



Institute of
Waste Management
of Southern Africa

MEDIA RELEASE

Engineers in high demand

Immediate Release

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Caption: The engineering field plays an instrumental role in our economy and society as a whole. Jan Palm (above), Vice-President of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA), encourages young learners to tackle science and mathematics head-on from an early age to contribute to stimulating the country's economy.

There has been significant coverage in the media recently about the desperate need to improve the country's infrastructure. To achieve this more engineers are needed in the private and public sector, mentions Jan Palm, one of South Africa's most experienced engineers in the field of solid waste management.

According to an article in Moneyweb*, of 511 564 enrolments in engineering disciplines from 1998 to 2010, a shocking 14% graduated. "It is critical for school learners to develop an understanding of maths at primary school level, otherwise it becomes increasingly difficult in high school. Even if learners do not study engineering, these subjects are an essential skill to master for most occupations," explains Palm.

Engineers are known to be logical, task orientated, resourceful and analytical with functionality at the centre of it all. The profession optimally designs habitats based on how it interacts with the natural environment. “Engineers design the infrastructure required to uphold day-to-day activities. Especially in South Africa, engineers have to ensure that designs are sustainable, appropriate, practical, affordable and maintainable with the country’s unique resources in mind. Currently there seems to be a worldwide shortage of civil engineers,” says Palm.

Palm has many years of experience as an engineer in the waste industry. He is also the Vice-President of the IWMSA, a non-profit organisation comprising a body of dedicated professionals in their respective fields, who give freely and voluntarily of their time and expertise in order to effectively educate, promote and further the science and practice of waste management.

“There are exciting career prospects for young engineers, especially in the waste industry. The new landfill barrier system, which is the lining between the waste body and the underlying soil, boosted the fields of geosynthetic engineering and geotechnical engineering. These fields are highly technical and very rewarding. Engineers are also required to design recycling facilities to optimise the flow of materials and transport routes,” continues Palm.

There are currently a lot of ventures and technologies in the waste management industry where engineers play a pivotal part. These include sustainable energy initiatives, alternative technologies such as Waste to Energy and Landfill Gas to Energy and the Green Building drive.

“For learners that want to embark on an engineering career, my advice would be to stay focussed and study hard. You will enjoy the fruit of your labour for the rest of your life as engineering is a very rewarding and satisfying career,” guides Palm.

For more information on the IWMSA, visit www.iwmsa.co.za. The IWMSA is also on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>).

* <http://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-south-africa/sas-engineering-shortage-widens>

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