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The IV600 also includes a database of over 30,000 PV modules, manageable via the new HT AGORA software, and delivers measurement throughput up to 6.5 MW/hr with no cool-down required, regardless of the environmental temperature.

Power analyser T60

The T60 power analyser delivers advanced power quality monitoring with the ability to record 362 parameters over two months, detect voltage sags and swells, and display real-time waveforms. It supports earth resistance testing, four-pole soil resistivity, RCD testing for Types A, AC, and B up to 10 A, and insulation resistance up to 1,000 V. The device also offers advanced loop impedance testing, power factor measurement, THD up to the 49th harmonic, phase sequence verification, and leakage current detection. With built-in Wi-Fi, the T60 provides efficient data transfer and modern connectivity for comprehensive electrical analysis.

TBM788BT digital multimeter

The TBM788BT multimeter is a high-performance instrument featuring 60,000 counts, 100 kHz TRMS capability, and CAT-III 1 kV safety rating. It now includes BLE-Comm wireless data communication, enhancing convenience and real-time monitoring. The device offers advanced functions such as AutoHold Real-Read, BeepLit continuity and diode alert, and LoZ AutoV for improved accuracy in low-impedance measurements.

Additional capabilities include Hi-Lo EF detection, VFD voltage and frequency measurements, nanosecond measurement, T1-T2 Type-K thermocouple support, and dBm readings. It also provides Crest Peak, Speedy Max/Min/Avg, Relative Zero, and BeepJack safety input alert features, making it a versatile and reliable tool for professional electrical diagnostics.

Enquiries:
www.hellermanntyton.co.za



HellermannTyton offers a versatile range of high-precision electrical measurement instruments designed to support professionals across the various aspects of electrical installation, maintenance, diagnostics, and power quality analysis.

IV600 curve tracer

The I-V curve tracer is used for the maintenance and troubleshooting of photovoltaic (PV) systems up to 1,500 V and 40 A. It performs tests and measurements on PV modules using the most widespread technologies, including the latest high-efficiency models.

The IV600 traces I-V curves for solar modules/strings up to 1,500 V/40 A according to IEC/EN 60891, compares results to manufacturer data, and gives a clear OK/NOT OK result. It communicates with the SOLAR03 remote unit via Bluetooth up to 100 m, logs data when communication is blocked, and works with mono-facial and bi-facial modules using dual-side irradiance measurement. It supports up to three reference cells to measure front-side and rear-side radiation according to IEC TS 60904-1-2, and auto-detects their calibration parameters.




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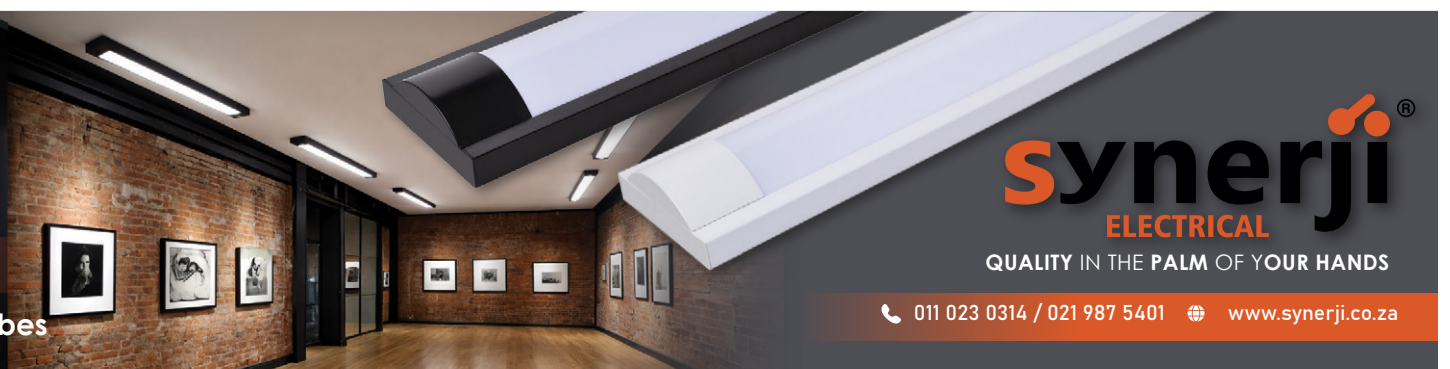






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ELKO EP delivers European-engineered electrical components to South Africa via ElectroMechanica

As South Africa continues to contend with persistent grid instability and increasing pressure on ageing electrical infrastructure, both industrial and commercial sectors are prioritising system reliability above all else. In response to this rapidly evolving landscape, ElectroMechanica

(EM) is officially expanding its distribution portfolio with the introduction of ELKO EP. This strategic partnership brings high-performance, European-engineered components and advanced protection tools directly to the South African and SADC markets.

With more than 31 years of engineering excellence and a physical presence in over 70 countries, ELKO EP delivers sophisticated electrical solutions designed specifically to safeguard sensitive equipment and ensure long-term operational consistency.

A legacy of innovation

Founded in Europe, ELKO EP began its journey as a specialist relay manufacturer and has since evolved into an award-winning global developer of electrical

”

The availability of ELKO EP through EM's extensive network supports a growing demand for technical precision and device protection across the region.

- ELKO EP

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Scan to view the complete
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components. Recognised as a "Visionary of the Year", the company combines advanced internal research and development with fully automated production facilities to maintain rigorous quality standards.

Today, ELKO EP stands as a world leader in DIN rail relay production, having manufactured more than 30 million products to support diverse industrial, residential, and commercial applications worldwide.

Core product ranges available at EM

The ELKO EP portfolio addresses the most pressing challenges in the South African market, specifically focusing on equipment longevity, energy efficiency, and robust electrical protection:

- **Timers and modular contactors:** As a dominant global manufacturer, ELKO EP offers a comprehensive range of time relays, modular contactors, and IoT-enabled twilight switches. These components form the essential foundation of automated switching, ensuring that electrical loads operate precisely according to required schedules, thereby reducing unnecessary energy consumption.
- **Monitoring and protection relays:** Designed to safeguard expensive and sensitive equipment, these relays provide critical real-time oversight of single-phase and three-phase voltage and current. These devices provide an essential line of defence against undervoltage, asymmetry, and power instability, preventing the costly hardware failures often associated with loadshedding and grid surges.

Strategic impact on the local market

The availability of ELKO EP through EM's extensive network supports a growing demand for technical precision and device protection across the region. The modular design of the ELKO EP range enables flexible installations in both new builds and retrofit projects, simplifying the workflow for local contractors and making high-end European technology more accessible than ever before.

"We don't just manufacture devices; we improve system reliability," says ELKO EP. The company maintains that its primary focus is "developing and manufacturing the highest quality electronic devices" to ensure that South African users have access to accurate timing and switching devices, as well as reliable monitoring and protection for their installations, through EM's distribution network.

Enquiries: www.em.co.za



Explore
the range



Embrace the tool, don't fear it



If you've been anywhere near the internet lately, you'll know that artificial intelligence (AI) is the topic on everyone's lips. And with it comes a whole lot of noise. Depending on who you listen to, AI is either

going to save the world or destroy it. The truth, as usual, lies somewhere in the middle.

Let's be honest: AI is here to stay. It's not a passing trend or a gimmick. It's a tool, and like any tool, its value depends entirely on how you use it. Used responsibly and ethically, it can help businesses streamline processes, improve decision-making, and free up time for the work that truly requires a human touch. Used carelessly, without thought or oversight, it can cause real problems. The keyword here is "responsibly".

There's a lot of fearmongering out there suggesting that AI is coming for our jobs. But let me put it this way: when the calculator came along, people worried it would replace the need for anyone who could do maths. It didn't. It just made the process faster and freed people up to focus on more complex problem-solving. AI is much the same. It's not here to replace you. It's here to support you.

Burying your head in the sand and hoping

it all goes away isn't a strategy. Businesses that refuse to engage with AI risk being left behind, while those that take the time to understand it, set ethical boundaries, and integrate it thoughtfully will be the ones that thrive. Are you keeping up?

You'll find a great example of this thinking in our Lighting section this month, where Daniel Hammond from the BHA School of Lighting shares ways to use AI to enhance the creative process without losing the human element that makes their work meaningful (page 16).

Beyond AI, this edition also includes a key focus on Tools & Tooling. On the cover, we take a look at HellermannTyton's range of electrical measurement tools, with more tool-related news on page 8, including Torq Craft's 127-piece Trackbox Racing Edition toolbox from Vermont Sales.

We also explore Standby, Backup & Emergency Power (from page 9). And there's plenty more in our regular Lighting feature too: on page 14, see what happened

at Tridonic's recent customer event, while on page 16, we look at the fascinating story of StadiLux, the South African-designed stadium floodlight that took on the global giants and lit up venues from Johannesburg to the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

There's plenty to discover this month, so grab a coffee, dig in, and let's make March a good one. Happy reading!

Happy reading!

Ilana Koegelenberg

sparks@crowns.co.za

PS. This is my last edition as Editor before I hand over the reins to Minx Avrabos. Thank you to everyone for your support and for teaching me about your incredible industry. You're in good hands, and I look forward to watching this industry continue to innovate from the sidelines. All the best!



Solar & Storage exhibition returns to Joburg in March

Solar & Storage Live Africa, the continent's largest renewable energy exhibition, is set to take place from 25 to 27 March 2026 at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

The three-day event will bring together more than 20,000 attendees, 650 sponsors and exhibitors, and 200 speakers across four conference tracks. The exhibition focuses on solar, energy storage, electric vehicles, and the wider energy transition, providing a platform for technology providers, project developers, and industry leaders to showcase cutting-edge solutions.

The event will feature a free-to-attend conference covering the latest trends, market developments and technologies shaping the energy sector. Keynote presentations, case studies, and country

spotlights will be complemented by interactive discussions and workshops.

The exhibition will include specialised zones, such as a start-up area, an Installers University, a training hub, and a Dealmakers Hub. Networking opportunities will be supported by a dedicated lounge, a guest buyer programme and a networking app to facilitate business connections.

The show is backed by host utility partner Eskom and industry associations, including SAESA, SAPVIA, and SAREBI. Attendees are expected from South Africa and numerous other countries across Africa and beyond.

Solar & Storage Live Africa is part of a wider regional series, with sister events planned for Egypt (6-7 April 2026), Dubai (9-10 June 2026), Kenya (26-27 August 2026), Cape Town (20-21 October 2026) and Riyadh (23-25 November 2026).

Registration for the event is now open and free.

Enquiries: <https://www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/solar-show-africa>



The exhibition focuses on solar, energy storage, electric vehicles, and the wider energy transition, providing a platform for technology providers, project developers, and industry leaders to showcase cutting-edge solutions.

Smart geyser cuts water heating costs by up to 85%

With electricity tariffs set to rise again in 2026, households and businesses are under increasing pressure to cut energy costs. The innovative integrated heat pump (IHP) geyser from Power4Less offers a breakthrough solution, reducing water-heating expenses by up to 85% while delivering reliable, eco-friendly performance.

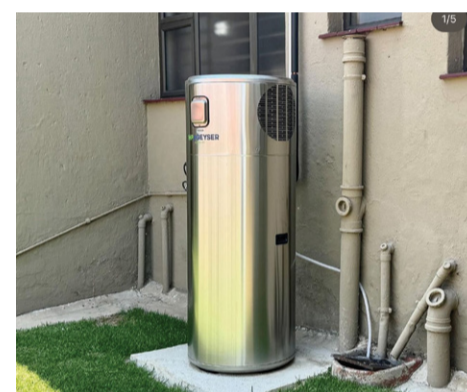
Unlike conventional geysers that rely on electricity-hungry elements, the IHP geyser harnesses natural heat from the surrounding air. A fan draws air into the system, where heat is absorbed, compressed, and transferred directly into the water. This cycle repeats continuously, consuming less than half a kilowatt of power – less than a kettle – and cutting energy usage by up to 85% when compared to traditional geysers. The numbers speak for themselves:

A 200 L electric geyser uses a 4 kW electric element to heat water to 55 °C. The average cost of electricity is R3.91 per kWh (2025 prices). Let's assume this geyser is used once in the morning and once in the evening for two showers. This equates to an electricity spend of around R78.20 per day or R2,377 per month over 30.4 days.

In comparison: The IHP geyser uses 0.5 kW to heat water to 60 °C on both the 200 L and 300 L models. This is up to 85% less power usage. We'll keep electricity costs at R3.91 per kWh and the same morning and evening usage for two showers. This equates to an electricity spend of just R7.04 per day or R214 per month over 30.4 days. This is a saving of R2,163 every month and annual savings of up to R26,000! Savings are also compounded as tariffs continue to rise.

The IHP geyser integrates seamlessly with smart app controls and a colour touchscreen keypad, allowing users to adjust water temperature or power down remotely during holidays or off-peak business periods.

To prevent those "geyser bursting at 3am" fiascos, the IHP geyser is crafted



from stainless steel, designed not to leak or burst, and carries a robust 10-year warranty. The IHP geyser also carries an exceptional suite of local and global certifications, which affirm its compliance with the highest international safety and performance standards, including SABS, NRCS, TUV, IEC, and EU A+ efficiency ratings.

