

Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:

Experience Vital For Successful Foundation Piling

Entrusting piling projects to inexperienced operators who cut costs to secure business is short-sighted and could result in disastrous consequences, warns Nico Maas, chairman and founder of Gauteng Piling, which is this year celebrating its 20th anniversary.

"Proper piling is critical to the durability and safety of any new structure. It provides the foundations of a structure whether one or 30 storeys high - so short-cuts, or awarding a contract purely on the lowest price, could be extremely dangerous, to say the least," cautions Maas, who personally has been involved in the piling industry for 45 years, and is a former president of both Master Builders SA and what is now Master Builders Association North.

A long-standing member of Master Builders Association (MBA) North, Gauteng Piling has since its establishment in 1996 completed over 1 500 major piling projects in many parts of South Africa, including providing over 500 foundation piles for the construction of Southern Africa's largest single-phase retail centre, the new multi-billion rand Mall of Africa, in Midrand.

Maas believes that in piling, quality should never be compromised to save time or money.

"Clients and contractors should remain satisfied with the foundation element the appointed piling company has provided throughout the duration of the building project - and the entire lifecycle of the asset. It is very important that the soil information supplied to tenderers is accurate and sufficient to allow piling operators to work out a competitive cost estimate. If the correct information is not supplied, or if a proper geotechnical investigation of soil conditions not done, then the project may be delayed due to the main contractor starting work on site and only then discovering that piling is required.

"All piling work should be undertaken and supervised by staff who are trade-qualified and competent to perform the necessary procedures. It is essential to invest time and money in training staff to ensure that quality is never compromised. On large or complex piling projects, quality should be managed systematically to ensure that quality assurance elements are not omitted due to the wider ranging scope of operations.

"Safety and health considerations are also important in an industry such as piling with its heavy equipment which could cause serious accidents on site. Gauteng Piling has full-time Occupational Health and Safety staff who conduct regular - and unexpected - site visits to ensure that safety regulations are adhered to. Our site managers also are all fully versed in this important aspect of piling operations," Maas added.

"Experience in the provision of piles is vital and most errors in piling installation come about when short-cuts are taken or when inexperience leads to the piling contractor following totally incorrect procedures, such as pouring concrete into a pile hole into which ground water had seeped.

"In two decades, Gauteng Piling has had minimal failures - and when setbacks did occur, the cause invariably was unexpected ground conditions. All too frequently, clients or contractors refuse to spend the extra money to establish what lies beneath the surface of the site they are planning to build on. If there are enormous boulders underground, for example, not even the most experienced piling operator can keep to time schedules. Then the final costs of the piling project could exceed the budget. The piling operator - who often carries the blame for the delays - through all of this also has to cope with planned operational schedules on other sites that would by then have been severely disrupted.

"The experience Gauteng Piling has gained in 20 years is being used daily to ensure that the piles that we install will safely carry the design loads supplied by the client's agents - and that we keep to stipulated time schedules as much as possible with the information we have been provided with at the outset," Maas adds.

Apart from the piling for Mall of Africa, Gauteng Piling has also provided the foundations for other major shopping centres such as The Grove in Pretoria, I'langa Mall in Mbombela, as well as Cresta and Fourways Mall in Johannesburg. It was recently awarded the contract for the piling for the second phase of Fourways Mall's extension project and has also provided piling for the upgrade of the Kyalami Grand Prix Building Project, extensions to the Market Theatre complex in Johannesburg, as well as public sector projects by agencies such as PRASA and Telkom, to name just a few successful contracts of recent years.

The company has a fleet of 20 auger drilling machines, three bore rigs, two cranes, four Grundo hammers and two lateral support machines.

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Caption 'gp team':

The management team of Gauteng Piling at its 20th anniversary consists of (from left, standing): Jaco Grobler, GM; Eulalia Maas, Financial Manager; and Ignatius Maas, Contracts Director. Seated are the founders of the 20-year-old company, Nico and Hettie Maas.

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Caption 'two rigs at fourways 2':

Gauteng Piling most recent high profile contract was for the provision of foundation piling for extensions to the Gourways Mall. Pictured: work on the second phase of the project.

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Caption 'burnette studios flight exit & rebar':

Not all piling projects produce the relatively soft soil encountered at this recent Gauteng Piling project in the Pretoria CBD.

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