

Could this magnesium oxide-based material help put an end to rampant shack fires?

The Cape continues to experience rampant shack fires that devastate those with property in the informal sector. Dave Lindup, managing director of Magnastruct, however, has come up with a green solution.



“Fire is a serious hazard throughout South Africa in informal settlements and it is estimated that, on average, over the last five years there have been 10 ‘shack’ fires a day, with someone dying as a result every other day,” says Lindup whose Cape-based company manufactures boards designed to help prevent the spread of fires.

Magnaboards are made from magnesium oxide, which Lindup says is superior in every category compared to traditional wood, gypsum and cement-based products.

Zero-flame spread

“Magnaboard has a zero-flame spread and smoke development rating, a huge advantage considering that informal houses are generally built very close to each other, so fires can easily spread very rapidly from one to another,” says Lindup.

“In a fire test held at an informal housing settlement in Pniel near Stellenbosch, one of the homes was made out of Magnaboard while the other shacks were constructed with conventional materials. When the fires were started the shacks

made of conventional materials burnt, buckled and collapsed, whereas the fire in the informal house made of Magnaboard could be contained and extinguished.”

Lindup says Magnaboard is a green recyclable product with many characteristics welcomed by the built industry.

“The fire retardant application has been a breakthrough for local government, business and NGOs so there is no excuse for not using fire retardant materials for building, particularly when it comes to informal housing,” says Lindup.

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