

Celebrating...

WOMEN IN HVAC-R LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2026

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TRADE

"Leadership is not defined by the title you hold—it is reflected in the confidence you project, the respect you earn, and the impact you leave behind. When women own their voice, embrace their value, and lead with authenticity, they don't just change their careers—they transform the future of the HVAC-R industry."



Ntokozi Dube:
Refrigeration Mechanic
Refrigeration Facilitator
& Assessor, Ekurhuleni
East Tvet College



Thandokazi Portia Mqwebedu: Senior
Commissioning Engineer
| ALEC Engineering &
Contracting LLC (Dubai)



Professor Edith Phaswana: (Acting)
Executive Dean: Thabo
Mbeki African School of
Public and International
Affairs UNISA



Jessica Mamutsi:
HVACR Technician,
Boleng Mechanical
Engineering Services
and Consulting



Phophi Matshaya:
Managing Director,
Mummy & Sons HVACR |
Project Management



Dr Lerato Makoro WITS:
Secretary General for
Women in Global Health
(WGH) South Africa



Margaret Molefe:
Director, Department of
Forestry, Fisheries, and
the Environment



Marilyn Morris:
Personal Brand Strategist |
International Professional
Image Association (IPIA)



Lisel Engelbrecht:
Executive Head: Data
Engineering, Analytics and
AI Standard bank SA



Ayanda Mona:
Refrigeration Mechanic,
COCA - COLA Beverages
SA



Sylvia Baloyi:
Industrial Psychologist,
Transition Coach and
Adjunct Academic



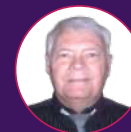
David Botha:
Executive Director,
SARACCA



Thobile Ndwandwe:
HOD Engineering
Lumacon



Andre van Der Merwe:
Managing Director,
Evapco



Eugene Le Roux: EAC
Project Management



Ria Ledwaba:
CEO Gree Products



Angelique Thompson:
Chief Operating Officer-
ERASE



Michele Hughes:
DAIKIN SA



28th / 29th October 2026



EMPERORS PALACE
Johannesburg

The HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration) industry is undergoing rapid transformation driven by technological innovation, sustainability, digitalisation, and increasing demand for skilled professionals. Despite these advancements, women remain underrepresented across technical, operational, and executive leadership roles.

The Women in HVACR Leadership Summit -2026 organised by Empire Conferencing aims to provide a platform that celebrates women leaders, equips emerging professionals with leadership skills, encourages mentorship, and promotes diversity and inclusion across the HVACR value chain.

The conference will bring together industry executives, engineers, contractors, manufacturers, policymakers, educators, and young professionals to share knowledge, inspire change, and develop actionable strategies for increasing women's participation in leadership.

Conference Objectives

- Inspire women to pursue and advance leadership careers within HVACR.
- Showcase successful women leaders and industry role models.
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across the HVACR industry.
- Build leadership, negotiation, and strategic decision-making skills.
- Foster mentorship and networking opportunities.
- Highlight innovations, sustainability, and emerging technologies.
- Encourage collaboration between academia, industry, and government.
- Develop practical recommendations to improve gender representation within HVACR organisations.

Target Audience:

- HVACR Engineers • Mechanical Engineers • Facility Managers • Contractors
- Manufacturers • Consultants • Technical College Students • University Students
- Government Representatives • Industry Associations • Human Resource Professionals • Women Entrepreneurs • Young Professionals • Executive Leaders
- Sustainability Professionals

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TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A MORE **INCLUSIVE, INNOVATIVE & SUSTAINABLE** HVACR INDUSTRY.



AGENDA: DAY ONE (28TH OCTOBER 2026)

