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SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STANDARD

Environmental considerations for the planning and management of tele- communication structures

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Table of changes

Change No.	Date	Scope

Foreword

This South African standard was prepared by WG10397, and was approved by National Committee SABS TC 74, *Communication technology*, in accordance with procedures of the SABS Standards Division, in compliance with annex 3 of the WTO/TBT agreement.

Telecommunication technology has shown tremendous development over the past few years and is spreading rapidly to meet the growing demand for better and more convenient communication. This undoubtedly improves people's quality of life and gives them new choices.

However, new telecommunication structures can cause significant transformation of the environment on a large scale and result in severe negative environmental impact. Telecommunication structures, by their nature, are frequently located on high-lying ground where they have a high visual impact and can often impact on sensitive natural ecosystems such as mountain tops.

Because of their potentially significant environmental impact, telecommunication structures were made subject to environmental impact assessment by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations of the Environment Conservation Act, 1989 (Act 73 of 1989) in 1997 (see 3.4). In terms of these regulations, all telecommunication structures shall go through a scoping study or environmental impact assessment (or both), results of which shall be submitted to the relevant provincial environmental authority or the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism for authorization of the proposed activity.

This standard is intended to assist applicants of telecommunication structures to

- a) choose the most environmentally acceptable sites for telecommunication structures at the start of the planning process,
- b) identify mitigation measures that can be used to minimize the environmental impact of telecommunication structures as early as possible during the planning process,
- c) obtain exemption from some or all of the requirements of the EIA regulations for applications that will have a low level of environmental impact, and
- d) limit the environmental impact of telecommunication structures to the lowest possible level during their operational life.

This standard should also assist provincial and national environmental authorities in reviewing the applications in terms of the EIA regulations by

- i) ensuring that the format of documents submitted for authorization is relatively consistent, meaningful and understandable,
- ii) ensuring that EIA reports comply with certain minimum standards, and
- iii) through reference, using the recommendations in this standard as conditions of approval.

Foreword *(concluded)*

The ultimate aim of this standard is to make the assessment and decision-making process quicker and more efficient, to the benefit of both the applicant and the decision-making authority.

Two main considerations regarding the environmental impact of communication masts, namely, site selection and management of the mast and the mast site, should be borne in mind.

Clause 4 of this document provides overall guidelines for the environmental site selection process for telecommunication structures. These guidelines consider the initial site selection process, with an emphasis on minimizing environmental impact by choosing the most environmentally acceptable site from the outset. The ultimate aim is to assist applicants of telecommunication masts to speed up the environmental impact assessment authorization process for these sites.

Clause 5 provides guidelines to assist an applicant to maintain the site in a good condition and to continue to comply with the requirements of the authority's Record of Decision. The recommendations of clause 5 are designed to be compatible with a SANS 14001/ISO 14001 (SABS ISO 14001)-based environmental management system.

The application of the recommended management measures should assist the applicant to comply with authorization conditions, and also save the relevant authority time by being able to refer to these standard requirements when authorizing a telecommunication development, instead of compiling a new set of authorization conditions for every application.

**Reaffirmed and reprinted in March 2010.
This standard will be reviewed every 5 years and
either be reaffirmed, amended, revised or withdrawn.**

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