

First Cut and GSI confirm merger of interests

First Cut, a leading South African provider of cutting, welding and grinding consumables and equipment, has entered into a merger of interests with respected industry stalwart Gas Safety International (GSI), which provides certified gas safety training and quality gas equipment to a wide range of sectors.

The agreement becomes effective from 01 November 2021, and will see these two world-class companies – which together have over a century of industry experience – collaborating closely. This opens up pivotal expertise and opportunities across both businesses; as well as leveraging mutual access to customers, suppliers, market sectors and geographic areas.

MD of First Cut, Andrew Poole, explains: “By joining forces with GSI, we can strengthen and expand our offering even further. Having been in business for some 65 years, First Cut has long been acknowledged as a leading South African distributor of cutting and grinding consumables and equipment – and we have more recently extended our expertise to include a welding division.”

“GSI, as a premier gas safety products and training company, is an excellent, synergistic service provider with which to join forces. The new relationship will strengthen our service offering, providing our customers with even more choice of products and solutions – as well as access to the highly-respected training experience and expertise offered by GSI’s MD, Peter Rohlssen, with regards to gas safety training, consulting and auditing.

In addition, welding safety training, consulting and risk auditing will be offered by GSI’s Welding Engineer Robert Lawrence,” Poole explains.

Rohlssen continues: “I have been very pleased that through this agreement with

First Cut, we have achieved a true ‘meeting of minds’. We share the same company values of honesty, integrity and reliability, which have given rise to a tremendous inter-brand chemistry. The trust between both companies is also a strongly cohesive force, which will enhance our businesses and inter-company synergies even further,” he says.

“I will remain at the helm of GSI, which will continue as a separate brand, entity and team ‘as is’; while working collaboratively with First Cut to expand and explore mutually strategic and advantageous opportunities. This includes ensuring that through this merger, the legacy I have built up since founding GSI back in 1985 will continue – so that the enormous knowledge and experience will be preserved and our client base will also continue to be serviced.”

Rohlssen notes that First Cut has a very strong reputation as a respected and trusted brand with a long-standing client base and expertise; as well as an enviable portfolio of international suppliers, a wide national footprint and well-developed infrastructure.

“All this represents huge value for GSI, as it expands our geographic footprint and service offering enormously,” he says.

Poole adds: “This merger of interests will provide First Cut and our clients with access to GSI’s coaching, training, guidance and risk auditing services. Furthermore, our recently established welding division will also be strengthened – not only through Peter’s expertise, but that of his team. The whole strategy fits together beautifully!

“We will be combining a portfolio of excellent international suppliers, and this will allow us to boost our joint offering: providing our customers with an even



GSI MD, Peter Rohlssen and the MD of First Cut, Andrew Poole.

wider choice, and importantly, with our combined ability to deliver the appropriate solution for their applications and requirements.”

Both Poole and Rohlssen are adamant that stringent safety is critical when it comes to working with gas – irrespective of the sector. “We improve gas safety through our strict adherence to compliance regulations; as well as providing clients with the benefit of our significant industry experience via our gas safety training and risk audits,” explains Rohlssen. “Gas safety standards must be applied in any sector where gas is used, including welding. It should however be noted that the applications are certainly broader than the industrial sphere alone: including the mining, medical, pharmaceutical, agricultural and domestic markets.

As such, GSI adheres to stringent compliance standards and conformance in line with both South African and international standards at all times. Its training and product portfolio is also fully aligned to SANS 10238, and suppliers comply with European standards, many of which are included in SANS 10238.

“In addition, our gas safety training material is accredited by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA). We are the only company locally to have achieved this, and it means that engineers who attend our courses can earn their requisite continuing professional development (CPD) points,” he advises.

“This again demonstrates how First Cut’s and GSI’s thinking is aligned. From First Cut’s perspective, we too adhere firmly to strict quality and safety regulatory compliance. Safety is the ‘North Star’ or ‘guiding light’ – as well as the key differentiator for our two companies. It is what defines and directs us: we share a mutual dedication in this regard, and will not ever compromise on it.

“We look forward to working closely, growing our mutual offering to clients, and going from strength to strength,” Poole concludes. ■

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Having produced its first band saw blade in 1956, First Cut now has 65 years of industry experience as a leading South African distributor of cutting, welding and grinding consumables and equipment.

The merger with Alexander and Poole in 2001 and the acquisition in 2002 of Band Sawing Services, led to the company expanding into capital equipment. Since then, First Cut’s capital equipment division has grown exponentially to specialise in metal cutting, sheet metal processing, CNC bending and punching machines, and tube and pipe processing.

First Cut has also invested substantially in its service programme enabling the company to provide repairs and maintenance services for a wide range of machines, from entry level band saws to state-of-the-art CNC controlled drilling and cutting lines.

In 2021, a new welding division was introduced as an integral part of the fabrication and manufacturing value chain, while the recent merge of interests between gas safety training stalwart GSI, further strengthens this offerings.

Employing some 240 people, First Cut is based in Benrose, Gauteng but has a national footprint and distribution facilities across South Africa.