



Brian's Brief

Issued to SANEA members to stimulate dialogue

No 3

Dear Members

Much is being written about the tight energy situation that is gripping our country and will continue to do so until about 2012. There is particular concern about electricity and liquid fuels.

The latest initiative is a challenge issued by Radio 702 for all businesses to switch off non-essential lights and equipment on Thursday 23 August from 21:00 to 22:00. Now this is a sure way to raise awareness and it has engendered a great deal of well-intended effort as businesses phone in to pledge their support and challenge others to do likewise.

But will it make any sustainable difference? The designated hour is well after the peak demand time and is also at a time when inconvenience will be absolutely minimal. I suggest that this is one of those "feel good" activities that does more for our own conscience than it delivers real benefit to the intended recipients.

So what should we do with this new-found awareness? We should have a good look around our place of work and identify those items that are consuming energy in a wasteful manner or where there is opportunity for efficiency improvement. I was astounded to hear that in South Africa about 6500MW is needed for pumping. This is nearly 20% of Eskom's installed capacity. Now in most businesses the pumps and their motors are neglected until they give trouble and then they are put back into service as quickly as possible because production is affected. We are not even sure if they have been correctly sized and matched to the system. The chances are that they are oversized "to be on the safe side". Imagine what a difference we could make if we saved only 10% of the energy used for pumping. There would be a direct saving on our electricity bill but Eskom would avoid the construction of a new coal-fired unit saving billions of rands.

Motors are another area deserving of attention and I am sure that you can find more.

Switch your lights off on Thursday, by all means, but in the cold light of day take a hard look at the real energy wasters that lurk in the shadows around us and deal with them now.

Kind Regards

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