Power4Less, one of the country's leading suppliers of energy-efficiency solutions, is the powerhouse behind the innovative IHP geyser. Power4Less CEO Nafisa Fareed stated, "The IHP geyser represents a complete rethink in energy usage. Where the geyser was previously the biggest user of power in a household or business, the IHP geyser becomes the biggest energy saver. Our clients see the value, not just in theory, but in measurable returns from the first month."

The revolutionary product is backed by some of South Africa's most trusted brands, including Nedbank as the official financier, the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA) as the preferred installer, and Builders Warehouse as the preferred supplier.

Through Nedbank's innovative, affordable financing mechanism, supported by full supply, installation, maintenance, and insurance services, businesses can enjoy the benefits monthly while the geyser pays for itself with the savings generated.

The IHP geyser is compatible with electric, solar, and hybrid power systems. It is available at Builders Warehouse, accredited hardware and plumbing stores, and via the Nedbank Avo platform.

Enquiries: www.pwr4less.com



Water mist fire suppression for high-value assets

Water mist fire suppression minimises water damage, supports life safety, and offers strong environmental performance, particularly in specialised and high-risk applications.

"Clients increasingly want fire protection that is both technically robust and sensitive to their operations," says ASP Fire CEO Michael van Niekerk. "Water mist systems give us another proven tool in the engineering toolbox, especially where conventional sprinklers, foam, or gas systems present unacceptable trade-offs in terms of water damage, downtime, or enclosure integrity."

What is water mist fire suppression?

Water mist systems are water-based fire suppression systems that discharge very fine water droplets through specially engineered nozzles at low, intermediate, or high pressures. According to NFPA 750, the Standard on Water Mist Fire Protection Systems, water mist is defined as a spray in which 99% of the water volume is in droplets smaller than 1,000 microns in diameter at the minimum operating pressure.

By comparison, conventional sprinkler droplets are significantly larger. The much smaller droplet size dramatically increases the total surface area of water exposed to heat. As the droplets absorb heat and rapidly evaporate to steam, the system cools the flames and hot gases, displaces oxygen immediately around the fire, and reduces radiant heat transfer.

The result is fast fire control or extinguishment, with a fraction of the water flow of traditional sprinkler systems, which

in turn reduces collateral water damage, clean-up time, and business interruption.

Applications vary, and include data centres, control rooms, and IT facilities. Fine droplets cool hot surfaces, inhibit fire spread, and limit damage to equipment. Although water mist is not intended to penetrate sealed cabinets, it is effective at stopping fires from spreading beyond the point of origin, and reinstatement is often quicker than after a conventional sprinkler discharge.

Advantages of water mist systems

A key benefit is reduced water consumption and water damage. Since the droplets are so fine and are used more efficiently, water mist systems typically operate at significantly lower flow rates than sprinklers. This reduces the volume of water that ends up on equipment, finishes, and sensitive contents, and can ease demands on water storage and pumping infrastructure.

The second is enhanced life safety and tenability. By absorbing heat and limiting smoke production, water mist can extend the available safe egress time, improve visibility, and reduce the risk of flashover and backdraft in certain scenarios.

The third is environmental performance. Unlike halon and many legacy chemical agents, water mist relies on water as the primary extinguishing medium and therefore has no ozone depletion potential or long-term global warming impact from the agent itself.

The fourth is resilience in ventilated or 'leaky' spaces. Gaseous systems depend on maintaining a minimum agent concentration

for a specified period within a sealed volume. In highly ventilated genset rooms or plant areas, this can be impractical. Water mist can offer a more robust solution in such environments, as it does not rely on enclosure tightness in the same way.

Limitations and the importance of proper application

Despite its advantages, water mist is not a one-size-fits-all answer. Industry guidance stresses that there are scenarios where other technologies remain preferable. Large, open or very tall spaces with strong air movement may dilute the mist and reduce effectiveness.

Certain flammable liquid and gas hazards, or very rapid-growth fires in open process areas, may be better addressed by foam, dry chemical, or gas systems, depending on the risk assessment. Where very deep-seated fires in bulk solids are possible, traditional sprinklers or specialised systems might offer better penetration.

New developments and emerging applications

Research and innovation in water mist fire suppression have accelerated in recent years, both internationally and in markets relevant to South Africa. One key area is new-energy and battery-related risks.

Recent reviews highlight the potential of water mist – alone or in combination with gaseous agents – to manage lithium-ion battery fires, or those from solar installations, wind turbines, and/or biomass systems, thanks to strong cooling performance and reduced environmental impact.



Michael van Niekerk of ASP Fire.

Water mist fire suppression has matured from a niche technology into a mainstream option for a wide variety of specialised applications. Its ability to deliver fast, effective suppression, with reduced water usage and limited collateral damage, makes it particularly attractive for critical infrastructure, heritage, and high-value industrial environments across Africa.

"Every project starts with understanding the risk," concludes van Niekerk. "Water mist systems are not a silver bullet, but in the right context, they offer exceptional performance. When we integrate them into a rational fire-safety design, backed by proper standards, testing, and maintenance, they help our clients protect people, assets, and productivity in a world of increasing fire risk."

Enquiries: www.aspfire.co.za

Is the national minimum wage hike a lifeline for workers or a risk to jobs?

By: Donne Nieman, sales director at Workforce Staffing

From 1 March 2026, South Africa's national minimum wage will increase to R30.23 an hour, a 5% rise that takes the rate past the R30 mark for the first time. For millions of low-paid workers, the increase offers modest relief against rising living costs. But in an economy with stubbornly high unemployment and weak growth, the adjustment also raises an important question: how do we protect vulnerable workers without putting further pressure on job creation?

The answer lies in understanding the delicate balance between improving livelihoods and sustaining employment in a fragile labour market.

In the bigger picture, the increase is significant. While the adjustment is modest, it forms part of a series of annual increases aimed at keeping wages in line with inflation and rising household costs. Will it close the gap between earnings and the true cost of living? Probably not. But the intention is clear: to stop the lowest-paid workers from losing ground.

The pressure on employers is real

Higher wages also have an impact on how businesses operate. For labour-intensive companies working with tight margins, rising wage costs are a major expense. This doesn't mean employers are against fair pay, but in a weak economy, every increase in costs means tough decisions.

Businesses need to stay competitive,



The risk is not sudden, large-scale job losses but a gradual change in how companies manage their workforce. Over time, this could mean fewer entry-level opportunities for workers trying to enter the formal job market.

- Donne Niemand, Workforce Staffing

especially those that compete in global markets. To manage higher labour costs, some may invest more in automation, mechanisation, or new technology. Others may slow down hiring, restructure their operations or reduce their reliance on lower-skilled roles.

The risk is not sudden, large-scale job losses but a gradual change in how companies manage their workforce. Over time, this could mean fewer entry-level opportunities for workers trying to enter the formal job market.

South Africa's competitiveness challenge

South Africa faces a difficult reality. The country has many people looking for work, many of whom are low-skilled. In the past, the availability of affordable labour had been one of the factors that attracted investment.

As labour costs increase, this advantage

becomes less certain. If higher wages are not supported by improvements in productivity, skills, and economic growth, businesses may become more cautious about expanding or investing.

This is why minimum wage increases cannot be considered in isolation. Protecting workers is important, but lasting wage growth is only possible if the economy becomes stronger and businesses remain competitive.

Businesses are planning ahead

One important shift since the introduction of the national minimum wage is predictability. Employers now expect an adjustment each year from 1 March and build this into their budgeting cycles. While the exact percentage may vary, the increase itself is no longer a surprise.

As wage costs rise, workforce flexibility is becoming an essential strategy. Many businesses experience fluctuating demand,



Donne Nieman of Workforce Staffing.

with periods of peak activity followed by quieter cycles. Maintaining a full-time workforce through these changes can be difficult, particularly as labour costs increase each year.

Flexible staffing approaches, including the use of Temporary Employment Service (TES) providers, allow employers to scale their workforce in line with operational needs. For workers, this model can also offer an important benefit. By being deployed across multiple client sites as demand shifts, employees can maintain more consistent employment and income rather than facing intermittent layoffs or reduced hours. In a constrained labour market, this type of shared flexibility can support business sustainability while helping workers maintain greater income stability.

Enquiries: <https://workforcestaffing.co.za/>



Safehouse: non-compliant electrical products put consumers at risk

South Africa has no reliable national statistics on electrical product compliance, with independent industry testing consistently showing high failure rates, says the voluntary electrical safety association Safehouse. Most South Africans trust that if a product is being sold in a store, it must be safe because it is assumed that the retailer has vetted the product. Unfortunately, that isn't always true.

Many products available on the shelves fail to meet basic safety requirements. And while non-compliant electrical products are not always immediately dangerous or seen up front as dangerous, they can pose significant risks. More concerning is the systemic threat of South Africa's illicit electrical goods trade and the far-reaching consequences it has on consumer safety, economic stability, and industrial sustainability.

Safehouse was founded in 2014 in response to ineffective regulation and the lack of robust market oversight under the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS), which relies primarily on administrative approvals and single type-test reports. Without ongoing quality control, the risk of undetected non-compliance increases significantly, creating a system that can be exploited by certain importers

and unscrupulous local manufacturers to sell a wide range of products under a single approval certificate. Compounding the problem is the NRCS's refusal to publicly disclose non-compliant products, a practice that leaves all consumers exposed to unnecessary risk.

The recent South Africa Illicit Economy 2.0 Report, launched by the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) in conjunction with Business Unity South Africa (Busa), states that South Africa's illicit trade is estimated at R100 billion, or about 1.5% of GDP. This figure barely captures the wider damage it inflicts on lawful manufacturers, retailers, employees, and tax revenue. And while the NRCS is making some effort to control non-compliant and illicit products across sectors, including building materials, automotive components, chemicals, and electrical products, its overall enforcement reaches less than 0.5% of South Africa's illicit trade.

"Robust processes are being put in place thanks to our members' continued commitment to product safety and regulatory compliance. Consumers can now make more informed and reliable choices by selecting products bearing the Safehouse mark and checking the Safehouse website to verify suppliers and businesses that are accredited

members," says Safehouse's technical lead and chairperson, Connie Jonker.

According to the South African civil society organisation, Tax Justice South Africa, the influx of cheap, non-compliant electrical products into South Africa, many entering through porous borders or online channels, poses serious risks to consumer safety and local industry, with surveys showing that nearly 80% of electro-technical companies are highly concerned about this growing problem.

Jonker says that no one can determine compliance through visual inspection alone. He says that tests, which can cost several thousand rand each, involve the assessment of dimensions, flammability of materials, insulation, and tripping currents of circuit breakers. These can only be conducted in proper laboratories. "Even experienced people cannot reliably identify a compliant product on a shelf."

Jonker, part of Safehouse's management team, who brings over 50 years of electrical industry experience to the organisation, says that the compliance situation in South Africa is a disaster. "A lot of non-compliant products are entering the country without proper control. We can only advise; we cannot force products off shelves. We send test results to companies and urge them to fix issues, and if not, we report to the NRCS. But not much happens after that. It is also virtually impossible to track what action, if any, the NRCS takes on any compliance issues raised," he says.

"Different products carry different risks. If a circuit breaker doesn't trip when needed, you could have a fire or an electrical shock. Other issues, such as incorrect marking, may not be immediately dangerous but can lead to products being used incorrectly," says Jonker. Buying very cheap products increases the risk of serious non-compliance, and the consumer must be aware that buying cheap products poses its own risks, even when done by a third party and signed off via Certificate of Compliance (CoC).

The accountability for the safety of electrical products being sold in South Africa also lies with the retailers, who Safehouse says have a fundamental responsibility to

protect consumers by carefully verifying test reports and Letters of Authority (LOAs) before listing products.

"Retailers need to understand exactly what they are selling, and act as the first line of defence against unsafe or non-compliant goods," Jonker says. "Too often, retailers rely blindly on documentation that should be rigorously scrutinised, particularly when prices seem too good to be true."

As a result, Safehouse is urging both consumers and retailers to learn more about its mission to remove nefarious suppliers of unsafe electrical products and services and to eradicate dangerous products from the market. They also want to make electrical safety information understandable and accessible.

While many compliant products are still updating their packaging, consumers can start identifying trusted items by the Safehouse mark on electrical appliances and other products. Consumers can also visit the Safehouse website to see which companies have committed to producing compliant products and protecting lives and livelihoods across South Africa.

Safehouse, which operates on a peer-review model with members funding laboratory testing and committing to a strict code of conduct, has become the go-to platform to support ethical compliance, conduct credible independent testing, and encourage higher standards across the sector. The association wants to partner with authorities, not replace them, by providing technical insight and evidence-based recommendations.

"You can't see electrical safety with the naked eye. Two products may look identical on a shelf, yet one can meet every requirement while the other fails critical safety tests. That's why ongoing compliance testing matters, and why consumers and retailers need a way to know who is doing things properly," says Jonker.

"This is a sector where safety should never be optional. A more informed marketplace, from sales floors to boardrooms, will drive demand for compliant products and improve national safety standards," he concludes.

