



4th Quarter

# ELEVATEafrica

The voice of the elevator industry in Africa

December 2023



Milly Ruiters - Chief Inspector, Occupational Health and Safety - Department of Employment and Labour



Jacob Malatse - Director, Electrical and Mechanical Directorate - Department of Employment and Labour

SAVE THE DATE  
GLE EXPO 2024  
20-21-22  
August 2024

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**Milly Ruiters:**  
OHS in safe hands

**8**

**Jacob Malatse:**  
Ensuring safety and compliance

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**BOWIE:**  
Leading the way with gender diversity

# At the touch of a button

*It's difficult to comprehend that the last month of the year is upon us, and that we are heading into "Silly Season", where we're all under pressure to complete orders before going into annual shutdown.*

As South Africans, we have come to accept that loadshedding is now a way of life. However, it's still a huge inconvenience, causing additional expenditure to industry and people alike. Having said that, Elemod Electronics has seen a huge increase in the sales of its emergency light unit and LED lights.

The industry has had to comply with the regulation that all lifts have a battery backup lighting system in place for when loadshedding stages come into play. Due to increased demand, Elemod has experienced delays from suppliers as their stocks were depleted much faster than expected. This meant they were on the back foot when supplying stock, which in turn had a knock-on effect on Elemod's turnaround time.

The company did its best to maintain the expectation levels of its customers but unfortunately, for reasons outside its control, stumbled a few times. "We appreciate our customers' understanding and, as always, we endeavour to produce and supply according to an agreed-upon timeframe," says Elemod's general manager Daryl Garner-Savory. "We understand that requirements are now leaning towards lithium batteries instead of the usual lead-acid or gel batteries due to increased output – this is something we are busy looking into to see how we can adapt or redesign our unit to cater for these requirements."

Elemod recognised that there was a need for light curtain/door detector units, and began importing these in earnest this year. The company has a 24V and a 220V option available at competitive prices, so if you require these units, Elemod is here to assist.

After a partnership with Schaefer earlier in 2023, the imported equipment is slowly gaining momentum in the market, with many options available.

Elemod currently has the basic range of square- and round-button options in stock. In addition, all of Schaefer's equipment can be imported on request, with a relatively quick turnaround. Garner-Savory is planning a marketing drive in the new year, and will be networking with lift companies to introduce them to this European standard-compliant range.

"In the meantime, Elemod Electronics would like to thank the industry for its continued support throughout the year. We wish everyone a happy festive season and a prosperous New Year, and we look forward to 2024 with great excitement and motivated staff, aiming to continue to offer excellent service."

Elemod's annual shutdown will be in effect from 14 December 2023 to 15 January 2024.



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# Leading the way with gender diversity

*In an industry that is dominated by men, Bowie Lifts, Elevators and Escalators (BLEE) continues to lead with the empowerment of women. ELEVATEafrica had a conversation with Natasha Bowie, BLEE's director responsible for recruitment and training, about the company's family values, and the drive to ensure a good gender balance in the organisation.*

Speaking from a position of experience and observation, BLEE's Natasha Bowie says she's seen growth in numbers when it comes to women in the lift industry. "Women, and female technicians, deal with issues differently from their male counterparts," she says. "Where a man may only need to ask once for certain things to happen, we find that his female equivalent must ask several times to get the same co-operation or response."

"Of course, this is broadly speaking, and has a lot to do with a person's attitude towards challenges in the workplace. I believe it's all about changing mind-sets. That change will not happen overnight – but it is happening."

"I think the industry is changing. It is more welcoming, and I think it will progress in the coming years, because there are many more women joining lift companies. For me, what stands out is that we're a unique group of ladies who know what our training and skills-development needs are, and the different challenges we come across every day. To overcome these challenges, we talk about them. I actually think the challenges are exciting! The lift sector is a niche industry in which we can bring about meaningful change."

"The industry is not just about getting dirty and greasy at the bottom of an elevator shaft. As technicians, we all go through the same process – the same training in safety, attention to detail, customer relations or administration. But women tend to bring a softer side to the business. The women who are successful in the industry are fearless, and are tackling the challenges head on. The beauty of what we're achieving is that the end goal is to make our environment safer and more pleasant to work in. We face the same challenges as men – how we solve them might be different, but the results are the same."