08:30-09:00	Registration Meet and Greet /Morning Snacks
09:00-09:45	BREAKING BARRIERS: WOMEN REDEFINING LEADERSHIP IN HVACR "From Apprentice to CEO" (SUCCESS STORY) Phophi Matshaya: Managing Director, Mummy and Sons HVACR Project Management Vice Chair South African Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Contractors Association (SARACCA)
09:45-10:30	THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN HVACR: Beyond the 3% Thandokazi Portia Mqwebedu: Senior Commissioning Engineer ALEC Engineering & Contracting LLC (Dubai) Stargate UAE 200MW Data Centre Cluster SAIRAC Associate Director, Women in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Alliance (WIRACA)
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-11:30	Who Moved My Cheese Andre van Der Merwe: Managing Director, Evapco SAIRAC Member Served on SAIRAC JHB Committee for 14 years and a Past Centre Chairman and National President
11:30-12:15	CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS: Leading with Purpose: Inspiring Young Women towards a Career in HVAC-R Ayanda Mona: Refrigeration Mechanic, COCA-COLA Beverages SA
12:15 -13:00	Encouraging Women Engineers/Technicians on the Use of Natural Refrigerants Margaret Molefe: Director, Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment
13:00-14:00	LUNCH
14:00-14:45	MOTIVATIONAL ADDRESS: Inclusive Leadership in Technical Industries Professor Edith Phaswana: (Acting) Executive Dean: Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs UNISA
14:45 -15:00	BREAK
15:00-15:45	Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Solutions Ria Ledwaba: CEO, Gree Products SA -the only black Woman importer of Heating, Ventilation, and Air-conditioning (HVAC) in South Africa. South African businesswoman, football administrator, and philanthropist. Founder of the Premier Soccer League (PSL) club Ria Stars First female Vice-President of the South African Football Association (SAFA)
15:45-16:30	COOLING DOWN!! Mental wellness: Balancing ambition and wellbeing Sylvia Baloyi: an Industrial Psychologist , Transition Coach and Adjunct Academic on an exclusive session on Balancing Mental Health in the Workplace: Building Resilience, Well-being, and Creating High-Performing Teams
16:30 - 17:00	Shortage of Technicians in the Refrigeration and Air conditioning Industry: Eugene Le Roux: EAC Project Management
17:00-17:15	VIRTUAL SESSION: Promoting Workforce Diversity, Skilled Trades Advocacy, and Creating Career Opportunities for Women in HVAC Daphne A.I. Fayle: Founding Board Member, Women In HVACR Canada
17:15	END OF DAY ONE FOLLOWED BY COCKTAIL HOUR CELEBRATING WOMEN

AGENDA: DAY TWO (29TH OCTOBER 2026)

09:00-09:30	FROM FRONT DESK TO FRONTLINES: How Mentorship, Training and Opportunity Build HVAC-R Leaders" Angelique Thompson: Chief Operating Officer- ERASE
09:30-10:00	The Role of SARACCA: Driving Compliance, Professional Standards, and Excellence in the HVAC Industry David Botha: Executive Director - SARACCA
10:00-10:15	BREAK
10:15-11:00	How Daikin SA is Changing the Lives of Women: As a leader in the HVAC-R industry, Daikin is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion by creating pathways for women to excel, lead, and shape the future of the industry. Michele Hughes: DAIKIN SA
11:00-11:45	TOOLS TECH AND TRAILBLAZERS: Women Leading the AI Transformation in HVACR Lisel Engelbrecht: Executive Head: Data Engineering, Analytics and AI Standard Bank SA Global Top 100 Innovator in Data & Analytics 100 Influential Women in Tech Driving Data and AI Innovation & Data Literacy Across Africa CDAO at Women in AI Mentor BFSI Top50
11:45 -12:30	POWER SESSION: Own the Room: Professional Etiquette, Executive Presence & the Confidence to Lead Marilyn Morris: Personal Brand Strategist International Professional Image Association (IPIA) Personal Brand Coach Speaker Women Empowerment Corporate Brand Strategist Protocol & Etiquette Consultant Image Consultant Chamber Committee Chairperson: Services SETA
12:30-13:00	Women Leading the Future of Sustainable Cooling: Natural Refrigerants in HVACR Ntokoze Dube: Qualified refrigeration mechanic refrigeration facilitator and assessor and gas safe handling practitioner Ekurhuleni East Tvet College
13:00-14:00	LUNCH
14:00-14:30	Resilience in Leadership Dr Lerato Makoro WITS: Secretary General for Women in Global Health (WGH) South Africa
14:30-15:00	Closing the Skilled Trades Gap Through Inclusion Thobile Ndwandwe: HOD Engineering Lumacon
15:00-15:45	Women Driving Sustainability in HVACR Jessica Mamutsi: HVACR Technician Boleng Mechanical Engineering Services and Consulting
15:45-16:00	CLOSING REMARKS/VOTE OF THANKS END OF CONFERENCE

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Book before
31 JULY 2026
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TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A MORE **INCLUSIVE, INNOVATIVE & SUSTAINABLE** HVACR INDUSTRY.





WOMEN IN HVAC-R LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2026

28TH –29TH OCTOBER 2026 | EMPEROR'S PALACE | JOHANNESBURG

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Delegate substitutions. Substitutions is welcome at any time and do not occur any additional charges. Please notify EMPIRE in writing of any such changes at least 3 days before the date of the event.

- Please note that the speakers and topics were confirmed at the time of publishing however circumstances beyond the control of the organizers may necessitate substitutions, alterations or Cancellations of the speakers and/or topics.
- As such, EMPIRE reserves the right to alter or modify the advertised speakers and /or topics if necessary. Any substitutions or alterations will be updated and sent to you as soon as possible.
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- or any cancellations received in less than 7 working days before the date of the event, the full fee will be payable and no refunds or credit notes will be
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- **Registration fees above INCLUDES the following entitlements:** Entrance to session, registration pack, lunch and refreshment breaks.
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