

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

SA COATINGS SECTOR TO STEER GHANA TOWARDS LEAD-FREE PAINT

The South African coatings industry will be assisting a major building material manufacturer in Ghana to produce the country's first lead-free paints.

South Africa is the only country on the African continent with legislation prohibiting the use of high levels of hazardous lead in decorative paints already in place, and legislation pending to also drastically restrict the use of lead in industrial paints.

The draft amendment for the South African Hazardous Substances Act stipulates that the level of lead in paint produced locally, previously legislated at 600ppm, will in future be only 90ppm to fall in line with international standards. The amendment affecting both the levels of lead in paints - and methanol in lacquer thinners - is likely to be promulgated next year, or early 2020, depending on the date of completion of a socio-economic impact assessment study (SEIAS) now being conducted by the government. Offenders will face prison sentences of up to 10 years or heavy fines.

The SA Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA) has now been asked to advise Ghana's Dakmak Group, a leading construction industry producer based in Accra, on the steps required to move towards lead-free paint production. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is engaged in an international outreach and anti-lead education programme on behalf of the United Nations and, following the request from Dakmak, asked the International Paint and Printing Ink Council (IPPIC) to offer assistance to the Ghanaian group.

Deryck Spence, executive director of SAPMA - the South African representative of IPPIC - says SAPMA will offer all assistance and advice possible to help the Ghanaian producer and will liaise directly with the Dakmak Group as Ghana has no official body representing its coatings sector.

"The South African government's decision to outlaw all lead in paints follows years of crusading for this cause by SAPMA as the use of lead in paint and methanol in thinners has been proven to be harmful to health - particularly in children - and pollutes the environment and all forms of life in it.

"It is commendable that the Dakmak Group has decided to remove lead from its paint ranges as it will set an example to other sub-Saharan countries. It is already virtually impossible to export leaded paint to Europe and America so national economies face potential harm if their coatings sectors do not produce internationally acceptable products. It may well be cheaper to produce paint with lead than safer alternative compounds but globally such leaded imports are totally banned," Spence states.

He says it is hoped that the socio-economic impact assessment study (SEIAS) now being conducted by the SA government will be completed as soon as possible so that all forms of paint with illegal lead limits would be prohibited locally next year already. "Any undue delay would continue to erode the competitiveness of SAPMA members who are already

complying with anti-lead laws, particularly in industrial paint production – for which hazardous levels of lead are still legal,” Spence adds.

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Caption:

Deryck Spence, executive director of SAPMA, which is providing input and advice for the Ghanaian coatings sector’s move towards lead-free paints.

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