified persons to determine the method of depressurization. That decision must remain your responsibility, as is the supervision of the complete work process.

Submitted by James Nunnerly



-  Trainees **must be registered with SAQCC Fire for a minimum period of six months** regardless of what training they may have had previously.
-  Trainees are not allowed to carry out any servicing unsupervised. The supervising competent person is responsible for all work carried out by the trainee.



→ DON'T FORGET!

- 🔧 Your SAQCC Fire card must be carried at all times. Please check the details and advise the administration office of any corrections.
- 🔧 Please check the saqccfire website www.saqccfire.co.za and ensure that the details are correct
- 🔧 When you leave a company, SAQCC Fire must be advised immediately, and the card should be returned
- 🔧 When joining a new company, you must immediately complete re-registration forms and submit them to the administration office to ensure you are registered with the correct company, and servicing legally.



INVITATION

Finally – attached is the invitation to attend the forthcoming Annual General Meeting which is to be held at our offices on Thursday 18th June 2009. As SAQCC Fire is your organisation, we welcome your participation and look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible – and should you be unable to attend, then a proxy form is attached for your use. Nominations to the committee are welcome from all members. However, should you be nominated, it is recommended that you are fully acquainted with the responsibilities of the committee prior to accepting the nomination – these include:



- 👤 *Attending committee meetings once every two months (approximately 2 hours)*
- 👤 *When necessary, taking part in disciplinary hearings*
- 👤 *Undertaking tasks as discussed at meetings and requested by committee*
- 👤 *Providing input on various subjects raised for discussion*

Attention is drawn to all potential nominees, that the committee is there to serve the industry and not for their own benefit

Drinks and snacks will be provided at the AGM, and the current committee members will be present to answer any questions you may have.

