



## Newly-branded Aspasa looks to the future

*Aspasa has grown to reflect a diverse membership base and has expanded its services to include other opencast sectors of the mining industry. As such, it will no longer be known as the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association, but rather retain the Aspasa acronym only.*

**T**ightening mine legislation and widespread calls for quality materials have led to increasing numbers of opencast mining operations signing up for membership of Aspasa. The Association, which had previously represented South Africa's formal sand and aggregate quarrying industry, has recently broadened its member base to include closely allied operations where minerals are mined in a similar way to quarrying operations.

Aspasa director Nico Pienaar says the move is necessary to accommodate growing numbers of opencast mining operations seeking assistance with compliance to health, safety and environment legislation, as well as a strong requirement for improved quality management.

Membership of the Association requires strict standards to be applied and is subject to both environmental, as well as health and safety audits. Those joining need to be legally compliant in terms of the relevant laws pertaining to mining.

"These have been recognised globally to be at the forefront of requirements and have played an important role in improving standards on local operations and making them more sustainable," he says. "We want to share our expertise and assist the industry where possible and as a result we have broadened our membership to include members from the salt mining, lime, dimension stone and clay mining industries, as well as ash resellers and any other opencast or similar type of operations that are legal operators."

"These operations also want to be part of a larger industry that speaks with a unified voice to address challenges and issues that are facing them individually or as unified industry. These include assistance with tax-related issues, legislation, skills development and labour issues. They now have the opportunity to be part of a dynamic association with representation on all relevant government, mining, regulatory and other organisations relating to the opencast mining sector," Pienaar confirms.

In addition, traditional sand and

aggregate quarry membership is also increasing due to tightening material controls in the building and construction industries. "There is a move across all industries towards tighter standards and the Association plays a pivotal role in disseminating this type of information and where necessary providing training and support to our members."

As a result Aspasa provides regular email updates to keep members informed, as well as using its comprehensive website as a source of information and news of the industry. Various downloads are also available for use by members.

### Enhanced training drive

The Association has increased its involvement in training, education and skills development through the establishment of highly-skilled committees in various fields. A well-trained workforce has the potential to turn an ordinary business into an exceptional one, according to Pienaar, who has launched a series of training workshops aimed at setting the opencast industry on a sustainable growth path through targeted training. The training is tailored to the needs of industry following extensive communication with its members.

"An investment in training for levels of staff, from junior recruits and general

labourers to managers and directors, has the potential to provide massive returns on investment provided that the training is appropriate," Pienaar maintains. "We have already conducted a needs analysis and developed the coursework. Now it is up to individual operations to do the same to identify the type of training they require in their own operations and dovetail this with our workshop programmes. Where training courses do not cover their requirements, they can put forward a request and it can either be arranged on a one-on-one basis or be developed provided there is enough demand."

He says that training requirements should be derived from a review of an individual's key performance indicators and development plans. "This should be overlaid with the company's organisational needs analysis and a strategy compiled that is based on the company's needs and available skills and skills potential. Once this has been satisfied then companies should use the opportunity to send staff on specially-developed training courses provided by the Association."

"The markets in which we operate, the way we do things and the way we sell and market our products is changing. Likewise, buyers have new requirements for us and they require tighter standards, lower prices, higher quality products and

faster turnaround times. Therefore, it stands to reason that if we do not continuously change with the times, we will be left behind and the world will pass us by," Pienaar says.

"Training ensures that we keep up to date with these requirements and gives us access to techniques and technologies that can assist us to compete, adapt and improve our offerings in such a way that we can become market leaders able to compete with the best-of-the-best. We are therefore encouraging those in the opencast mining sector to make use of our training opportunities, as well as other short courses and further education and training to set companies and the industry on a new path of growth."

He adds that companies should also measure returns on training investments to see whether the training has indeed had an impact and improved the KPIs of those who attended the course. Additional evaluation may also be required to determine whether the individual's expectations are being met by training courses attended, as this will have a bearing on their job satisfaction and future performance within the organisation.

If the training meets these requirements it can be deemed as successful and an asset to the company. It will also have delivered a return on investment that is

in line with the company's initial expectation. Further training can therefore be justified, both in terms of outcomes and the monetary value that such training will add (or save) the organisation.

"Training is one of the most important business tools at our disposal and we encourage our members to make use of the courses that we have prepared. Also, to provide feedback where additional courses are required in order to empower our members with the right staff to take their businesses and our industry forward," Pienaar says.

### Fatigue management

Fatigue is widely acknowledged as a leading cause of accidents and fatalities on mines across the globe. To address this problem on quarries and mines, Aspasa is in the process of hosting a number of workshops across the country to assist in the practical identification and management of fatigue in line with the industry's code of practice (COP). Prepared by industry specialists Dr Andre van Jaarsveld and Alex Raymond, the workshop explains the COP and uses information gathered from three opencast site inspections, including large, medium and small-type operations, to share actual findings and solutions.

The two-day workshops have been held in Gauteng in June, and are scheduled for the Western Cape on 20-21 July and KwaZulu-Natal on 17-18 August. Further dates may be announced depending on requirements for outlying areas.

[www.aspasa.co.za](http://www.aspasa.co.za)

For more information or to book seats at any of the workshops contact Mary Ann Sutton of Aspasa on (011) 791 3327, or Email: [office@aspasa.co.za](mailto:office@aspasa.co.za).

Report by Dale Kelly



*Aspasa aims to share its expertise and assist the industry where possible and has broadened its membership to include members from the dimension stone industry, among others.*