Enquiries: www.safehousesa.co.za



Growatt's smart energy storage powers customer success

From factories and schools to commercial sites and island microgrids, Growatt's WIT Series C&I energy storage solutions have become a world-trusted choice for cleaner, more economical, and more resilient power. So, what makes this series stand out?

Smarter, safer, and more adaptable

At the core of Growatt's WIT Series is a unified design philosophy: enable businesses to use energy more intelligently, safely, and economically – across any scenario or system architecture. From maximising solar consumption to supporting complex microgrids, WIT solutions combine flexible configurations, intelligent control, and industry-leading safety features in one integrated ecosystem.

With multiple smart operating modes, the WIT Series boosts solar self-consumption, optimises time-of-use tariffs, manages peak demand, and ensures reliable backup power. Whether integrated into an existing

PV system through AC coupling or deployed in a new project with DC coupling, WIT delivers seamless coordination between solar, storage, and the grid. In hybrid microgrids with PV, storage, and diesel generators, it prioritises clean energy to reduce generator runtime while maintaining stable 24/7 power for critical loads.

Each system features multi-layer protection, real-time monitoring, and advanced temperature control for consistent performance in demanding environments. Combined with Growatt's 24/7 smart cloud service, remote diagnostics, and over-the-air updates, customers enjoy a system that stays secure, intelligent, and easy to maintain. Backed by Growatt's whole-system approach – covering inverters, batteries, BMS, EMS, and service – the WIT Series delivers a unified, robust energy solution built for long-term stability and confidence.

Enquiries: <https://en.growatt.com/>





How AI can solve our country's biggest challenges

By: Dean Wolson, general manager of Infrastructure Solutions Group at Lenovo Africa

South Africans have a long tradition of doing more with less, and that resourcefulness may be our greatest competitive advantage in the coming decade. Unlike global superpowers that invest heavily in sheer computing capacity, South Africa doesn't need to be the largest computing market to lead in innovation. What matters today is how we apply computing to accelerate insight, discovery, and socio-economic progress.

That's where AI-accelerated simulation, combining high-performance computing (HPC) with machine intelligence, comes in. Instead of waiting hours or days for results, we can simulate complex scenarios in seconds, enabling faster decisions and innovation than traditional methods.

The global surge in HPC & AI-driven simulation

High-performance computing is no longer the exclusive domain of national labs. According to Future Market Insights, the global HPC market is projected to be worth around \$60.2 billion in 2025 and to continue robust growth through the next decade, underscoring explosive demand for advanced computing in science, engineering, and AI workflows.

Across industries, the AI-enhanced HPC market is also expanding quickly, driven by the need to simulate ever more complex data and models at speed.

Yet, in many emerging economies, including South Africa, raw computing power alone is rarely sufficient. What holds greater strategic value is a simulation that turns limited infrastructure into accelerated insight.

South Africa's digital transformation is measurable

South Africa remains one of the most digitally active economies on the continent.

It accounted for over 43% of Africa's digital transformation market in 2024, reflecting strong adoption of cloud, analytics, and AI technologies.

Internet penetration in the country reached nearly 76% of the population in 2025, with ongoing expansion of both mobile and fixed-broadband services. South Africa is also among the top four African countries capturing the majority of AI startup investment.

These figures reveal a vibrant and growing ecosystem but also highlight constraints. According to Mastercard, infrastructure gaps persist, data centre capacity is limited compared with global hubs, and access to HPC resources remains uneven.

This context, scarcity of compute and uneven infrastructure, is precisely why AI-accelerated simulation matters.

From theory to impact: simulation where it counts

Traditional HPC workloads, such as climate modelling or fluid dynamics, typically require vast clusters and long turnaround times. Emerging AI "solvers", neural models trained on earlier simulation outputs, can replicate outcomes orders of magnitude faster, often running on a single GPU rather than a large supercomputer. In scientific settings, this has already transformed workflows around fusion plasma modelling and particle physics.

South Africa can benefit in similarly tangible ways:

- **Resource-efficient innovation:** Local engineering, manufacturing, and materials research can simulate product performance, stress tests, and failure scenarios before committing to expensive prototyping. This cuts costs and accelerates time-to-market for

South African innovators.

- **Health and pharmaceuticals:** AI-driven simulations can drastically speed silico modelling of drug interactions, guiding researchers in prioritising compounds for development at a fraction of traditional HPC cost.
- **Transportation and logistics:** South Africa's economy depends on the efficient movement of goods across vast distances. Autonomous systems and traffic simulations powered by AI can support smarter transport planning, especially in urban hubs like Johannesburg and Cape Town, without massive computing overhead.
- **Climate resilience:** Simulation models that predict drought patterns, water resource fluctuations, and renewable energy scenarios could inform adaptive policymaking. Rather than waiting for centuries-scale data, AI-enhanced HPC provides highly probable futures in accessible timeframes.

Turning capacity constraints into strategic advantage

South Africa's HPC landscape is growing. The Centre for High-Performance Computing (CHPC) has long anchored supercomputing efforts in the country, and national initiatives continue to expand access.

At the same time, major private investments, such as Microsoft's multi-hundred-million-rand AI infrastructure expansion announced in 2025, are catalysing local capability building while also training tens of thousands in digital skills.

But more than hardware investments, the key shift will be this: South Africa wins not by owning the most compute, but by using AI-driven simulation to amplify decision-making across sectors. This approach turns scarcity into strategic



Dean Wolson of Lenovo Africa.

leverage: with efficient AI solvers, organisations can prioritise high-impact simulations, reduce energy consumption, and generate insight faster than competitors with larger but less flexible infrastructure.

Simulation as a competitive differentiator

The ability to explore millions of possible futures, whether for engineering designs, economic models, climate adaptation strategies, or healthcare interventions, gives South African leaders a new form of foresight. This is a data-driven glimpse of the probable future enabled by simulation speed and intelligence.

South Africa's strength has always been resilience and ingenuity. AI-accelerated simulation allows us to compute the future rather than wait for it, maximising scarce resources, unlocking new innovation pathways, and delivering measurable impact.

Enquiries: www.lenovo.com

AI-powered maintenance for future-ready data centres

The data centre marketplace is facing a conundrum of sorts: on the one hand, operators are now investing heavily in infrastructure to meet AI's growing demands; on the other hand, it still (often) relies on outdated maintenance methods to manage mission-critical equipment.

But with rising energy demands, talent shortages, stricter sustainability regulations, and mounting downtime risks, change has become non-negotiable. Enter Condition-Based Maintenance (CBM), powered by AI and fast becoming a necessity for ensuring both competitiveness and resilience.

Cannah Dladla, cluster president for English-speaking Africa at Schneider Electric, explores this topic further.

Why traditional maintenance falls short

There's no doubt that time-based or reactive maintenance models have the potential to expose data centres to unnecessary downtime, inefficient resource use, higher costs, and compliance risks.

Additionally, as AI workloads continue to drive demand for greater computational

power and more complex infrastructure, failures in innovative technologies become costly. This is particularly true in sectors such as finance, healthcare, and e-commerce, where outages can cause severe reputational damage and financial loss.

According to Uptime Institute, the average cost of IT downtime ranges from \$6,000 to \$9,000 per minute, with some outages exceeding \$1 million. Talent shortages amplify the risk: half of operators (51%) reported difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill their job openings for the third year running. In addition, Uptime Institute estimates, and based on 25 years of data, human error plays a role in more than 66% of data centre outages.

Traditional maintenance typically suffers from three flaws:

- Calendar-based servicing wastes resources and fails to prevent unexpected failures.
- Contracts often cover only narrow equipment sets, not entire systems.
- Technicians may lack the skills or connectivity to manage multi-vendor, multi-site ecosystems.

The solution: systemic CBM

AI-driven CBM offers a rounded and proactive solution. For example, by embedding sensors to collect real-time data on temperature, vibration, pressure, and wear, CBM continuously monitors equipment health. Predictive analytics then identify issues before they escalate, enabling interventions only when necessary.

This approach reduces downtime, minimises human error, and extends asset lifespans. Over time, CBM systems self-optimize by learning from new data points, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

Importantly, human judgment remains vital to complement AI insights, ensuring multi-layered decisions in complex environments. CBM offers measurable benefits such as:

- **Efficiency and uptime:** predictive analytics reduce costs and downtime by 20%, according to the International Energy Agency.
- **Resource optimisation:** according to a recent Schneider Electric report, early CBM implementation can result in up to a 40% reduction in on-site maintenance interventions and a 20% decrease in operational costs.
- **Sustainability:** CBM reduces energy waste and extends equipment lifespans, thereby directly supporting carbon-

reduction targets.

- **Reliability:** consistent performance and service continuity are maintained, even amid technician shortages.
- **Cybersecurity:** continuous monitoring identifies anomalies early, reducing vulnerabilities and centralising infrastructure management to shrink attack surfaces.
- **Cost reduction:** Compass Data Centres cut costs through AI-powered maintenance, with a shift to CBM leading to a 40% reduction in manual, on-site interventions and a 20% decrease in OPEX.

A strategic imperative

Future-ready data centres demand proactive strategies. Whether designing a new facility or upgrading legacy systems, integrating AI-powered CBM is critical. For new builds, embedding CBM from the design stage ensures seamless, data-driven operations from day one. For existing facilities, a phased rollout helps mitigate risks while transitioning infrastructure.

With CBM, data centres can evolve into efficient, resilient, and sustainable facilities, ready to harness AI to optimise operations and drive innovation in an increasingly demanding digital world.

Enquiries: www.se.com/za/en



Surge protection for modern control systems

As industrial automation, smart buildings, and safety systems become increasingly interconnected, the exposure of measuring and control circuits to lightning and surge events continues to grow. Even short-duration overvoltages can interrupt communication interfaces, damage sensitive equipment, and cause costly process disruptions. Effective surge protection for signal, bus, and communication lines has therefore become a core design requirement in modern electrical and automation installations.

One example of how this challenge is addressed in practice is the BLITZDUCTORconnect range from DEHN. It reflects current design approaches that combine high discharge capacity with compact construction for control and instrumentation systems.

Universal combined arresters for critical circuits

Measuring and control circuits often require protection against both direct lightning currents and induced surge voltages. Combined lightning current and surge arresters are commonly used for this purpose, particularly on signal lines, bus systems, and telecommunication interfaces.

Devices in this category are typically designed to withstand lightning current impulses of several kiloamperes (10/350 µs) while also handling high nominal and maximum surge currents (8/20 µs). This enables them to manage demanding transient conditions found in industrial environments.

Maintaining a low voltage protection level is equally important. Sensitive terminal equipment in automation, instrumentation, and communication systems can be vulnerable to excessive residual voltages. Achieving the correct balance between

discharge capability and voltage limitation is essential to ensure both system reliability and long-term equipment protection.

Installation and maintenance considerations

Ease of installation and maintenance significantly influences the practical suitability of surge protection devices. Features such as push-in connection technology, angled terminals, and compatibility with common conductor sizes help reduce installation time and minimise wiring errors.

Integrated test points allow voltage measurements to be taken directly at the arrester, supporting faster diagnostics and routine inspections. The ability to disconnect signal lines simplifies commissioning and servicing.

Modular designs, separating the base from the protection module, are increasingly common. In these systems, surge protection components are contained within a pluggable module that can be replaced without tools. Maintenance can therefore be performed safely and efficiently without disturbing field wiring.

For PCB-based applications, mountable base components allow surge protection to be integrated directly into electronic assemblies. Remote signalling contacts at the base level enable condition monitoring while conserving enclosure space.

Operational safety and system availability

High availability is essential in industrial plants and building services installations. Surge protection devices are therefore often designed with fail-open characteristics, ensuring signal circuits remain operational even after the protective element has



reached end of life.

Secure locking mechanisms help prevent accidental removal during operation, while still allowing controlled replacement during maintenance. Resistance to vibration and mechanical shock is important in industrial environments subject to movement or impact.

Effective earthing and bonding networks remain fundamental to surge protection performance. Designs that provide reliable lightning-current-capable connections via standard 35 mm DIN rails support dependable bonding under severe transient conditions.

Visual status indicators that do not rely on auxiliary power allow rapid on-site condition checks. Remote signalling modules enable integration into central monitoring or building management systems, supporting proactive maintenance and reducing the risk of unnoticed protection failures.

Compact construction and compliance

Space in modern control panels and switchgear assemblies is increasingly limited. Surge protection devices with narrow widths that protect multiple signal lines within a single module offer clear advantages in high-density installations.

Compliance with international standards and certifications such as UL, CSA, SIL, ATEX, IECEx, and CCC remains essential, particularly for projects involving hazardous



locations or global supply chains. Dedicated solutions for intrinsically safe circuits further extend applicability in potentially explosive atmospheres, where electrical safety and surge coordination must be carefully aligned.

A system-based approach

Surge protection for control systems forms part of a broader lightning and earthing strategy. Applications range from building automation and HVAC systems to safety and security installations. By combining high discharge capacity, controlled protection levels, modular construction, and robust mechanical design, modern signal line arresters support a coordinated approach to protecting today's interconnected control infrastructure.

Enquiries: www.dehn-africa.com/en-za

A smarter way to cool homes

As temperatures remain high across the country, South African households face a familiar dilemma: how to stay cool without the electricity bill skyrocketing. For many, the default strategy is to run the air conditioner at full blast until the room is freezing, then switch it off until the heat becomes unbearable again.

