

# A world first in road safety



Iris Wink, an associate at JG Afrika and registered International Road Federation road safety audit team leader

Iris Wink, an associate at JG Afrika, has become a registered International Road Federation (IRF) road safety audit team leader and is the first woman in the world, and the second person in Africa, to receive this globally recognised credential.

**H**eadquartered in Washington DC and supported by regional offices throughout the world, the IRF assists a network of members from both the public and private sectors in more than 70 countries by providing world-class knowledge resources and advocacy services. This is in addition to offering continuing professional education, such as its Global Credential Programme, which provides a pathway for experienced road safety auditors to enhance their existing qualifications.

Wink was first introduced to the programme by the South African Road Federation (SARF), which is a local partner of the IRF. In order to qualify as an IRF road safety audit team leader, she had to complete an online examination before submitting a comprehensive presentation of her professional experience, including details of the projects that she had

audited and four letters of recommendation from clients.

Michael Dreznes, executive vice-president, IRF, noted that the content of the reports demonstrated a sound understanding of safe systems concepts, while also praising her insightful commentary on speed and its management, as well as her knowledge of vehicle restraint systems.

Wink graduated with an MSc in civil and transportation engineering from Leibniz University in Hannover, Germany, in 2003. She immigrated to South Africa that year to gain experience working in a sub-Saharan African environment. Then, in 2012, she joined JG Afrika as a traffic and transportation engineer and was later appointed to lead the firm's Transport & Traffic Engineering Division in Cape Town.

### Challenging existing practices

Wink has been involved in numerous audits over the years and remains extremely

passionate about creating safer roads, especially for South Africa's youth. She lauds the IRF and the SARF for the leading role that they are playing in challenging existing traffic and transportation engineering practices to create safer road systems.

"I am looking forward to helping them change existing mindsets as a registered IRF road safety audit team leader. In South Africa, too many engineers still tend to design strictly to the guidelines, when, in fact, we should be challenging the norm to find real workable solutions to the extraordinary road mortality rate," she says.

She further says that many lessons and experiences can be gleaned and adapted from developed countries, such as the UK, USA and Germany, which continue to make major strides in terms of road safety. Importantly, in these countries, due attention is given to pedestrians, the most vulnerable of road users, in the early design phases of road transportation networks.

### Pedestrians

Pedestrian safety is an area that requires significant improvement in South Africa, considering that three children under the age of 15 die every day while commuting on the country's roads.

Wink says that targeted educational programmes will greatly assist in raising

road safety awareness at school level. "While they will play a large part in helping to reduce many fatalities and injuries in the short term, the longer-term benefits of these programmes will become apparent once these learners reach a driving age. This will help correct many of the current unsafe driving practices that have contributed towards the many deaths on South Africa's roads every year, especially during the holiday periods," she says.

Meanwhile, South Africa's international engineering counterparts are also making major strides in terms of using new materials to manufacture road signage that collapses on impact, and in the design of guardrail end treatments that provide effective deflection and absorption of oncoming traffic. Iceland has even started trialling a new pedestrian crossing that appears to be three-dimensional, which forces drivers to decelerate once they see the seemingly floating 'zebra stripes'. Wink will accept her certificate at the



2018 SARF/IRF/Permanent International Association of Road Congresses' Regional Conference for Africa, held at the Durban International Convention Centre in October. She received news of her accolade during

Women's Month and, as such, says that she hopes that her recent achievement will inspire women who are interested in the technical professions to pursue their ambitions. **35**