

URGENT ALERT: CRISIS IN FIREARM TRAINING QUALIFICATION THREATENS SOUTH AFRICAN GUN OWNERS AND SECURITY INDUSTRY

For Immediate Release by the South African Gunowners' Association (SAGA)

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The South African Gunowners' Association (SAGA) urgently calls attention to a critical situation affecting firearm training qualifications across the country.

On June 30, 2024, the qualification for firearm training expired due to the Minister of Education's failure to extend it. This oversight has severe implications for multiple sectors and individuals reliant on firearm competency certifications.

In 2013, the Professional Firearm Trainers Council (PFTC) was appointed as the quality assurer for firearm training, replacing the South African Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) due to proven incompetence. This appointment was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Appeal. Despite a court order in 2021 reaffirming the PFTC's mandate against attempts by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), SASSETA, and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to remove it, the situation has deteriorated.

As of July 1, 2024, no new enrolments for firearm training can take place, halting new applications for competency certificates for those who did not complete training by June 30, 2024. This sudden cessation has immediate and far-reaching consequences.

What this means is that while people will still be able to undergo proficiency training, they will not be able to receive a statement of results upon completion. Without this crucial document, they cannot obtain a competency certificate from the South African Police Service (SAPS). Consequently, they will be unable to apply for or renew licenses for firearms should their competency be expired. This creates a significant barrier for anyone looking to become a legal firearm owner or maintain their current firearm licenses.

Law enforcement and traffic officers require a firearms competency certificate to be able to carry a firearm. Without this competency, they cannot carry a firearm to protect themselves, severely compromising their safety and their ability to perform their duties effectively.

Other Affected Groups Are:

- **Private Persons:** Individuals seeking firearm competency certification are now unable to proceed with their applications.
- **Commercial Security Industry:** Security firms cannot certify new personnel, compromising their operational effectiveness.
- **Arms and Ammunition Dealers, Wholesalers, and Importers:** The halt impacts the entire supply chain, affecting availability and sales.
- **Manufacturers of Firearm-Related Equipment and Consumables in SA:** Production and distribution face significant setbacks.
- **Hunting Associations and Private/Commercial Game Farms:** Hunting activities and game management practices are severely disrupted.
- **Metro Police Departments, Correctional Services, and Other State Agencies:** Essential training certifications for state agencies are in jeopardy, affecting public safety services.
- **Traffic Authorities:** Officers requiring firearm certification are left uncertified, impairing their duties.

- Sport Shooting and Gun Owners' Associations: Competitive shooting and recreational activities are stalled.
- Firearm Training Organisations and Instructors: Training institutions and professionals face operational halts, impacting their livelihoods.
- Commercial Shooting Ranges: Business operations and customer services are disrupted.

In response, the PFTC filed an urgent application to address the gap created by the lack of extension. Despite opposition from state respondents on technical grounds, the presiding judge indicated support for maintaining the status quo. After deliberations, the judge accepted the PFTC's proposal, extending the current qualification status until the Minister of Education makes a formal decision.

The state respondents' reaction was alarming, demanding an immediate urgent application for leave to appeal the interim order. This conduct indicates a deliberate attempt to undermine the renewal process, potentially aiming to restrict new firearm training and ownership.

SAGA emphasizes the gravity of this situation and its potential to stifle firearm ownership and related industries. We urge all stakeholders, from private individuals to commercial entities, to unite in addressing this pressing issue.

Issued by: Damian Enslin, SAGA Chairperson