



THATCHERS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA DEKKERSVERENIGING VAN SUID-AFRIKA

Newsletter 5/2014
31 July 2014

NEWSLETTER

Dear member

The following discussion points, amongst others, were on the agenda for the recent National Executive meeting which took place on July 30, 2014 and we gladly report as follows:

1. TASA: QUO VADIS?

The TASA is losing members. Systems should be put in place to protect our members. Customers sometimes seek reason not to pay and contractors and clients contradict each other.

Quotations are not always clearly set out. Customers are not always aware of hidden costs because the “cheapest” quote is usually accepted on first glance, but when the hidden costs are disclosed at a later stage, it turns into an argument and a possible dispute.

After thorough discussion, it was confirmed that a technical committee as was used during the earlier years of the existence of the old Thatchers Association, will not be re-established to investigate complaints. An impartial, independent body such as SATAS will be involved to settle disputes.

Hard lessons the past nine years has shown that it is not advisable for one member to get involved in another member's disputes. Complaints are handled confidentially by the TASA's office to avoid possible embarrassment for the member concerned.

Members in general are not necessarily aware of the quality of work delivered by a fellow member and the scope of his record, as a result of the fact that complaints are not made known. It is therefore unfair and undesirable to allow such a member to participate and comment on another members' work.

Only when it is found that there is no cooperation or omission in respect of the dispute, the entire National Executive gets involved to decide what actions should be taken, but even then, Executive members are not directly involved in the dispute. The client is recommended to make use of the services of SATAS and / or Mr. Mike Hull of Hull Consulting Engineers.

SATAS is requested to give the thatch contractor against whom the complaint was brought the option to be present during SATAS's investigation on the premises.

It is the client's prerogative, whether he wants to make use of the services of SATAS and / or Hull Consulting Engineers or not. The client is responsible for these costs.

(Source document: TASA's Complaint Procedure)
(TASA Information document: Choice of a Thatch Roof Contractor)

2. TESTING OF FIRE RETARDANT SYSTEMS

The definition regarding fire retardant systems as contained in the National Building Regulations are as follows:

“Fire-retardant: (Thatched roofs)

Means a product, method, or system employed to reduce and delay the spread of fire between buildings, building materials or components of a building. (Smoke detectors, fire blankets, drencher systems, fire extinguishers, etc)”

The ASTM E108 testing method is replaced by the SANS 10177/12, which has been developed and designed exclusively for South African conditions. It also aims to provide a uniform testing method for the different testing laboratories. All fire retardant systems shall be tested, or retested according to this specification.

Decision:

Testing of fire retardant systems

It is the duty of manufacturers to test and market their own products.

It was decided that Executive members, each one in his own area, will approach manufacturers of fire retardant systems to run the SANS 10177/12 on their products so that contractors of these products or systems meet the National Building Regulation’s requirements.

Fire retardant systems fall into two categories, namely chemical such as chemicals sprayed on grass / reed or pretreated with a chemical product, and fire retardant membranes such as fire blankets and sisalation.

A need assessment can be made regarding:

- Systems used in the area
- Which manufacturers are involved?
- What will the test costs be?
- How many thatching contractors in the area make use of these systems?

Who is responsible when a fire retardant system fail?

Everyone from the manufacturers to the consumer can be held responsible by the Consumer Protection Act. No party is excluded, so everything must be specified.

A presentation of Mr. Januz Luterek will accompany this newsletter to explain the most important aspects of the Consumer Protection Act. It was part of SAWPA's nationwide campaign to inform their members of this important legislation that greatly affect all contractors.

Knowledge of the provisions of this legislation will also enable our members to know what requirements regarding quality for instance can be insisted upon, etc.

The manufacturers must have controls in place and the TASA may insist that the specification of a product / system must detail all the necessary information so that any uncertainties in the case of a dispute/claim can be clarified.

This means of course that thatch contractors themselves must have controls in place to ensure that the installation / application have been executed correctly and the contractors must have proof thereof.

Treated sisal twine

As in the previous paragraphs described, concern was expressed regarding poor quality and poorly treated sisal twine.

Manufacturers thereof may be addressed to label distinct specifications regarding how much resistance and stress treated sisal twine can handle, including shelve life, age limit, etc.

Clarity can be obtained regarding their implementation of quality control, treatment, transmission, etc.

“Drencher systems”

These systems are designed for each individual structure and its components are subject to SABS standards. The overall designed system can't be tested.

The difference between a "drencher" system and a "sprinkle" system is that a "sprinkle" system spray the water upwards while a "drencher" system spray downwards.

Sisalation

The use of sisalation is not recommended because of condensation that takes place, but a proposal to reconsider the use thereof is accepted.