It is a common habit, but it is also one of the most inefficient ways to cool a home. Traditional air conditioning units that stop and start repeatedly consume significantly more energy than those maintaining a steady temperature. In a landscape where electricity tariffs are rising and grid stability remains a background concern in many

cities, efficiency is a financial necessity and not just part of a green philosophy.

The shift from 'off' to 'controlled'

The latest generation of residential cooling technology is moving away from this binary "all-or-nothing" approach. LG Electronics South Africa has introduced Active Energy Control (AEC) to its Dualcool inverter range, a feature designed specifically to give users granular control over their power consumption.

Rather than simply choosing a temperature, AEC allows homeowners to actively cap the unit's energy intake. Users can limit the motor's performance to 80%, 60%, or even 40% of its capacity. This essentially acts as a "dimmer switch" for electricity usage.

This is particularly relevant in South Africa. On a mildly warm day, running an AC at 100% capacity is overkill. By throttling the system to 40%, families can maintain a comfortable environment for sleeping or working while minimising the impact on the household budget. It also reduces the startup load, which is critical for homes running on solar inverters, as many households are choosing to become more and more energy independent.

Hygiene and health in closed spaces

Beyond efficiency, the mechanics of cooling

have evolved to address air quality. Air conditioners can become breeding grounds for mould if moisture is allowed to sit in the unit after it is switched off.

Newer models now incorporate auto-cleaning functions that automatically dry the heat exchanger, preventing bacteria and mould growth. This ensures that the air being circulated remains clean, preventing the "stale" smell often associated with older units and maintaining a healthier environment for bedrooms and nurseries.

Smarter management

Efficiency is also driven by visibility. Integration with platforms like the LG ThinQ app allows households to monitor their energy consumption in real time from a smartphone. Being able to see exactly how much power is being used – and having the ability to adjust it remotely or set schedules – shifts air conditioning from a passive appliance to a managed home asset.

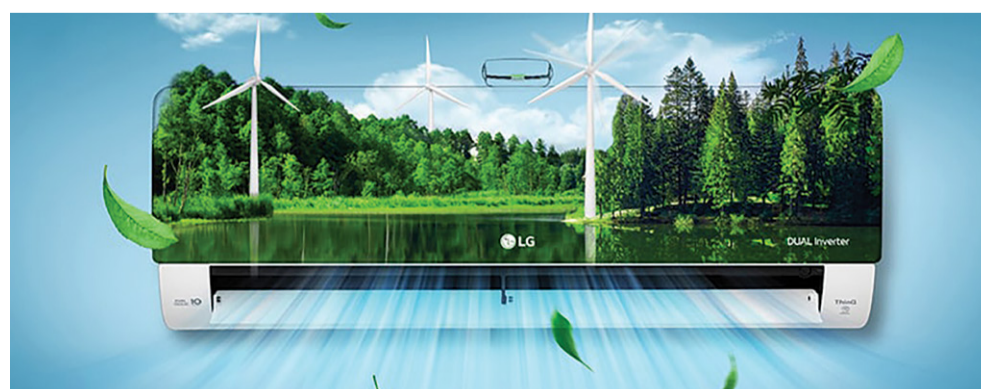
As South Africans enjoy the summer months, the focus should shift from simply "surviving the heat" to managing the home environment intelligently. Modern cooling is about temperature control, yes, but it is also about balancing comfort with cost-effective, sustainable energy habits.

Enquiries: <https://www.lg.com/za/>

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Modern cooling is about temperature control, yes, but it is also about balancing comfort with cost-effective, sustainable energy habits.

-LG Electronics



Why Makita continues to lead the jobsite

Makita has been manufacturing professional-grade power tools for over a century, building a reputation on the jobsite for durability and performance across residential, commercial, and industrial applications. Available locally from Three-D Agencies, the range continues to expand with cordless technology and battery platforms that are reshaping how electrical contractors work.

A legacy of innovation

Founded in 1915 in Nagoya, Japan, Makita began as an electric motor sales and repair company. Over the decades, the company expanded into power tools, becoming a pioneer in cordless technology. In fact, Makita was one of the first manufacturers to introduce lithium-ion battery tools to the professional market, setting a new standard for runtime, charge speed, and tool longevity.

That early commitment to battery innovation has shaped the brand's identity. Rather than chasing trends, Makita engineers tools around real-world jobsite needs: longer runtime, reduced downtime, and consistent torque under load.

The cordless revolution: LXT and XGT

At the heart of Makita's modern lineup are its battery platforms:

- LXT (18 V lithium-ion): A comprehensive system with hundreds of compatible

tools, from drills and impact drivers to outdoor power equipment.

- XGT (40 V max): Designed for high-demand industrial and heavy-duty applications, delivering corded-level power without the cord.

These platforms allow professionals to build entire tool arsenals on a single battery ecosystem. The result? Efficiency, cost savings, and fewer compatibility headaches on the job.

Built for professionals

What separates Makita from competitors isn't just power, it's precision engineering. These tools are engineered to withstand constant use in harsh conditions. Many Makita tools feature:

- Brushless motor technology for extended life and efficiency;
- Advanced battery protection systems;
- Ergonomic, lightweight designs to reduce fatigue; and
- Extreme Protection Technology (XPT) for dust and water resistance.

Expanding beyond construction

Makita's reach now

extends far beyond traditional construction. Landscapers rely on cordless blowers and string trimmers. Mechanics depend on high-torque impact wrenches. Woodworkers trust precision routers and track saws. Even DIY enthusiasts are embracing Makita for its professional feel and reliability. This versatility reflects the company's broader mission: to create a unified battery-powered ecosystem that supports every trade.

Sustainability meets performance

Makita has also invested heavily in sustainability. By pushing cordless solutions and reducing reliance on gas-powered equipment, the brand supports cleaner, quieter jobsites. Its battery recycling initiatives and energy-efficient

manufacturing processes demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility without compromising performance.

The Makita advantage

Professionals choose tools for three reasons: reliability, power, and trust. Makita delivers on all three. The brand's reputation has been built over decades of consistent quality control, rigorous testing, and feedback-driven design improvements. In an industry where downtime costs money and performance defines reputation, Makita remains a trusted partner on jobsites around the world.

Three-D Agencies is a proud partner of Makita Corporation, delivering professional-grade power solutions to support tradespeople on every jobsite.

Enquiries: www.three-d.co.za



Tork Craft rolls out 127-piece Trackbox Racing Edition toolbox

Tork Craft has unveiled its latest addition to the Performance Garage range, the Trackbox Racing Edition (TCTB127) – a fully kitted 127-piece top box that packs an impressive spread of chrome vanadium tools into a compact, lockable steel case. This toolbox is locally available from Vermont Sales.

Measuring 600 mm (L) x 270 mm (W) x 320 mm (H) and weighing in at 26 kg, this is a serious working kit designed for anyone who needs a well-organised, portable tool solution. The powder-coated steel construction is built to take knocks, while three lockable drawers running on 35 mm ball-bearing slides ensure smooth, reliable access to every tool inside. A top tray and lid tray round out the storage, with foam inserts keeping everything snug and in its place.

What's inside

The TCTB127 covers an enormous amount of ground for a single toolbox. The lid

tray houses everyday essentials: eight screwdrivers (slotted, Phillips, and Torx), a 3 m tape measure, 150 mm mechanical vernier, utility knife with ten spare blades, a 75-lumen torch, pencil-type tyre pressure gauge, Schrader valve key, brass wire brush, and a telescopic magnetic pick-up tool.

The top tray is where things get more specialised, with sliding T-bar wrenches in six sizes (8–17 mm), spark plug sockets, and a comprehensive socket set spanning 1/4", 3/8", and 1/2" drives, including 1/4" bit sockets covering Torx, slotted, hex, Phillips, and Pozi drive types. Extension bars and drive adaptors complete the set.

Across the three drawers, users will find combination spanners from 6–24 mm, circlip pliers (internal and external), a 250 mm locking plier, hex key set (1.5–10 mm), a 3/8" mechanical torque wrench with a 10–60 Nm range, reversible ratchets in 1/4" and 1/2" drive, a water pump box joint plier, 400 mm tyre levers, a chain breaker, cable lube tool, spring pulling tool, spoke wrench kit, machinist and mallet hammers, long nose, combination, and diagonal pliers, and a half-round steel file. A foam storage cut-out provides space for additional items, and a racing sticker set is included for good measure.

Built for the field

The lockable drawers and carry handles make the Trackbox Racing Edition a practical choice for anyone who needs to transport a full tool set between jobs or to the track. The empty box is also available separately (TCTB005) for those who prefer to populate it with their own selection.

Enquiries: www.vermontsales.co.za



Non-compliant flame-retardant cables detected in lab tests

Independent laboratory testing has uncovered non-compliance with South Africa's compulsory SANS 1507 standards in several locally manufactured and imported electrical cables. This was revealed by South Ocean Electric Wire (SOEW)'s testing laboratory in Alrode. SOEW is a JSE-listed local cable manufacturer.

This underscores the risk that numerous electrical installations, including underground mines and high-rise buildings, could be facing potential health hazards in the case of a fire due to the installation of inferior or non-compliant products where a standard wire or cable type does not meet all fire and related emission safety standards.

Andre Smith, CEO of SOEW, explains that cables are identified by extruded stripes on their black outer sheath. A red stripe denotes Flame Retardant (FR) PVC, which produces dense smoke and corrosive hydrogen chloride gas (HCl) upon burning, making it unsuitable for certain buildings and underground mine installations.

A blue stripe indicates Low Halogen Flame Retardant (LHFR) cables, emitting less smoke and fewer toxic gases, and a white stripe signifies Low Smoke Zero Halogen (LSZH) cables, generating minimal smoke with no toxic emissions.

"In applications such as solar installations, engineering projects, manufacturing facilities, construction, and industrial settings, selecting the correct cable is crucial to reduce safety and fire risks," Smith explains.

"Fire retardant (FR) PVC (red stripe) is unsuitable for confined environments due to its emissions, while LHFR (blue) and LSZH (white) provide graduated protection for applications involving sensitive electronics or personnel. Costs rise with the performance level. Blue-stripe cables

exceed red-stripe pricing, and white-stripe is the most expensive due to the use of advanced polymers in the manufacturing process."

He adds that SANS 1507, aligned with international standards such as IEC 60332, IEC 60331, UL 94, and BS 6387, mandates specific requirements for flame retardancy and emissions in all installed cables and wires. For example, Part 4 of SANS 1507 details additional criteria for fire-retardant cables, including materials, construction, and electrical performance.

These standards ensure the cable design will delay the spread of a fire by self-extinguishing when the flame source is removed, as the cable's required polymer's Limiting Oxygen Index (LOI) exceeds the percentage found in normal air, preventing sustained burning.

Smith notes that SOEW's tests revealed shortcuts by manufacturers, including the use of substandard polymers that render cables non-compliant and hazardous. Instances include mismarking FR PVC as LHFR or even LSZH by applying a blue or a white stripe on the cable and using LSZH only on outer sheaths, while inner cores and the cable bedding do not comply with the required standards. Contractors have also been found to substitute blue-stripe cables for the required white-stripe variants to cut costs.

He adds that cable verification requires specialised equipment, which not all manufacturers possess. Many rely on unverified manufacturer datasheets. As a reputable manufacturer, SOEW cautions users across these sectors against these dangers and offers independent testing for compliance assurance.

Enquiries: www.soew.co.za



Power without pause: standby and solar backup solutions

In 2026, energy resilience is no longer reactive but strategic and engineered. As grid instability, rising tariffs, and increased digital dependence continue to shape the electrical landscape, standby, backup, and emergency power systems have evolved into intelligent, integrated solutions. Today's installations are smarter, cleaner, and more connected than ever before, according to Voltex.

The modern home and business now operate in a hybrid energy environment. Solar photovoltaic systems, lithium battery storage, and advanced hybrid inverters work alongside standby generators to create layered protection against outages. The focus has shifted from simple backup to seamless continuity, ensuring critical loads remain operational without disruption, data loss, or safety risk.

Solar backup solutions have advanced significantly in 2026. High-efficiency PV modules, next-generation MPPT technology, and scalable lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO₄) batteries now offer longer lifespans, faster charging cycles, and enhanced thermal stability. Modular battery systems allow for phased expansion, giving users flexibility as energy demands grow. Integrated hybrid inverters intelligently prioritise solar generation, battery storage, and grid supply, optimising consumption while reducing reliance on fuel-based generation.

Smart energy management systems are

redefining control. Through mobile apps and cloud-based monitoring platforms, users can track load consumption in real time, adjust priority circuits, and receive maintenance alerts instantly. For commercial facilities, predictive analytics support preventative servicing, reducing downtime, and extending equipment life.

Standby generators remain a critical component, particularly for high-load industrial, healthcare, and infrastructure environments. In 2026, modern generator systems feature improved fuel efficiency, lower emissions profiles, and enhanced acoustic design. Automatic transfer switches (ATS) with intelligent load sensing ensure rapid, seamless changeover during grid failure, while synchronisation capability allows generators to integrate into hybrid solar-battery systems when required.

