

MD's Word or Two
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Be Safe This Winter

I don't know about you, but for me the chill of winter came a bit early this year. As I write, the sky is dark grey, rain is drizzling and the wind is howling. The weather forecast is not promising either. Winter is upon us with fury and as the Paraffin Safety Association of Southern Africa (PASASA) we are running a 12 week, "**Be Safe this winter**" campaign.

The campaign focuses on empowering individuals and communities to improve their household energy safety through information and a call to action. The primary target of the campaign will be poor paraffin consumers who live in informal settlements throughout the country. This group will be reached mainly through the medium of radio (over 20,000,000 listeners). Adverts and interviews will be aired on the following **national radio stations**

- Ukhozi FM (6 668 000 listenership and broadcast in 7 provinces in isiZulu),
- Umhlobo Wenene FM (4 852 000 listenership and broadcast to all provinces in isiXhosa), and
- Motswedeng FM (3, 042, 000 listenership and broadcast to 3 provinces in Setswana)

We will also conduct Interviews on **community radio** stations in the areas where we are involved in projects on the ground. Events and workshops are also taking place in these areas as we speak.

The message we want to send out to **consumers** is that there are practical things they can do to make their environment safer, especially for children. These include taking seriously the rights and responsibilities of being a household energy user, conducting safety audits of their homes and their household behaviour to identify and to remove danger. It also includes engaging their municipalities and local councillors / ward committees about how they can help to make things safer - especially around the enforcement of household energy safety standards. We are also saying people must boycott illegal appliances and report the same to the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) a division of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

People need to put pressure on spaza shops and retailers to only supply approved appliances. They must understand the difference between a safe and an illegal stove. They must purchase only safe stoves with a homologation number - AZ/1906/2006/.....which is a proof that that appliance is approved. People must use only well functioning appliances and maintain and operate them safely.

The paraffin itself should be stored in safe, clearly labelled packaging with a safety warning label according to SABS standards. We also encourage the using of hot or wonder boxes not only to save the environment, reduce costs and reduce cooking time, but to also eliminate risk of fire.

In this campaign, we have tried to include as many **partnerships** as possible because they are critical to success. These include NRCS, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), local authorities and NGOs. We want to create other forms of partnerships where ordinary people, employers and companies will join us to reduce paraffin related injuries this winter.

The campaign includes a “**BeSafe@Home**” component where we will use real life examples of households and through limited transformation; convert those households into safer dwellings. The idea here is to show people practical ways that they can make their household energy environment safer. We have identified informal dwellings in areas such as Phillipi (Cape Town), Swapo (Msunduzi), KaBokweni (Mpumalanga), Mhluzi (Mpumalanga), Kliptown (Gauteng), Marabastad (North West) to mention just a few.

As winter moves in with vengeance, we urge communities to take responsibility for their household energy safety. They must now be vigilant and focus on prevention of fires.