

BRIDGING THE SAFETY GAP: RECOGNISING ROAD SAFETY ENGINEERING WITHIN ECSA'S FRAMEWORK FOR A SAFER SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

As South Africa strives toward implementing the Safe System Approach (SSA) to road safety, it becomes increasingly evident that the current engineering registration framework does not adequately support the development of road safety engineering (RSE) as a specialised capacity. This workshop seeks to open a critical discussion on the systemic omission of RSE in the Identification of Engineering Work (IDoEW) Rule and the policies governing professional registration by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA).

Although existing registration policies uphold the principle of protecting the public, references to "safety" predominantly relate to occupational health and safety under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993). This narrow interpretation neglects the broader dimensions of public safety inherent in road infrastructure planning, design, and management - a gap which is particularly concerning given the scale of South Africa's road trauma burden.

We propose that road safety engineering be recognised as a formal sub-discipline of civil engineering. This would enable the definition of discipline-specific competencies such as crash investigation, road safety auditing, and the application of human factors in transport design. Such recognition is vital not only for the performance of identified engineering work but also for enabling candidate engineers to accumulate recognised, relevant experience as part of their journey toward professional registration.

While ECSA has already introduced a framework for registration of Road Safety Auditors (RSAud), this initiative remains misaligned with the mainstream civil engineering education and training pathways that are essential to develop the broader road safety engineering competencies required to implement SSA effectively.

We invite stakeholders across engineering practice, academia, and policy to engage in this dialogue to shape amendments to ECSA's professional standards and training guidelines that will foster national RSE capacity. This is essential to fully support the implementation of the Safe System Approach and to ensure the engineering profession contributes meaningfully to reducing road fatalities and serious injuries.