Emergency power compliance continues to tighten in 2026, especially in regulated sectors. Dedicated emergency distribution boards, clearly segregated essential circuits, and compliant cabling infrastructure are vital to meet safety standards. Emergency lighting, fire detection systems, and life-support equipment demand a fail-safe design and uncompromised reliability.

For installers and specifiers, the 2026 landscape requires future-ready thinking. Electrical infrastructure must be designed for scalability, accommodating additional battery banks, expanded PV arrays, and electric vehicle charging integration. Correct

sizing, protection coordination, and surge protection remain fundamental to system longevity and safety.

At Voltex, the focus remains on supplying the critical components that make these systems reliable: compliant distribution equipment, robust protection devices, advanced switching solutions, and quality cabling that supports modern hybrid

installations. Effective backup power is not defined by a single product, but by a carefully engineered ecosystem.

In 2026, resilience is strategic. By investing in intelligent, compliant, and solar-ready backup solutions today, businesses and homeowners secure continuity, operational confidence and long-term energy independence, regardless of grid uncertainty.

Enquiries: www.voltex.co.za



Are we ready for businesses to go off-grid?

By: Francois van Themaat, co-founder and managing director, Large Projects at Sustainable Power Solutions (SPS)

South Africa's energy market is fast changing. With grid connection queues stretching up to five years in some areas and demand for reliable, affordable power rising, Commercial and Industrial (C&I) businesses face a pressing question: is it time to take control of their energy and go fully off-grid? For many companies, off-grid is no longer just a backup option or a safety net. It's the strategic choice for energy security, sustainability, and predictable costs.

Technology and economics are finally aligning

For years, complete energy independence seemed out of reach. Technology was expensive, storage options were limited, and generating enough power to run a business off-grid felt impractical. That is changing rapidly. Modern solar panels capture sunlight far more efficiently, while battery storage allows businesses to use that energy at night or when clouds block the sun.



Francois van Themaat of Sustainable Power Solutions.

South Africa is particularly well-positioned to benefit, with abundant sunlight across much of the country. Nature has shown us the way: each tree is, in essence, a small factory. A tree's leaves capture sunlight and convert it into energy to grow and produce fruit. The tree's trunk can be thought of as a battery that stores energy, for when it is needed. Off-grid systems operate on a similar principle at an industrial scale, turning sunlight into reliable, usable power for businesses.

Costs have dropped dramatically. Solar panels are now more than 80% cheaper than a decade ago, while batteries, the key to energy storage, have fallen nearly 90% in price over a similar period. Combined with better efficiency and large-scale production, self-generation is becoming increasingly competitive with traditional grid electricity, turning a long-dreamed possibility into a practical reality.

What off-grid really means in practice

Going off-grid requires a deliberate decision to disconnect from the utility grid. All energy needs must be generated on-site, through a combination of solar panels and battery storage, with a diesel generator for periods of prolonged cloudy days. Today, well-designed off-grid systems can supply 95% or more of an operation's energy from clean sources, with diesel used only during extended periods of heavy cloud or rain.

This approach provides three key benefits: predictable costs, reliable supply, and a lower carbon footprint. Businesses are no longer subject to volatile electricity tariffs, punitive regulations or intermittent grid supply. Operations can run smoothly, while sustainability performance increasingly meets global expectations for export-focused companies.

Increased financing and accessibility options

Historically, the upfront cost of going off-grid was a major barrier. That barrier is now changing thanks to innovative financing solutions. Models such as Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Energy-as-a-Service (EaaS) allow businesses to adopt off-grid systems without a heavy initial investment. Providers take responsibility for design, installation, monitoring, and maintenance, including component replacement for the duration of the contract. Performance guarantees ensure that clients are

compensated if energy targets are not met.

These arrangements allow businesses to focus on running their operations while enjoying the benefits of reliable, sustainable, and cost-effective power. For many, off-grid energy is now not only feasible but financially sensible.

Strategic considerations and opportunities

Off-grid solutions are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Space constraints limit the feasibility of high-demand facilities such as data centres or dense urban buildings, which may instead rely on wheeling or embedded energy solutions. For businesses with sufficient rooftops, land, or even the ability to create additional space through carports and storage areas, going off-grid makes strategic sense.

Electric vehicles with vehicle-to-load (V2L) capabilities that are now readily available in South Africa at competitive prices provide additional options for creative load management.

The projects that SPS has implemented for the hospitality sector in the Seychelles, Kenya, and Botswana demonstrate that fully off-grid operations are both technically possible and economically viable. However, new developments should incorporate off-grid planning from the start, as buildings designed to maximise solar exposure and utilise unshaded areas can be used to avoid the high costs of grid connection, reduce operational risk and create more attractive, sustainable properties for tenants or buyers.

Off-grid energy as a strategic advantage

Off-grid energy has matured from a niche experiment into a strategic business solution. Falling technology costs, innovative financing models, and the urgent need for reliable power provide companies with a clear reason to take control of their energy. For C&I businesses with enough space, the choice is obvious: off-grid energy is cheaper, cleaner, and more predictable than remaining tied to the grid.

Off-grid energy is set to become mainstream in South Africa within the next five years. Businesses that embrace it now gain resilience, operational certainty, and sustainability advantages that will give them a competitive edge for the future.

Enquiries: <https://sps.africa/>

Critical power distribution for modern infrastructure

Legrand has expanded its critical power portfolio with integrated solutions that deliver reliable, efficient, safe, and flexible power distribution across a range of applications, including commercial buildings, healthcare facilities, data centres, and industrial sites.

As demand for dependable electrical infrastructure increases, Legrand's approach focuses on delivering stable power distribution, while addressing space constraints, operational continuity and energy efficiency. The company's critical power solutions combine modular

distribution design with high-efficiency upstream equipment, enabling designers and operators to adapt systems efficiently as operational requirements change.

Track busways

A central system in critical power is the latest generation Legrand Data Center Track Busway technology, which addresses the operational pressures facing today's high-density, AI-intensive computing environments.

The Legrand Data Center Track Busway system – engineered for reliability, safety, and long-term efficiency – comprises modular, monitored power distribution infrastructure that supports scalable, fault-resilient data centre operations.

Standout features of the Legrand Track Busway compared to conventional busway systems include the combination of advanced safety features, rapid tool-free installation, integrated intelligent monitoring and cost-efficiency.

This system has been designed to replace traditional cabling with a compact, expandable power rail that enables rapid configuration changes and branch expansion without interrupting supply. The flat profile design and

compact installation clearances optimise overhead space, while supporting A and B busway configurations.

Safety and operational reliability are reinforced through IP40-rated construction, a “mechanical first, electrical second” tap-off box installation sequence and integrated temperature monitoring at critical connection points.

Legrand's track busway, with current ratings from 160 A to 800 A, incorporates hot-swappable power meters at end feeds and tap-off boxes, allowing real-time monitoring of voltage, current, power, energy, and joint temperatures. These meters support standard communication protocols, enabling integration into data centre infrastructure management platforms to provide operators with detailed visibility of rack-level power consumption.

Distribution boards

Distribution boards form the backbone of every building, ensuring optimum efficiency and safety in electrical installations.

Legrand's modular power distribution enclosures – designed to the highest quality, safety and environmental standards – ensure dependable operation, flexibility, and ease of installation.

Flexible Legrand XL3 4000 and XL3 6300 enclosures are available in various widths, depths, and heights, allowing flexibility for precise configuration. These modular enclosures can be joined side-by-side or back-to-back and each panel can be replaced by a door to suit exact installation requirements.

This optimised distribution system, which ensures freedom of assembly, eliminates the need to create special connections upstream and ensures time savings in installation by being able to connect appliances on pre-assembled units.

Trunking supports, wire guide rings, and cable tie bars facilitate easy wiring through these enclosures, and, for enhanced convenience, all side walls and top and bottom plates can be assembled after wiring.

Legrand specialists advise on critical power projects in diverse industries throughout Southern Africa, offering comprehensive solutions from planning to installation.

Support services

Legrand is committed to working closely with customers to ensure sustainability, energy efficiency, and optimum performance of equipment for every installation.

The local operation has entered into service agreements with strategic partners, enabling the team to offer direct installation and after-sales services. Legrand specialists work closely with partners to provide in-house designs, specifications and critical power solutions, ensuring that suitable products are selected for every installation.

The Legrand team – which comprises highly skilled engineers and technicians in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban – also offers services in Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia. A dependable after-sales service, with a dedicated service support line, includes Tier 3 level support to data centres.

Legrand's environmentally responsible approach to constantly changing project requirements is enhanced through the company's support services and solutions plan. This initiative enhances ongoing technological developments of the company's product portfolio, in terms of energy efficiency, quality power supply, safety, and aesthetics.

Enquiries: www.legrand.co.za



SafeQuip launches new disposable extinguishers

SafeQuip, a leading distributor of fire-related equipment, is addressing one of the most common fire safety failures: access. Too often, extinguishers are locked away, poorly maintained, or simply not close enough when a small fire starts. SafeQuip's latest product launch introduces two compact, disposable fire extinguishers designed for fast response, minimal upkeep, and everyday use.

The new 0.6 kg disposable dry chemical powder fire extinguisher and the 0.6 L disposable foam fire extinguisher offer a simpler option for everyday spaces. They are lightweight, non-refillable, and require no servicing, removing one of the biggest

barriers to effective fire protection in homes, vehicles, and small workplaces.

The dry chemical powder extinguisher is suitable for Class A, B, and C fires, which means it can be used on common combustibles like wood and paper, flammable liquids, and live electrical equipment. Filled with 600 g of general-purpose powder containing 85% monoammonium phosphate, it packs serious firefighting ability into a small, easy-to-store unit. It fits comfortably into everyday settings such as homes, cars, caravans, and small workshops.

The foam extinguisher is aimed at spaces where cooking and liquid fires are more

likely. It is rated for Class A, B, and F fires and works especially well on cooking oils and fats. Using a 3% AFFF foam agent, it forms a layer over the fire that helps smother flames and reduce the chance of flare-ups. One of its biggest advantages is clean-up. Foam leaves far less residue than powder, which makes it a better choice for kitchens and food prep areas. It should not be used on live electrical equipment and is not suitable for Class C fires (energised electrical equipment fires).

Both extinguishers share the same compact size and a full mass of 732 g. They are small enough to store in cupboards, cars, caravans, or holiday accommodation without getting in the way. As they are disposable, there is no need for pressure testing, refilling, or routine servicing. When the unit reaches the end of its life or has been used, it is simply replaced.

Understanding fire classes still matters.

Class A covers everyday solid materials. Class B relates to flammable liquids. Class C involves energised electrical equipment. Class F applies to cooking oils and fats. Choosing the right extinguisher for the space you are protecting makes a real difference, especially when electricity is involved. SafeQuip's clear labelling helps take the guesswork out of that decision.

These new disposable extinguishers are designed for real life. They are for the places where fires actually start and where quick action counts. Homes, holiday getaways, vehicles, and small offices all benefit from having something simple and reliable within arm's reach. When time is tight, having the right tool close by can change the outcome completely.

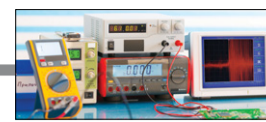
SafeQuip remains dedicated to elevating fire safety standards in South Africa and beyond, ensuring the effective mitigation of all fire risks.

Enquiries: www.safequip.co.za



Too often, extinguishers are locked away, poorly maintained, or simply not close enough when a small fire starts. SafeQuip's latest product launch introduces two compact, disposable fire extinguishers designed for fast response, minimal upkeep, and everyday use.

- Safequip



Five warning signs that SA faces a silent battery crisis

South Africa may be heading into a new energy crisis, one that has nothing to do with Eskom. According to REVOV, a leading supplier of lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries assembled in South Africa, thousands of degraded batteries imported during the loadshedding boom are now entering the market, and consumers are paying the price.

During the height of loadshedding, importers flooded the country with batteries to meet unprecedented demand. But when outages eased, much of that stock sat idle in warehouses for months, and unlike ordinary goods, batteries degrade when left unused.

"A LiFePO4 battery can lose up to 3% charge per month. After a year in storage, it can arrive flat, unbalanced, and already

compromised," says Lance Dickerson, managing director of REVOV. "This is a systemic issue that is eroding trust in the renewable energy sector."

To help consumers and installers navigate the risk, REVOV has identified five warning signs that degraded stockpiles are quietly undermining South Africa's energy resilience.

Batteries are being sold after sitting idle for months: Batteries are not inert products; they are chemical systems that deteriorate when left uncycled. A battery stored for a year can arrive at installation already compromised, even though it is sold as "new".

A growing number of installations are failing under basic load: The cause is often not the inverter or the installer but degraded stock that was never maintained.

Consumers are paying premium prices for sub-par products: Many of the batteries imported during the boom were never cycled, tested, or conditioned. Consumers end up footing the bill when these units fail months later.

Tariff hikes are driving households toward backup power, but quality is not guaranteed: With electricity tariffs rising

and municipal outages worsening, more households are turning to solar and storage. "Energy independence is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity," says Dickerson. "But independence must be built on quality, not on stockpiled batteries that were never cared for and maintained."

