

Chris Oosthuizen

(29.9.1947 to 11.11.2017)



Our friend and colleague Chris Oosthuizen passed away on Saturday 11th November 2017 after a 5 year battle with cancer.

Chris Oosthuizen spent his career working in dam engineering, starting at the then Department of Water Affairs in 1974 at the construction of Vanderkloof Dam.

Chris was the Approved Professional Person for dam safety evaluations and/or remedial works of more than 300 DWA dams since the inception of the country's dam safety legislation in 1986 and he spent much of his career looking after the safety of the Department's dams including the establishment of a formal Dam Safety Evaluation Programme for the more than 800 dams owned by the Department, followed by the development of a probabilistic methodology for the prioritisation of dam safety rehabilitation works (eventually his PhD thesis). He also served as the Dam Safety Expert for two dams in Switzerland since 2000, one of only two engineers from outside Switzerland, and was involved in mentoring the dam safety and surveillance teams of the dams of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (Phase 1) as well as Cahora Bassa Dam.

Chris served on the advisory committees of UCT and UNISA and was an ex Professor Extraordinaire at the Tshwane University of Technology. He also lectured post graduates at UCT and the University of Stellenbosch. He was a member of the ECSA Committee on Dams and a member of the ICOLD Technical Committee on Dam Surveillance that produced Bulletins 138 and 158 as well as the latest bulletin of significant surveillance case histories that will be finished later this year. Since 2012, Chris chaired this ICOLD committee.

Chris was a very active member of SANCOLD, presenting papers and lectures, serving on the Management Committee for several years, as well as acting in the role of SANCOLD Secretary for a number of years. Chris was awarded the SANCOLD Award in 2013 in honour of his exceptional contributions to SANCOLD and in the field of dam engineering in South Africa.

Most importantly however, was Chris' passion for the professional development and mentoring of technical staff using his "10:90" principle - 10% formal training and 90% hands-on experience. Not just in South Africa but also as far afield as Switzerland, Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Australia and closer to home in countries like Mozambique, Namibia and Lesotho.

Chris was universally respected by all his peers and his contribution to dam engineering in South Africa was immeasurable. We have lost a great man.

I would like to ask everyone to stand for a moment of silence in tribute to Chris.

The funeral arrangements for Dr Chris Oosthuizen are as follows:

Date: Saturday 18 November 2017
Time: 12:00 burial at the Petrusburg cemetery
13:00 church service
Venue: Petrusburg Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk)

Petrusburg is about 40 km from Bloemfontein on the road to Kimberley.

The coordinates for the town are:
29°07'09" S 25°25'16"



Chris and the ICOLD Dam Surveillance Committee at ICOLD 2016



Chris receiving the SANCOLD Award in 2013