

# Increasing demand for gasket installation

5TH AUGUST 2016  
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**H**aving identified a need in the market for the correct installation of gaskets at industrial plants, supplier of sealing products and services Klinger Mzansi is offering a joint integrity management service in addition to its product line to help increase the safety and efficiency of plants.

Klinger sales director Phillip Herbst explains that this service will involve sending trained technicians to plants to disassemble the flange arrangement where the gasket is being installed, install the gasket and ensure the correct installation and bolt torquing and tensioning when the arrangement is reassembled.

“There can be a number of problems with a gasket installation; usually the most unlikely one is that the gasket itself fails, especially if the correct gasket is selected for the application. Predominantly, problems arise with regard to the condition of the face of the flange, bolt torquing and the condition of the studs and bolts,” he explains.

Herbst highlights that the demand for gasket installation is growing, in light of the dangers that can result because of incorrect installation.

“A gasket generally functions under heat and high pressure and, if it is not correctly installed, it has the potential to leak. The majority of our customers are in the petrochemicals and chemicals industry and work with a wide range of dangerous chemicals. If leaks occur, these chemicals can endanger human life and cause significant environmental damage. In addition, the operational downtime required to fix the leak can be costly for the plant.”

Klinger is also in the process of developing the Klinger Training Academy, which will offer joint integrity training and learnerships for fitters, as well as general business skills such as sales and marketing training.

Herbst expects that the academy will accept its first class of students in

January next year who will be trained at the company's existing facility, in Wadeville. Initially, Klinger hopes to train about 20 learners yearly, but intends to build a bigger and more advanced facility within a year to expand the programme.

“There's a huge skills gap in South Africa and we want to help to train people to fill the gap in technical skills by equipping individuals with good-quality skills so they can be employed to carry out the services Klinger offers.”

Although the gasket is a well-developed and trusted product, with very limited opportunities for innovation beyond its current design, the types of materials that can be used in the manufacturing of gaskets do present an opportunity for experimentation, adds Herbst.

He notes that gaskets were predominantly made of asbestos, until the banning of the material in South Africa in 2008, when Klinger began to explore the use of alternative materials: “Asbestos had the advantage that it could be used in virtually any application – it was heat resistant and could handle high pressure, and was thus very resilient in gaskets.”

He explains that Klinger now makes gaskets from a variety of materials, including aramid fibres, graphite, mica and polytetrafluoroethylene. “We have had to experiment with mixing these in a variety of combinations and quantities to replace asbestos in the gaskets and produce a product that is just as effective and resilient.”

The company now offers a range of soft gaskets and metallic gaskets, with a variety of designs for different applications.

Klinger also has an ISO 9000-accredited research facility on its premises, which continuously investigates strategies for improving the way the company's products are manufactured and enhancing the product range it offers. 

EDITED BY: ZANDILE MAVUSO - CREAMER MEDIA FEATURES DEPUTY EDITOR