Lack of transparency is leaving consumers exposed: REVOV says the public should do due diligence and purchase from suppliers who can answer these key questions:

- Are you aware of the production dates?
- Do you have a record of recharge and maintenance histories?
- Do you follow pre-dispatch quality assurance procedures?
- Can you offer local technical support, country-wide?

Without these safeguards, consumers cannot know whether the battery they're buying is healthy or already degraded.

REVOV urges South Africans to choose locally assembled, locally supported batteries backed by nationwide technical teams and transparent warranties.

"The future of energy resilience depends on batteries that are built to last – and supported at home," Dickerson says.

Enquiries: <https://revov.co.za/>



ACTOM's approach to reliable medium voltage supply

Many sectors across South Africa and the broader region depend on mission-critical facilities to deliver uninterrupted services. Hospitals, data centres, and large industrial operations cannot afford downtime, and their performance relies heavily on stable and resilient Medium Voltage (MV) electrical systems. Ensuring that these facilities operate without disruption requires equipment that can support changing energy demands, tolerate grid instability, and offer strong protection and monitoring capabilities.

Meeting the demands of mission-critical environments

A mission-critical facility is defined by its need for maximum uptime and minimal room for error. Rhett Kelly, design and development manager at ACTOM MV Switchgear, explains that MV switchgear serves as the backbone of the electrical network: "It provides the switching capability needed for operational flexibility and protects upstream equipment by interrupting downstream faults and isolating them from the healthy network. Monitoring and protection systems ensure that operators have full real-time visibility of network conditions both onsite and remotely via Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)."

To meet the varied needs of hospitals, data centres, and industrial plants, ACTOM offers a wide range of switchgear solutions with various configurations, insulation technologies, and busbar options. All solutions are designed and type-tested to both local and international standards, ensuring they meet the performance and safety requirements demanded by high-reliability environments.

Engineering reliability through robust design

Reliability in MV systems is achieved through both technology and endurance. It is important for switchgear to employ modern maintenance-free interruption

technologies and durable operating mechanisms that have been tested by internationally recognised facilities for extended electrical and mechanical endurance, i.e., classified as E2 and M2, respectively, in accordance with IEC 62271-100. This testing ensures resilient electrical and mechanical performance over long periods, reducing maintenance requirements and supporting continuous operation.

While grid instability and rapid load fluctuations remain ongoing challenges across the region, MV switchgear is designed to tolerate the voltage and current variations typically associated with these conditions. This resilience helps operators maintain stability even when external factors are unpredictable.

Real-world support in times of outage

Beyond the physical equipment, long-term support plays a vital role in maintaining supply continuity. Avril Cape, after-sales manager at ACTOM MV Switchgear, highlights the importance of rapid response capability. "Effective outage management requires established rapid-response protocols, qualified technical personnel, and local availability of critical spares to ensure minimal service interruption. Network operators and switchgear service providers typically maintain 24-hour support capabilities and implement structured maintenance schedules and/or condition-based maintenance to identify and address potential failure points before they escalate."

"It is important to work with a company that operates a dedicated Services division with multiple regional branches," says Marius Lombard, services manager. "Providing customers with true 24/7 technical support and access to specialists in the maintenance, inspection, and life-cycle management of MV switchgear installations is vital. Proactive and condition-based maintenance strategies ensure early identification of wear, degradation, and operational risks before

they progress into costly failures. By combining field expertise, structured maintenance programmes, and access to OEM-level technical resources, a services division plays a critical role in safeguarding network reliability and extending the asset life of customer installations."

When unplanned outages occur, coordinated field service teams can expedite restoration through on-site fault assessment, component replacement, and system recommissioning. Importantly, holding essential inventory and adhering to stringent response times are key to restoring network integrity and maintaining supply continuity across power distribution systems."

Using technology to enhance resilience

Digitalisation is reshaping how operators manage electrical infrastructure. By integrating online condition-monitoring systems into MV switchgear, such as temperature and partial discharge monitoring, early warnings can be provided to help prevent failures. Features like infrared windows allow technicians to conduct inspections safely while equipment remains energised. These tools support a shift from time-based maintenance to predictive, condition-based strategies, improving both safety and efficiency.

Preparing for the future of energy

As global environmental standards evolve, so too must MV switchgear technology. New product ranges that eliminate reliance on fluorinated gases such as SF6, including solid dielectric insulated switchgear (SDIS), must be continuously developed in line with international regulations. With SF6-free solutions extending up to 40.5 kV, 3,150 A (4,000 A at 17.5 kV),

and 40 kA, ACTOM aims to ensure that mission-critical facilities can meet rising energy demands while adapting to a rapidly changing power landscape.

Keeping abreast of "4IR" (Fourth Industrial Revolution) trends, ACTOM has introduced QR-code access to documentation, making it easier for customers and operators to retrieve online cloud-based manuals, drawings, and test reports when needed.

Building a foundation for long-term stability

Reliable MV infrastructure underpins the performance of South Africa's most essential facilities. As energy systems evolve and digitalisation accelerates, investment in durable, well-supported switchgear remains essential. Through a combination of technical capability, long-term service support, and ongoing innovation, a resilient foundation can be built for sectors that cannot afford interruption.

Enquiries: www.actom.co.za



Solar for businesses with asbestos roofs

South African businesses urgently need more reliable, lower-cost power. However, asbestos roofing in many older commercial and industrial buildings has become a major barrier to rooftop solar adoption. Candi Solar has the solution...

Current asbestos safety regulations prohibit installing standard roof-mounted solar systems directly on these roofs. This adds cost, complexity, and delays to projects. In response, a more integrated solution is emerging: replacing asbestos roofing and installing solar as a single, coordinated energy upgrade. This approach removes compliance obstacles while improving insurability, strengthening long-term reliability, and future-proofing the building as a commercial asset.

Why asbestos rules matter for solar projects

The asbestos regulations are designed to prevent disturbance of asbestos-containing materials. In practical terms, this means that roofs containing asbestos cannot be drilled into, cut, or used to support new equipment – including solar panels.

As a result, solar installations on these buildings typically only move forward once the asbestos roofing has been replaced or a compliant alternative mounting solution is in place.

For many businesses, particularly in older properties, this has shifted the conversation from whether to install solar to how to do so safely and legally, while addressing ageing roofs that are often difficult to insure, costly to maintain, and increasingly restrict access to on-site renewable energy.

Some businesses have attempted to work around asbestos restrictions by installing solar on raised steel structures above the existing roof. However, this does not remove the asbestos or resolve the underlying compliance issue. Regulatory obligations, liability exposure, and insurance complications remain in place.

The growing case for solar

According to GreenCape's '2025 Energy Services Market Intelligence Report', embedded solar photovoltaic (PV) systems can deliver electricity at costs well below prevailing grid tariffs for commercial and industrial users. In broad terms, the levelised cost of electricity from embedded solar PV is typically 40–60% lower than grid power, depending on tariff structures and usage patterns.

In addition, qualifying solar installations may be eligible for a 100% write-off of the system cost in the first year under Section 12B of the Income Tax Act, subject to eligibility.

Yet for many buildings with asbestos-containing roofing, these advantages remain out of reach – not because the business case for solar is weak, but because the cost and complexity of the roof replacement remains prohibitive.

A high-cost barrier and a new way to overcome it

The cost of replacing an asbestos roof remains one of the largest obstacles facing businesses seeking to adopt rooftop solar. To address this, Candi Solar – a Swiss-founded solar developer, financier, and operator serving South Africa's commercial and industrial sector – has introduced a financing model that integrates roof replacement and solar installation within a single, fully financed energy upgrade.

Rather than requiring businesses to fund the roof replacement separately, Candi Solar can finance asbestos roof removal and replacement upfront as part of a coordinated solar project, allowing both elements to be structured within the same capital framework.

To ensure safety and regulatory compliance, Candi Solar works with accredited asbestos removal specialists who manage the required surveys, removal, replacement, and statutory clearance process before solar installation begins.

PLIS model

To make solar installation more financially accessible, Candi Solar offers a Performance-Linked Instalment Sale (PLIS) model – a financing structure that reduces the need for significant upfront capital by spreading the cost of the solar PV system over time, while still enabling businesses to benefit from applicable solar incentives and allowances.

Under PLIS, customers take ownership of the solar asset from the outset, with repayments linked to the system's actual performance. If generation falls below the agreed performance benchmark, instalments automatically adjust downward, providing a built-in cash-flow buffer.

Where a roof replacement is required to enable a roof-mounted solar installation, the associated asbestos roof replacement costs can be structured alongside the solar system within the same overall agreement, rather than as a once-off capital outlay.

This enables businesses to address ageing roofing and install solar PV as a single, coordinated project, with the solar system financed under PLIS to unlock lower-cost on-site energy and applicable incentives.

Richard Flamand, Candi Solar's South Africa lead, says the approach has transformed what was previously a prohibitive compliance challenge into a financially viable pathway to solar adoption.

"By structuring asbestos roof replacement and solar installation together within a single, integrated financing model, companies can modernise essential infrastructure and secure long-term energy cost stability without locking up capital. The delivery and performance risk sits with Candi Solar, reducing complexity for the customer while PLIS provides a clear path to ownership, with predictable repayments."

A practical next step for businesses

Businesses operating from asbestos-roofed buildings – or evaluating rooftop solar to reduce costs and strengthen resilience – should begin by confirming whether their facility has a legally compliant Asbestos Inventory. If one does not exist, or is out of date, a certified asbestos inspection professional must be appointed to complete the required survey.

From there, Candi Solar works with accredited asbestos and engineering partners to help businesses understand their compliance obligations, assess whether the roof is structurally suitable for solar, and explore compliant pathways to on-site generation. Where roof replacement is not the preferred option, alternative solutions – such as carports or ground-mounted systems – may also be considered, depending on site constraints and long-term objectives.

"Many businesses feel overwhelmed by the compliance and cost barriers around asbestos and solar," Flamand notes. "Our role is to remove that friction – making it simple, safe, and financially viable to transition to renewable energy."

Enquiries: info@candi.solar



New UPS series from Vertiv

Vertiv, a global leader in critical digital infrastructure, has introduced a new generation of compact uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems for connected homes and workspaces.

The Vertiv PowerUPS 200 family, available in 600–2,000 VA capacities, combines modern design with enhanced usability for workstations, point-of-sale (POS) systems, gaming consoles, smart devices, and home entertainment setups. Now available in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), the series expands Vertiv's single-phase UPS portfolio for home, office, and retail environments.

"As digital demand accelerates, users

are increasingly looking for reliable power solutions without operational complexity," says Giuseppe Leto, senior director, IT Systems for Vertiv in EMEA. "The Vertiv PowerUPS 200 family combines solid engineering expertise with an intuitive design tailored for the modern spaces where people live and work today."

Designed for ease of use and everyday reliability, the Vertiv PowerUPS 200 Standard Line Interactive Series (230 V) and Vertiv PowerUPS 200 Essential Line Interactive Series (230 V) include practical benefits that make power protection simpler and more intuitive. Among the most notable features are user-replaceable batteries, which

allow users to safely extend product life, and a straightforward interface featuring runtime LED indicators on the Essential Line Interactive Series models, and a colour LCD display on the Standard Line models for clear system status visibility.

Models 1,000 VA and higher include Type-A and Type-C USB charging ports, providing convenient power for mobile and connected devices. The new design also integrates details such as a dedicated mute button for alarm management and recyclable packaging, complementing proven

performance features including automatic voltage regulation (AVR) for output, and optimised internal design for consistent performance across a wide voltage range.

The Essential and Standard Series include models with up to eight total outlets, depending on configuration. Compact dimensions and recyclable packaging make them suitable for modern workspaces, while the two-year warranty (Essential Series) and the three-year warranty (Standard Series), including battery coverage, provide added confidence for users.

The Vertiv PowerUPS 200 Series renews Vertiv's single-phase desktop portfolio,

delivering reliable and efficient power protection for home, office, and small IT environments. Together with the network models such as Vertiv Edge Line-Interactive UPS and Vertiv Liebert GXT5 UPS, the series is part of Vertiv's comprehensive power management ecosystem, supporting future-ready digital operations.

Enquiries: www.vertiv.com



The Vertiv PowerUPS 200 family combines solid engineering expertise with an intuitive design tailored for the modern spaces where people live and work today.

– Vertiv



Introducing the Philips Tango Pro LED floodlight

The Philips Tango Pro, available locally from Signify, sets a new benchmark in outdoor lighting with ultra-efficiency and versatility. Delivering up to 200 lm/W, this fifth-generation floodlight combines cutting-edge LED technology with a sleek, award-winning design. Built for airports, sports arenas, ports, and industrial zones, Tango Pro ensures brighter, safer environments while supporting sustainability goals.

Engineered for durability, it boasts IP66 protection, IK08 impact resistance, and withstands 150 km/h winds. With lumen packages from 8,500–80,000 lm, and lifetimes up to 100,000 hours, it's a powerhouse for large-scale applications and demanding environments. Smart connectivity features like DALI 2.0 and Interact readiness make it future-proof for intelligent lighting systems.

Whether illuminating a stadium or a container yard, Tango Pro delivers performance, reliability, and style – earning the Red Dot Design Award 2024. It's not just a floodlight; it's a statement in sustainable innovation.