Ground poles

Concern was expressed regarding ground poles that completely rot and break down at ground level due to water penetration. A proposal that only H5 poles should be used for ground poles where the area around the pole does not quickly dry off, could not be accepted because it is not specified in the National Building Regulations.

The general availability of H5 poles is also questioned.

But it can be included as a hint in the TASA's own document "Guide to Thatching in South Africa."

This tip can also be expanded to include, for example through a drawing / picture to show how the area around the pole can be lifted to let water drain away quickly from the pole and not seep into the area directly around the pole.

“Guide to Thatching in South Africa”

This manual is based on the National Building Regulations regarding thatched roofs and is the exclusive property of the TASA. It is compiled by the Executive and is still in draft form, subject to additions and changes.

The ultimate goal is to offer it for sale to municipalities, professionals, contractors, clients, etc. in an effort to raise the standard of the thatching industry. As a result of the many complaints and inquiries received, it is increasingly obvious that contractors lack sufficient

knowledge to erect thatch structures and thereby causing enormous harm to the industry.

3. **TRAINING**

Although training is a huge responsibility of the TASA to set and maintain a standard in the Thatching Industry, there was unfortunately not enough time for this to be discussed.

4. **CERTIFICATION BY SATAS**



Mr. Abe Stears explained that SATAS (South African Technical Auditing Services) celebrates its tenth anniversary and that SATAS are accredited by SANAS for various certifications. Eighty (80) different factories that represent 130 product permits were certified by them. Three (3) of them are thatching businesses.

SATAS is regularly monitored and audits take place every year. They are also required to have quality control manuals, procedures, controls, etc. in place. Documentation regarding certification done by them is subject to the approval of the Approvals Board.

The role of SATAS is to protect the certification mark. If a certified company does not pass an audit or unannounced visit, the permit will be canceled if found that the company has not taken corrective actions within an agreed time to again comply with the requirements.

The feedback given by SATAS serves as a tool to prevent, or avoid a recurrence of problems.

The SANS 10407:2014 is now part of the National Building Regulations. SATAS cannot refuse to certify a contractor if he complies with the requirements.

SATAS will apply to SANAS for further accreditation to include the new SANS 10407. This accreditation will mean that the cost of certification for thatch contractors will possibly increase.

It is recommended that a public announcement be made that a cooperation agreement between TASA and SATAS exists. Now that the SANS 10407 is restored, SATAS will pay more attention to market certification for thatching contractors.

Procedure SATAS follows to certify a thatching contractor's business

The certification process performed by SATAS is done according to the SANAS (South African National Accreditation System) accreditation system.

When the applicant has all these requirements in place, the certification process can be completed within two to three weeks.

- 4.1 The company applies for certification
- 4.2 During SATAS's first visit, the conditions for certification as stated by SATAS, are agreed upon so that the applicant knows what he is letting himself in for.
- 4.3 A quotation is twofold. Firstly it involves the initial assessment which is an office exercise of approximately half a day if all the controls are in place and a visit to the workplace where the applicant is busy building a structure.

- 4.4 The second part is observing during unannounced visits and audits.
- 4.5 **Cost:** Consists of two amounts. The initial certification until the day that the permit is issued is a lump sum ranging between R 3 000 and R 4 000.
- 4.6 The unannounced visits, observation and audits amounted to about R1 500 per month. The distance to be traveled, number of inspections etc. influence the costs, amongst others.

The benefits of certification by SATAS

- It can be used as a marketing tool;
- Certification marks are affixed to documents such as tenders and quotations;
- Provides prestige value;
- Customers have more assurance that work is done according to standards and requirements, because unbiased outside eyes keeping an eye on activities;
- Conflicts of interest, client agreements, impartiality, etc. are kept under the spotlight;
- A model for fees must be submitted;
- There should be strict structures in place;
- Controls should be in place to enable oneself to check and verify the work done.

Advice from Mr. Abe Stears of SATAS to the TASA

- The TASA should have a clear understanding of the function, mandate and obligations with regard to the TASA Constitution;
- The TASA must clearly determine where it should be involved and what roles it needs to perform;
- The TASA should establish clear entry requirements and look at methods to evaluate a prospective member's craftsmanship;
- SATAS can evaluate a prospective member according to clear guidelines set by the TASA. The advantage is that the prospective member can make corrections to shortcomings; while ensuring that the TASA is convinced that the prospective member is able to deliver a certain standard of craftsmanship;
- The TASA needs a format regarding quotes to ensure that every quote given by a member meets certain requirements. This leads to comparable quotes without hidden costs;
- The TASA should not get involved in members' finances.

This information is made available to our members not only to bring our members up to date, but also to present an opportunity to express opinions and ideas; or to address other aspects. Every contribution is important to us and the Executive will be happy to take cognizance of it and respond if necessary.

Kind regards

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