Natasha Bowie  
Director at Bowie Lifts,  
Elevators and Escalators





BLEE has a training centre in Johannesburg that equips graduates and entry-level candidates with skills that are appropriate to where they see themselves in the elevator industry.

“The way the industry is adopting smart technology is making it easier for women to enter the sector – but we must all still go through the basics, the mechanical, engineering and technical training. There is always going to be a physical element in this industry, but that should not be seen as a deterrent for women to become part of what we do.

“Dealing with new tech in the industry involves training and upskilling, to ensure our jobs don’t become obsolete. It’s an important subject to raise. Anyone can become a technician, and anyone can become a mechanical engineer or an electrician. It all starts with passion and intelligence as something that passion can’t counter. You need to have an ingrained passion to become the master in your field, and that all starts with getting your hands dirty and doing all the physical groundwork. Intelligence is much-needed – but you need to be ‘in it’ to be able to apply your intelligence. Technology is a factor, of course, but something like using AI to improve the industry comes down to adapting your passion so that you master the use of AI.

“You must enjoy the job – love it, even. If it’s not for you, and if you feel that you’re not getting the training or getting upskilled in a particular way, you should fight for what you want. At the end of the day, this job, like any other, is what you make of it.”

BLEE has a training centre in Johannesburg that equips graduates and entry-level candidates with skills that are appropriate to where they see themselves in the elevator industry. The training centre focuses on sharpening skills in the specific fields that are part and parcel of working at elevator companies.

Once a learner or candidate is finished studying or is nearing graduation, BLEE asks the question: where are you at?

“As a company, we mould you into the best technician possible,” says Bowie. “Once on site, graduates work hand in hand with our qualified technicians. It’s an onboarding process – while they’re studying, the candidates are assessed by our existing team who all have industrial experience. In short, the graduates get training, while studying, in the very thing they are studying.”

With more than 20 years in the family business, Bowie has experienced all aspects of the lift industry, learning from her father as well as being client-facing. She says that recruitment and working for BLEE is about more than just qualifications – it’s also about the right fit, about being willing to be part of a greater family culture, and about being prepared to follow the entrepreneurial spirit that her father James exhibited when starting the company.

The reward for being part of the BLEE family is knowing that the entire team is behind you – knowing that what’s being built will leave a legacy for generations to come. Yes, there is the salary – but the family values that make working at the company worthwhile go beyond being part of a single division. If you feel that you need to change and expand your horizons, there are openings and opportunities, allowing employees to try something different. When that question arises, Bowie says avenues are explored as to the type of upskilling or training that needs to be done for both the employee and BLEE to benefit.

“I have these conversations with young people every day, asking them where they see themselves,” she says. “Before you start as a technician with us, you need to start as a graduate. Let’s say that, hypothetically speaking, Francina becomes your mentor. She takes you under her wing and you grow under her guidance. After a year, you might decide this particular position is not for you – you’d rather be a sales rep. Our business is dynamic enough to make this happen. My question to the graduate is, within our structures, where they see themselves expanding to. If it’s not being a technician, where else would they be comfortable or see themselves succeeding? Is it marketing and sales? Is it administration? Or do they want to become part of fleet management?

“Each individual in the business has a thorough understanding of the business. You need to prove that you want to be here. It speaks to the passion I mentioned. When approached for a change in direction, or recruiting for a specific position, I will show you what makes it exciting – exciting enough to stay, even if it’s not necessarily within that role. You have the platform to branch out.

“We encourage our employees, showing them the opportunities to branch out. And if the position they’re interested in requires further study, they have the freedom to come to tells us. We will ensure they get the tools they need to achieve their goals.”

Of the 12 people working at BLEE, five are women. Leading the field technician teams are three women who have gone through the rigorous training that BLEE requires; Bowie herself and two others run the company’s administration.

BLEE is on a growth trajectory, based on firm foundations and a passion for the industry. The company is making a difference and raising the standards for others in the lift industry to follow – a company where gender equality is celebrated, and here to stay.



The reward for being part of the BLEE family is knowing that the entire team is behind you – knowing that what’s being built will leave a legacy for generations to come.



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