Key highlights include:

- **Ultra-efficient design:** Efficacy up to 200 lm/W, reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint.
- **Versatile applications:** Airports, sports arenas, parking garages, façades, billboards, ports, and industrial areas.

Performance specs:

- **Lumen output:** 8,500–80,000 lm
- **Wattage:** 200 W–500 W
- **Lifetime:** 100,000 hours (BVP563)/ 75,000 hours (BVP565)

Durability:

- IP66 ingress protection, IK08 impact resistance
- Marine salt protection (up to 3,000 hrs)
- **Wind resistance:** 150 km/h+, vibration tested (3G, 100K cycles)
- Smart and connected:
- **Dimming options:** 1-10V, DALI 2.0, SR enable
- Interact-ready for smart lighting systems

Design features:

- Compact, elegant housing with ADC1 die-cast aluminium



- Toolless maintenance, stainless steel bracket optional
- Red Dot Design Award 2024 winner
- **Control and sustainability:**
- Cloud-based lighting management
- Easy retrofitting, remote support, and future-proof architecture
- **Warranty:** five years.

Enquiries: www.signify.com



Whether illuminating a stadium or a container yard, Tango Pro delivers performance, reliability, and style – earning the Red Dot Design Award 2024.

– Signify



The all new GreenVision Solar All-in-One

Meet your sustainability goals with our innovative solar lighting solutions designed with performance and energy efficiency in mind.




Configured on site with help of a handheld remote*

Improved Life at Night

Bringing light to remote off grid locations. Enabling increase social & commercial activity. Enhancing safety and well-being.

Affordable & Easy to Implement

No cost for electrical infrastructure. Quick implantable lighting solution. Low profile design.

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100% energy saving. Integrated monocrystalline panel, LiFePO4 battery, MPPT charge controller. Upto 18K lumens.

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*Remote Control sold seperately. It can be configured on site in case customized dimming is required.

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Tridonic shares latest innovations at customer event

By: Ilana Koegelenberg

Tridonic, a global technology leader in lighting, welcomed customers and industry professionals to The Country Club Johannesburg in Woodmead on 12 February for the second edition of its annual customer event. Building on the success of last year's inaugural gathering in Cape Town, the event provided a platform for the company to outline its evolving market approach and showcase the innovations shaping its future direction.

Setting the scene

Charles Tewitz, managing director of Tridonic South Africa, opened proceedings with a welcome address that set the tone for the afternoon. Tewitz discussed Tridonic's established market presence and its ongoing transformation from a pure component supplier to an integrated systems and services provider. He emphasised that this journey could only succeed with the support of the company's key customers, a theme that resonated throughout the event.

Innovation at the core

Philipp Heindl, vice president of Business Development at Tridonic's headquarters in Austria, delivered the keynote presentation, giving attendees a broad overview of the company's innovation

pipeline. Heindl cited Tridonic's patent productivity as evidence of its commitment to R&D, noting that the company holds nearly 1.5 patents per employee and ranked second in Austria for newly registered patents last year.

He introduced Tridonic's Building Asset 360 market approach, which positions lighting as a building asset that provides data on its health and performance. It is focused on retrofit applications and built around three pillars of asset management, net-zero carbon, and people and well-being.

"We want to make sure that lighting is seen as an asset in a building, and that asset managers, real estate companies, and facility managers understand what lighting can add to the value of their building," said Heindl.

Heindl went on to outline a number of key innovations in the pipeline. These include the Lifetime Indicator – an AI-driven feature that monitors the remaining useful life of LED drivers to enable predictive maintenance; Tridonic's focus on solar lighting; a growing family of DC-input drivers; and the joint market penetration in partnership with Schneider Electric for microgrid applications.

On the controls side, Tridonic is expanding its wireless portfolio with new mesh integrations that bridge indoor and outdoor installations in a single system. Investment also continues in the company's lighting

management platforms for projects ranging from single boardrooms to large-scale hospital and university installations.

Technology in action

Leroy Baird, leading national sales manager at Tridonic South Africa, followed with a showcase of local projects delivered using Tridonic lighting controls, demonstrating the company's growing systems and services capability in the South African market.

Attendees then moved into a solutions deep dive led by Henk Rotman of Tridonic, who provided a live, hands-on demonstration of the Lifetime Indicator and other technologies presented during the keynote.

The event closed with time for networking, giving customers the opportunity to connect with Tridonic's team and explore how the company's evolving portfolio can support their projects going forward.

Enquiries: www.tridonic.com



From left: Charles Tewitz (Tridonic), Pieter van Aardt (BEKA Schröder), Danie van der Nest (BEKA Schröder), and Leroy Baird (Tridonic).



From left: Welcome Mkandla (Regent Lighting Solutions/ RLS), Wayne James (RLS), Henk Rotman (Tridonic), Randal Wahl (RLS), Kyle Davey (Tridonic), Ryan Tobin (RLS), and Chetan Laloo (RLS).

Ethical practice in the age of artificial intelligence tools for lighting design

By: Daniel Hammond, lighting designer at BHA Lighting Design and Educator at BHA School of Lighting

Artificial intelligence (AI) has arrived in lighting design with remarkable speed, and whether we like it or not, it is already influencing how we think, explore, and communicate ideas. In the right hands, these tools can open creative doors. They help us sketch out concepts, test narratives, and visualise atmospheres long before any technical modelling begins in lighting design software like Dialux or Relux.

Experts in the industry believe AI will not replace the depth of knowledge, intuition, and lived experience that a qualified lighting designer brings to every project, as lighting design is fundamentally human-centred. It demands empathy, spatial understanding, and an appreciation for the subtle ways people react to light – qualities that AI cannot replicate. What it can do is support us, produce concept ideas, and free us from some of the heavy lifting that slows the creative process.

With ethical practice at the forefront, here is a closer look at a selection of AI platforms that designers already use to enrich the concept phase and streamline their workflow.

ChatGPT

ChatGPT has become a surprisingly useful companion in the early stages of design. It can help break through creative blocks, organise thoughts, or offer alternative ways of expressing a concept. Designers can feed it a project brief, a mood, or a narrative direction and receive structured ideas in return. The tool is fast, articulate, and particularly helpful when developing

early concepts.

Beyond idea generation, ChatGPT can help prepare written content for presentations, refine communication, or create drafting notes that support the design team. It does not replace professional reasoning, but it does help move thoughts from rough to clear in a short amount of time.

Nano Banana

Nano Banana excels at rapid visual exploration. Type in a description of the atmosphere or lighting quality you have in mind, and it will generate expressive images within seconds. For designers who rely on visual cues to test directions early, this immediacy is incredibly valuable.

It allows you to adjust lighting softness, contrast, colour, or direction using simple language. This makes it useful for building mood boards or exploring emotional tone without using technical rendering tools. It offers the creative looseness of sketching, but with far more visual impact.

Rendair.AI

Rendair.AI takes things a step further by offering photorealistic imagery from relatively rough inputs. Sketches, photographs, simple drawings, or models can be transformed into convincing visuals that help clients and colleagues understand the design direction from the outset.

For conceptual lighting work, this is especially useful. You can test materials, shadow behaviour, composition, and lighting effects without investing hours in detailed modelling. It also allows quick comparison between variations, making it easier to refine atmosphere and visual intent before moving into more technical stages.

Rayon.design

Rayon.design blends CAD functionality with AI assistance in a way that fits neatly into lighting design workflows. Designers can build concept-level lighting layouts, annotate drawings, drop in fixture symbols, and integrate visual assets, all within a single platform.

The AI-supported features add real efficiency. You can generate mood board imagery, trace objects, develop CAD blocks, or stylise drawings without leaving the workspace. This helps bridge the gap between early thinking and structured layout development, reducing the repetitive tasks that often slow conceptual work.

Midjourney

Midjourney remains one of the most expressive tools available for atmospheric lighting imagery. It interprets lighting prompts with an artistic sensibility that makes it ideal for exploring mood, emotion, and narrative. Whether you need scenes with warm golden-hour light, cool moonlight, diffuse softness, or dramatic high-contrast conditions, Midjourney produces visuals with remarkable character.

For conceptual lighting design, these images help clients and collaborators grasp the emotional direction of a project long

before technical decisions are made. It is a valuable tool for shaping the narrative language of a space.

Ethical and professional use of artificial intelligence in lighting design

Despite the growing capabilities of AI tools, ethical practice requires clear boundaries. AI can support our process, but it cannot engage with clients, interpret lived experience, or apply professional judgement. It does not understand the subtleties of lighting standards, the behaviour of people in different environments, or the emotional expectations carried within a brief.

Designers must therefore treat AI outputs as suggestions, not solutions. Every result requires validation, refinement, and contextual understanding. We must remain transparent with clients about AI use, and we must protect privacy and intellectual integrity at every stage.

Used responsibly, AI can free designers from repetitive tasks and provide more time for the human aspects of lighting design that truly matter: imagination, empathy, and crafting meaningful experiences shaped by light for the betterment of humankind.

Enquiries: www.bhalighting.co.za





PICOLUM: compact design, exceptional performance

Designed and manufactured in South Africa, the PICOLUM is BEKA Schröder's latest addition to its trusted streetlighting range. Combining sleek design with advanced LED technology, the PICOLUM brings together performance, durability, and energy efficiency in one compact luminaire.

Whether illuminating residential streets, urban roads, or public spaces, the PICOLUM ensures safe, sustainable, and cost-effective lighting, built to last in even the most demanding environments.

The PICOLUM delivers outstanding photometric performance while keeping the total cost of ownership to a minimum. It is the ideal solution for those aiming to reduce energy consumption, improve lighting levels, and minimise maintenance requirements. With a wide range of high-performing optics, the PICOLUM provides tailored light

distributions to meet the specific demands of each application, ensuring optimal illumination and maximum energy savings.

To further enhance efficiency, the PICOLUM offers flexible combinations of LED modules, as well as a choice of driver currents and dimming options, delivering a truly cost-effective and adaptable lighting solution.

The PICOLUM range takes advantage of the latest photometric innovations with the LensoFlex 4 and HiFlex photometric engines, which have been developed around the ideas of performance, compactness, versatility, and standardisation.

Designed with easy serviceability in mind, the PICOLUM features a replaceable lid for convenient maintenance. Multiple spigot options are available, allowing for both bottom and side-entry installation to ensure flexibility and ease of integration into different mounting configurations.



Key advantages include:

- **Proudly South African:** Designed and manufactured locally, achieving a SADC Class S rating with over 87% local content
 - **Reliable performance:** Operates LED light sources of up to 82 W in ambient temperatures up to 25 °C, maintaining a long useful lifetime of 100,000 hours (L95B10)
 - **Flexible mounting options:**
 - Side-entry Ø42 mm (adjustable +20° to -20°)
 - Bottom-entry Ø76 mm (adjustable 0° to +20°)
 - **Advanced photometric technology:** Equipped with the latest LensoFlex 4 or HiFlex photometric engine, providing maximum spacings for compliance with SANS 10098 road lighting classification, while maintaining comfort and safety
 - **Durable construction:** Marine-grade, high-pressure die-cast aluminium housing for long-lasting corrosion resistance
 - **Outstanding efficiency:** Maximised savings in energy (more than 70% possible) and maintenance costs
 - **Future-ready design:** Engineered for easy technology upgrades (future-proof)
 - **Simplified installation:** Compact, lightweight and installer-friendly design
 - **Exceptional light quality:** Provides uniform illumination for enhanced visibility and safety
 - **Robust protection:** Surge protection up to 10 kV/ 10 kA
 - **Sustainable choice:** Awarded a Circular Economy 4-Star rating
 - **Peace of mind:** Backed by a five-year warranty (terms and conditions apply)
- With its compact design, advanced optical performance and robust construction, the PICOLUM embodies BEKA Schröder's commitment to innovation, sustainability and local manufacturing excellence. It offers municipalities, developers and contractors a cost-effective, future-ready lighting solution that enhances safety, reduces energy consumption and supports a greener environment. The PICOLUM is more than just a streetlight; it's a smart investment in the future of South African road and urban lighting.

Enquiries: www.beka-schreder.co.za



Whether illuminating residential streets, urban roads, or public spaces, the PICOLUM ensures safe, sustainable, and cost-effective lighting, built to last in even the most demanding environments.

-BEKA Schröder

Sustainability and environmental impact in the lighting industry

Sustainability is no longer a peripheral concern in the lighting industry; it is central to how lighting is designed, specified, and evaluated, according to Aurora Lighting Africa. As Africa faces rapid urbanisation, growing energy demand, and increasing pressure on infrastructure, lighting choices carry significant environmental consequences. The industry now has both an opportunity and a responsibility to reduce its footprint while supporting economic growth and social development.

Lighting accounts for a substantial portion of global electricity consumption, particularly in commercial, industrial, and public spaces. In many African countries, where energy generation still relies heavily on fossil fuels and grid stability remains a challenge, inefficient lighting directly contributes to higher carbon emissions and resource strain. The transition to LED technology has

therefore been one of the most impactful sustainability shifts in recent decades. LEDs consume significantly less energy than traditional light sources and deliver the same or better illumination with far lower environmental cost.

