

Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:

SAPMA HAILS GOVT DECISION TO BAN LEAD IN PAINT

The South African Paint Manufacturing Association has, it would appear, finally won its 14-year struggle to persuade the government to totally ban the use of lead in paint.

Deryck Spence, executive director of SAPMA, says following a prolonged recent meeting in Pretoria with various government departments, including the departments of Health, Environmental Affairs, Customs & Excise, as well as the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCD), agreement was reached that the official Hazardous Substances Act regarding lead would be amended to eliminate lead from paint completely.

“It was also mooted by the Department of Environmental Affairs that the importation of paint containing lead would also be stopped in line with the World Health Organisation’s policy. Once this is done, then all imports of finished paint will be subjected to a Medical Safety & Data Sheet declaration whether the paint contains lead. If it does, its importation will be stopped by Customs & Excise,” Spence explained.

He added that SAPMA was, however, told by the Department of Health that before legislation could be changed or new regulations introduced, a Social and Industry Impact Study would have to be made. “There were also some concerns expressed regarding the availability of Customs staff at the Port of Durban to police such a new legislation, which is not reassuring. But it is gratifying that South Africa now would appear to be heading for a total anti-lead policy when it comes to paint,” Spence stated.

SAPMA has since 2003 contended that lead is one of the most invasive and hazardous components of paint manufacture and - in soluble form - harmful and extremely dangerous to the wellbeing and development of children.

But the tendency to continue using lead in paint production has been difficult to squash as lead-based pigments are the most cost-effective method of obtaining stable bright and durable colourful coatings - particularly for yellow, red and green paints.

“SAPMA and our membership were united in our quest for the total elimination of lead in paint, and we are now rejoicing. After all, just one case of lead poisoning in a child is one too many,” Spence concluded.

Ends