PRESS RELEASE

Maintaining the health of hospitals when it comes to fire risk

17 March 2020: The fire risk faced by hospitals was revealed dramatically when the theatre section of the Mitchells Plain Day Hospital in Cape Town was gutted by fire on Friday 13 September 2019. Earlier in May 2019, patients from the Bheki Mlangeni District Hospital in Soweto, Gauteng had to be evacuated following a fire at the administration block.

The biggest challenge faced by hospitals when it comes to fire risk is that a large number of occupants are either incapacitated or immobilised, which renders them extremely vulnerable, ASP Fire CEO **Michael van Niekerk** points out. In terms of specialist facilities such as mental health hospitals, patients are often restrained or restricted to certain areas, which increases the risk even further.

"It is essential for hospitals to able to compartmentalise their wards in the event of a fire. Therefore, if a blaze breaks out in one part, patients can be moved to another section, whereafter the fire can be contained within the enclosure of origin," van Niekerk explains.

ASP Fire has the capability to assist architects from the outset by becoming involved with the design phase of hospital projects, offering its specialist fire-engineering expertise and experience. For example, a high-rise hospital building definitely requires a fire sprinkler system, while evacuation routes in such a multi-storey structure also have to be considered carefully.

"We can design appropriate fire detection and suppression systems for hospitals, from sprinklers to water mist systems. Hospitals also have high-risk areas such as gas storage and server rooms, which require special attention," van Niekerk highlights.

Looking at existing hospitals, ASP Fire can conduct a fire-risk assessment to highlight causes of concern for management. These range from non-functioning fire doors to equipment that has been vandalised or not maintained properly.

"We are able to offer assistance in order for existing buildings to be modified accordingly so they can be fully compliant with all of the necessary regulations and standards," van Niekerk adds. ASP Fire has carried out work in this regard for Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital and Helen Joseph Hospital, as well as for a number of private Netcare hospitals.

Common issues are fire-detection systems that are either non-compliant or non-functional. In addition, the fire separation of the different areas in a hospital is often very poor, especially with government hospitals. Another area of major fire risk is the canteen or kitchen, where fan regulators often fail, or highly-combustible materials are left lying around.

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Notes to the Editor
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About ASP Fire
ASP Fire operates across the entire African continent from its Gauteng base, providing professional, accredited fire risk management and support to its clients. ASP Fire designs, installs and maintains a full range of fire detection and suppression equipment suited to clients' needs. ASP Fire provides a

holistic, proactive and preventative fire solution based on integrated fire risk assessment, training and consulting, with the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems that meet SABS, NFPA, FPASA, FDIA and SAQCC standards.

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