However, true sustainability in lighting goes far beyond energy efficiency. Product lifespan and durability are critical factors. A luminaire that fails prematurely negates many of the environmental gains achieved through reduced power consumption. Frequent replacements increase waste, transportation emissions, and resource extraction. Designing lighting systems that can withstand harsh operating conditions – heat, dust, voltage fluctuations, and long burn hours – is essential, particularly in African environments.

Another often-overlooked aspect of sustainability is material use and end-of-life management. While LEDs last longer,



As Africa faces rapid urbanisation, growing energy demand, and increasing pressure on infrastructure, lighting choices carry significant environmental consequences

-Aurora Lighting Africa

they are also more complex products, incorporating electronic components that require responsible disposal. The industry must continue to improve recyclability, reduce hazardous materials, and design products with circular economy principles in mind. Sustainable lighting should consider the entire lifecycle – from raw material sourcing to manufacturing, operation, and eventual disposal.

Light pollution is also an environmental issue gaining increased attention. Over-illumination and poorly designed outdoor lighting disrupt ecosystems, affect human health, and waste energy. Thoughtful lighting design using appropriate light levels, optics, and controls can significantly reduce unnecessary spill light while maintaining safety and visibility. Adaptive and smart lighting technologies allow illumination to respond to real-world conditions, dimming or switching off when not needed and further reducing environmental impact.

Sustainability is not only about protecting the planet; it is also about creating long-term value for communities and businesses. Efficient, well-designed lighting reduces operating costs, improves safety, and supports productivity, while lowering strain on national power systems. For municipalities and large-scale developments, sustainable lighting contributes to resilient infrastructure that can serve growing populations without

escalating environmental damage.

At Aurora Lighting Africa, sustainability is viewed as a practical commitment rather than a marketing slogan. This means prioritising quality, designing for longevity, and ensuring products are fit for purpose in real-world conditions. It also means working closely with clients to deliver solutions that balance performance, cost, and environmental responsibility.

As Africa continues to build cities, expand industry, and modernise public infrastructure, lighting decisions made today will shape environmental outcomes for decades. By embracing sustainable lighting practices now, the industry can play a meaningful role in reducing emissions, conserving resources, and supporting a more resilient future.

Sustainable lighting is not about compromise. It is about making smarter, more responsible choices that benefit both the environment and the people who rely on it every day.

As Scylagh Clunnie, managing director of Aurora Lighting Africa, notes: "Sustainability is not achieved by simply specifying an efficient light source. It comes from designing and selecting products that last, perform consistently in challenging conditions, and minimise waste over their entire lifecycle."

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Stodialux: the South African floodlight that quietly took on the world

By: Urbain du Plessis of Verdantek

By the early 1990s, stadium lighting was widely considered a solved problem. Then a South African designer asked a better question.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, stadium floodlighting followed a predictable formula: large rectangular housings, powerful 2 kW and 3.5 kW metal-halide lamps, high glare and significant spill light. If broadcast-quality illumination was required, inefficiency was accepted as the cost of doing business.

Philips closed this chapter decisively at the 1990 Soccer World Cup with its compact ArenaVision floodlight, effectively killing the "floodlight dinosaurs".

For Zumtobel, challenging that new dominance was not a matter of ambition, but the survival of a major element of its local operations.

What emerged from South Africa in the early 1990s was not just another stadium floodlight, but a fundamentally rethought luminaire – one that addressed glare, efficiency, thermal performance, and manufacturability as a single, integrated engineering problem.

Rethinking the stadium floodlight

The origins of Stodialux lie in dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Conventional stadium floodlights relied on oversized reflector systems that prioritised brute-force output over optical discipline. Large amounts of light never reached the playing surface, instead becoming glare, sky glow, or wasted energy. Achieving broadcast illumination meant installing more luminaires, taller masts and heavier electrical infrastructure than should have been necessary.

At the time, the author (Urbain du Plessis) was working as a lighting-design software developer, project applications engineer and product designer within Zumtobel's South African operation and saw this not as inevitable, but as an engineering failure.

Instead of starting with the housing, he started with the physics.

From 1990 onwards, Du Plessis worked on developing a reflector system based on first-principles optical geometry. Early drawings show parabolic constructions, focal calculations and ray-tracing studies that would form the basis of a new multi-

parabolic luminaire architecture.

The premise was simple but demanding: guide the light more intelligently and the floodlight could be smaller, more efficient, and far less wasteful.

A different optical architecture

Stodialux departed sharply from prevailing European and North American designs.

At its core was a rotationally symmetric, multi-reflector system comprising a main compound parabolic reflector, an internal auxiliary reflector and a back reflector working together as a single optical system. Lamp placement was dictated by optical and thermal necessity rather than mechanical convenience.

Crucially, the system tightly controlled the angles at which light exited the luminaire. Instead of spraying light indiscriminately, Stodialux concentrated usable output into defined zones (typically between -10° and -60° below horizontal) precisely where stadium designers needed it.

The result was higher utilisation of lamp output, reduced glare for players and spectators, and significantly less spill beyond the field of play.

This approach introduced a new challenge: precision. The system was highly sensitive to alignment, meaning that manufacturing tolerances and final assembly accuracy (often within 0.5 mm) were critical to photometric performance. This sensitivity would strongly influence how Stodialux was industrialised.

Designed (and built) in South Africa

One of Stodialux's most significant achievements is that it was not only designed in South Africa, but also manufactured locally as well.

Between 1992 and 1993, the product moved rapidly from concept to full industrialisation. Dedicated tooling was commissioned for high-precision spun aluminium reflectors, gravity die-cast aluminium bodies, hinges, aiming mechanisms, assembly jigs and quality-control gauges. This was a production programme, not an experiment.

The luminaire body was produced in LM6 aluminium alloy, selected for its corrosion resistance, thermal conductivity, and durability under harsh environmental conditions. Thermal management was treated as a system-level design issue, extending even to surface finishes and paint selection.

Thermal endurance testing conducted in 1993 confirmed that the design could safely manage the heat loads generated by 2 kW metal-halide lamps – an area where many competing products struggled.

By early 1994, Stodialux was ready for market.

From launch to landmark installations

Stodialux entered the market without fanfare, but its performance quickly attracted attention.

Early installations demonstrated that the theoretical advantages translated into real-world results. Stadiums achieved required lux levels with fewer luminaires and improved uniformity. Glare complaints dropped. Aiming accuracy improved. Maintenance access proved practical rather than theoretical.

Within a short time, Stodialux was being specified for major sporting venues across South Africa and beyond, including installations designed to meet broadcast television standards.

By the mid-1990s, Stodialux had become one of the most successful products produced by its manufacturer. It was exported across Africa, Europe, and later into Asian markets – particularly Australia, where it was used at multiple Sydney 2000 Olympic venues.

Production began in 1994 as a Zumtobel product manufactured by U-Lite at the former Lascon plant in Langlaagte. Stodialux sales later moved through Versalec and production to Regent Lighting, before becoming part of the BEKA-Schröder portfolio, where it remained in production well beyond the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Continuous improvement without compromise

Stodialux's success did not lead to

complacency. Field feedback from early deployments informed refinements to hinges, latches, lamp holders, alignment features, and assembly processes.

These changes improved serviceability and manufacturing consistency without altering the fundamental optical design.

Internal correspondence from the period shows how seriously performance integrity was treated. Minor misalignment could materially affect photometric output, making quality control and precision non-negotiable.

Importantly, these refinements preserved backward compatibility. Stodialux was not reinvented every few years; it was steadily improved while respecting the integrity of the original concept.

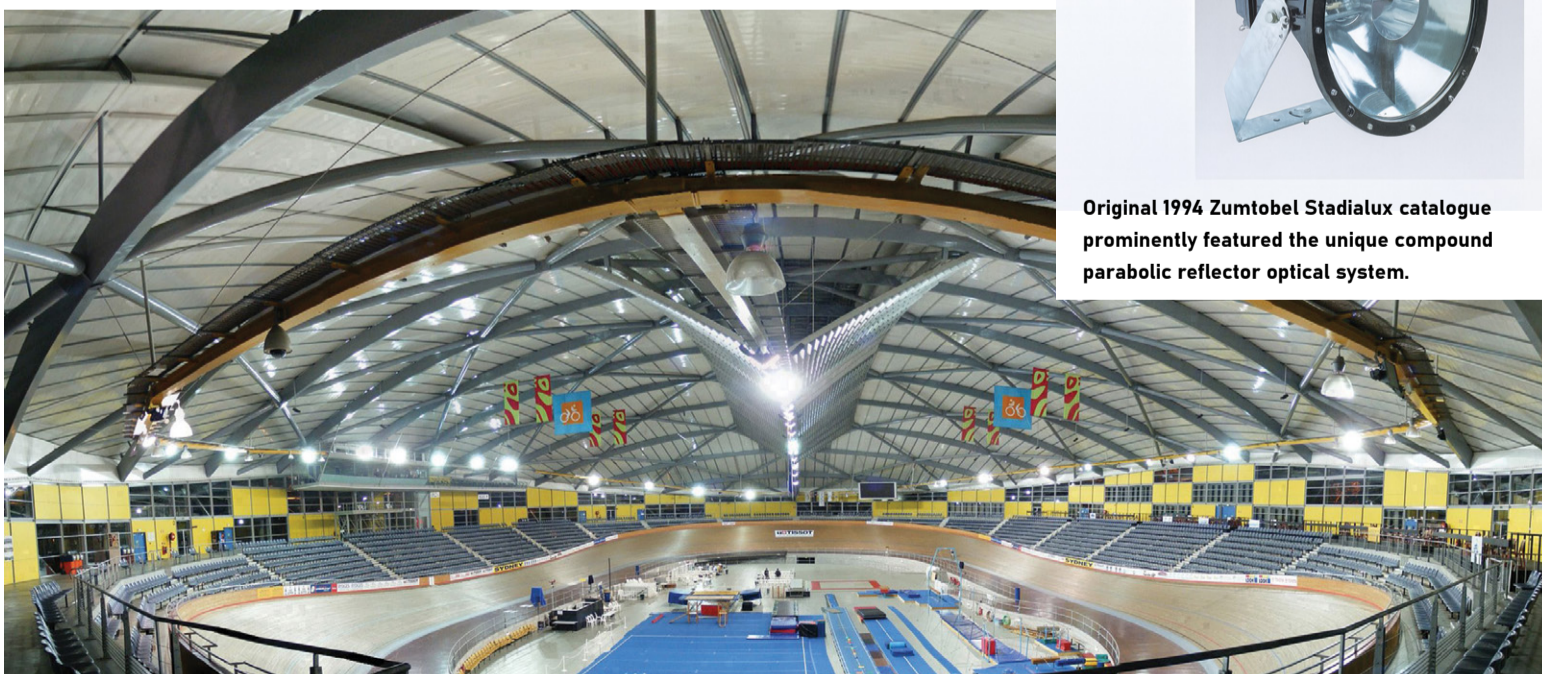
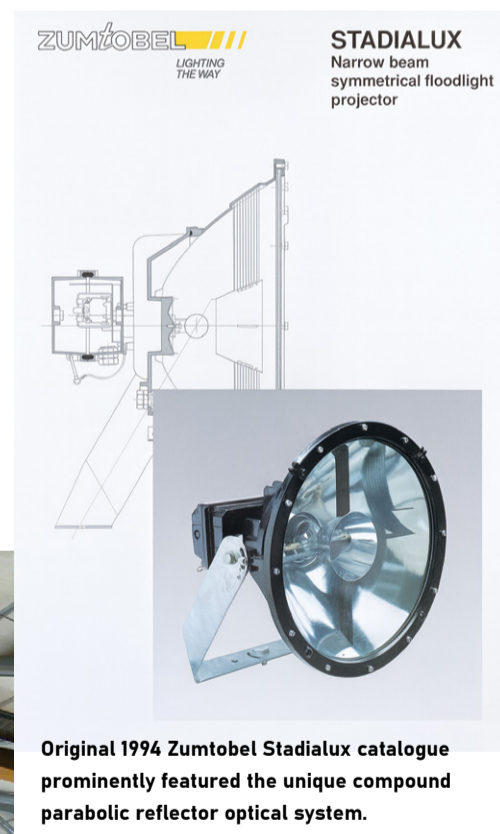
A different kind of success story

Today, Stodialux occupies a distinctive place in South Africa's industrial and engineering history. It demonstrates that world-class lighting innovation does not depend on geography, legacy scale, or marketing dominance. Instead, it emerges from rigorous thinking, respect for physics, disciplined manufacturing and attention to real-world use.

For electrical and lighting professionals, Stodialux offers a quiet lesson: genuine innovation often looks less like disruption and more like precision. It comes from asking better questions and refusing to accept inefficiency as inevitable.

Long after newer technologies have entered the market, Stodialux remains a benchmark – not just for what it achieved, but for how it was conceived, built, refined, and proven, one stadium at a time.

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Dunc Gray Velodrome, one of several Sydney 2000 Olympic venues lit by Stodialux, was not the largest but the most complex. Introducing a world-first: dimming OSRAM HQI-TS 2 000 W lamps to preserve uniformity from training to HDTV broadcast light levels. Lighting design and commissioning by Urbain du Plessis. (Photo credit: Adam J.W.C via Wikimedia Commons, March 2008)

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