

Green Topics

Response to the questionnaire on environmental management Report-back to members

Summary

The response was good—one of the best the SAIMM has had to its various questionnaires. 231 replies were received from 2768 members representing a response of 8,35%. For fellows and Members together, the response was 13,7%. The spread of responses based on respondents' work situation appeared to be well balanced with some bias from those in consulting organizations.

Members' perceptions of their employers' positions with respect to environmental management looked somewhat optimistic, but it is encouraging to note that they reported that more than half were developing environmental management systems. Training of varying degree was taking place at all levels in their organizations.

Members saw their Institute as an important agent in lifting environmental awareness, literacy and responsibility not only through the journal and symposia, but also by liaison with government departments and educational institutions.

Most respondents saw environmental legislation both from local and overseas sources as affecting their organizations, their products and services with the emphasis on corporate image, core business and sales.

Introduction

The questionnaire was prepared by the Institute's Committee for the Environment and circulated to members in the first quarter of 1995 with the aims of obtaining:

- ▶ members' perceptions of Industry's attitude to environmental management
- ▶ members' perceptions of Industry's expectations of their employees regarding environmental awareness, literacy and ultimately environmental responsibility in the workplace

- ▶ members' opinions of the roles the SAIMM should play in meeting Industry's expectations and members' needs in this regard.

Implicit in the exercise was to ask members to think about their responsibilities, both as professionals and practitioners within the mining, minerals and metals industry, towards the environment and environmental management.

Response

Two hundred and thirty-one replies were received representing 8,35% of the membership. Most were received in March and April with a few taking advantage of the extended deadline of 30 June 1995. Hopefully the attention of all members was at least attracted to the questionnaire even if it finally got stuck in the tray marked 'Too Difficult'.

An analysis showed replies from 59 Fellows (15,0%), 104 Members (13,1%), 46 Associates (5,3%), 10 Students (3,2%), 8 Company Affiliates (5,4%), and 4 Retired Members (1,5%), (more of whom replied and were placed in specific categories above).

The spread of responses based on the respondents' work situation and job title seemed to be well balanced with 41 from corporate head offices, 87 from mining companies, 30 from industrial companies, 54 from consulting firms, 12 from educational institutions, 8 from engineering contractors, 1 from the public sector, 20 from R&D organizations and 26 from the retired and other sectors. One hundred and thirty-two respondents saw themselves in line management and 89 in staff functions.

Members' perceptions of their employers' positions regarding environmental management and training is best reflected in the tabular formats in which the questions were posed:

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	Yes	No	Uncertain
Does your organisation have an environmental policy?	149	42	40
Has your organization developed, or is it developing, an environmental management system?	162	35	34
If so, is it based on SABS 0251: 1993/BS 7750 or equivalent?	65	44	86
and if so, is it subjected to regular external audit?	54	65	112
Do you believe that those responsible for environmental management in your company have the active support of their superiors?	166	18	47

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Job Level	Degree of Training			
	Induction	Awareness	Formal Training	Formal Education
Executive Management	26	107	26	12
Middle Management	31	119	37	15
Supervisor	38	85	27	7
Operator/Artisan	54	135	15	4
Labourer	52	48	6	2
Student	29	30	9	11

Members saw an important role for the SAIMM to play in raising awareness, literacy and responsibility for environmental management. All vehicles which the SAIMM could use received strong support. In order of preference they were: SAIMM *Journal* 90,5%; seminars, colloquia, etc. 88,7%; workshops 76,6%; liaison with government departments 72,7%; liaison with tertiary educational institutions 70,6%; the holding of schools 60,2%; and liaison with secondary educational institutions 51,5%.

The spread of opinion concerning the effect of environmental legislation on their organizations and their products or services was concentrated towards the upper end in the ratios of 45 : 88 : 90 for little : considerable : critical, respectively.

Aspects of their organizations which members believed would be affected over the next five years were:

Corporate Image	141
Business Climate	93
Marketing and Sales	102
Core Business	117

Member listed 87 other institutions or associations concerned with environmental management to which they belonged, 40 of which were actively promoting environmental management in a manner relevant to their employers. (Anyone wanting more details can obtain them from Mrs S. Moodley at the SAIMM offices.)

Results

The results of the questionnaire will be placed before the Institute's incoming Committee for the Environment for planning action towards meeting the needs that have come out of the survey.

Conclusions

In conclusion it can be noted that the response was proportional to the seniority of the member and apparently independent of whether the member saw himself in line management or a staff function.

From Council's perspective it seems that our Industry is more environmentally aware and is further along the road towards putting in place systems of environmental management than the media and consequently their followers in the public domain are prepared to acknowledge. That is no cause for complacency. Rather it serves to emphasize the point made in the preamble to the questionnaire of the need for Industry to adopt a pro-active approach to the problem. Involvement of, or at least consultations with, interested and affected parties is where Industry seems to be lacking in its efforts.

Recommendations

- Members should be encouraged as part of their professional responsibility to take every opportunity within and without their workplace to promote:
 - the development and effective management of environmental management systems
 - the image of the industry *vis-à-vis* the environment
 - training towards environmental awareness, literacy and responsibility at all levels in their organizations and at educational institutions.
- The SAIMM should support members in this regard by:
 - publishing relevant material in the SAIMM *Journal*
 - arranging seminars, colloquia, symposia, workshops and schools incorporating environmental management as a subject and including guest speakers to put the 'other side of the story' across
 - putting its President in a position to take a stand on contentious environmental issues facing the Industry. ♦