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ISEGEN WINS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Isegen South Africa, a wholly-owned South African manufacturer of food acidulants, plasticisers and resin raw materials, with head-office at Isipingo in Durban, has received the highest accolade for waste management awarded in 2006 – a Silver Award, presented following an audit by the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa. The Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs supported the initiative.

Presented for effective waste management at the company's Isipingo plant, a contributing factor was the company's intention to reduce the use of benzene on the site and replace this with the more environment-friendly butane. Mixed butanes, made up of iso-butane and normal (straight chain) butane, are a by-product of the refining process.

The company's Isipingo refinery separates the two butanes from the gas stream and the iso-butane is utilised as an octane booster in lead-free petrol. The normal butane is received via pipeline from the Sapref refinery next door. Isegen has expanded its maleic anhydride plant at Isipingo, thereby utilising larger volumes of normal butane, and thus assisting the gas balance.

The company's systems specialist, Rajend Mahadew, spearheaded the initiative. He commended the Durban Metro decision to involve the local community and industrialists in the city's Cleaning and Greening exercise as part of the business retention program of DIPA, the Durban Investment and Promotion Agency.

"This concern for the local environment bodes well for the future of businesses in the sensitive Durban South Basin," Mahadew said.

"Isegen will take over the administration of the dune area adjacent to the factory at its own cost and will work with the environmental authorities of the eThekweni Metro to stabilise the area and remove alien vegetation. This will benefit the neighbourhood, as the local community use the beach area extensively for fishing," he added.

MD Robert Fowlds said that the company's contribution towards ensuring a better environment was also recognised recently by one of its multinational customers during a quality audit.

"Responsible social and environmental considerations are becoming increasingly important when multinationals adjudicate their suppliers. This is one way that Isegen can differentiate itself from competitors from the Far East whose concern for the environment is notoriously absent," Fowlds said.

Isegen supplies various industries in the explosives, metal treatment, electroplating, plastics, paint, adhesive and resins fields. On the food acidulant side, it supplies a number of multinationals, including some of the top global companies in the food and pharmaceutical business, exporting to 43 countries.

Apart from Isipingo, the company has plants at Umgeni and Germiston. It recently announced the establishment of a US\$75-million maleic anhydride and food acids plant in Trinidad.

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