

# Construction corruption probe

Evidence uncovered in the industry is described as 'shocking' and damaging to transformation

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EVIDENCE of corruption described as "shocking" has been uncovered in the construction industry by the SA Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions.

The council said the extent of the illegal activities undermines national efforts to, among others, transform the construction industry and reduce fatalities and injuries.

The council was established to regulate construction management and construction project management professionals in order to protect the public.

It is a leading player in the built environment sector and seeks to transform the construction industry landscape but also to ensure only people with proven competencies work in the sector.

The council told The New Age yesterday that its preliminary audit findings said there were corrupt and unethical practices being committed by "a very few" of its staff members who were colluding with external companies serving as unauthorised agents.

"Some of the companies (being investigated) are in fact operated by our employees and we are determined to get to the bottom of it," spokesperson Yuvn Gounden said. He told The New Age the name of one of the companies but did not want it made public as it would compromise the investigation. Employees who are suspected of misconduct have been suspended as a precaution, he said.

Through rigorous processes, the council was able to identify discrepancies, which "upon closer scrutiny revealed possible acts of fraud and corruption", Gounden said.

The uncovering of some isolated cases led the council to immediately appoint a reputable forensic audit firm to drill deeper into these and any other possible incidences that had not been detected.

Council president Tjiamogale Manchildi said it was thanks to individuals, companies and voluntary associations that possible acts of corruption had been uncovered.

The investigation had found "disappointing and irresponsible conduct" among people who wanted to undermine national efforts to transform the construction industry, including the industry's determination to reduce and obliterate fatalities and injuries on construction sites around the country.

Current claims for fatalities, injuries and occupational diseases exceeds R2bn annually, the Department of Labour said in April.

Minister of Public Works Nkosinathi Nhleko commended the council for the decisive action it took against those involved to send an unequivocal message of the industry's commitment to clean governance.

"Corruption is an antithesis of development. Its demon should be exposed wherever it raises its ugly head. While it is the government's responsibility to fight it, society as well as the industry also has a critical role to play because it redirects the scarce resources into the pockets of a few dishonest individuals resulting in the decay of ethical values and public morality," Nhleko said.

Gounden did not want to reveal any further details as the investigation was ongoing but he said the final report was expected in three to six weeks.

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