

Are you Getting what You're Paying For?

In South Africa we rely on the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), who regulate and control the SANS (South African National Standards). These are developed in conjunction with the input from industry, interested and affected parties and their accredited bodies through the various technical committees. Standards are typically based on international standards and or best practices and are then adapted for the South African conditions and requirements.

These standards are regularly quoted on the products in the South African lubricant market. There is however very little chance of testing these products completely against the quoted standards, due to the cost and complexity in doing so. So, this begs the question, how does the end user, ie, the consumer know that what they are getting?

Sure, the label and packaging might state that this product meets certain performance specifications such as API CH4/SJ, but how can the consumer be sure that this is indeed the case?

Obviously if the manufacturer is an ISO 9001 accredited company there can be some assurance that the blending is conducted consistently and correctly to the tested formulation and that the product is appropriately certified. Complete engine testing for these products is rather cumbersome and expensive, which opens the door for unscrupulous blenders of lubricants to make fancy packaging and labels claiming international performance standards on their products.

Due to the fact that the majority of the end users in the automotive field are Joe Public and not familiar with these standards, comebacks on product performance against these suppliers would be limited.

It is time for action in this regard as the implementation of the Consumer Protection Bill, later this year, will bring about interesting challenges with regard to compliance for the lubricant marketer and recourse from a consumer's point of view.

Andrew Kirk, SAIT Committee Member

Gill Fuller; Tel: (011) 802-5145, Fax: (011) 804-4972, Email: secretary@sait.org.za, www.sait.org.za

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