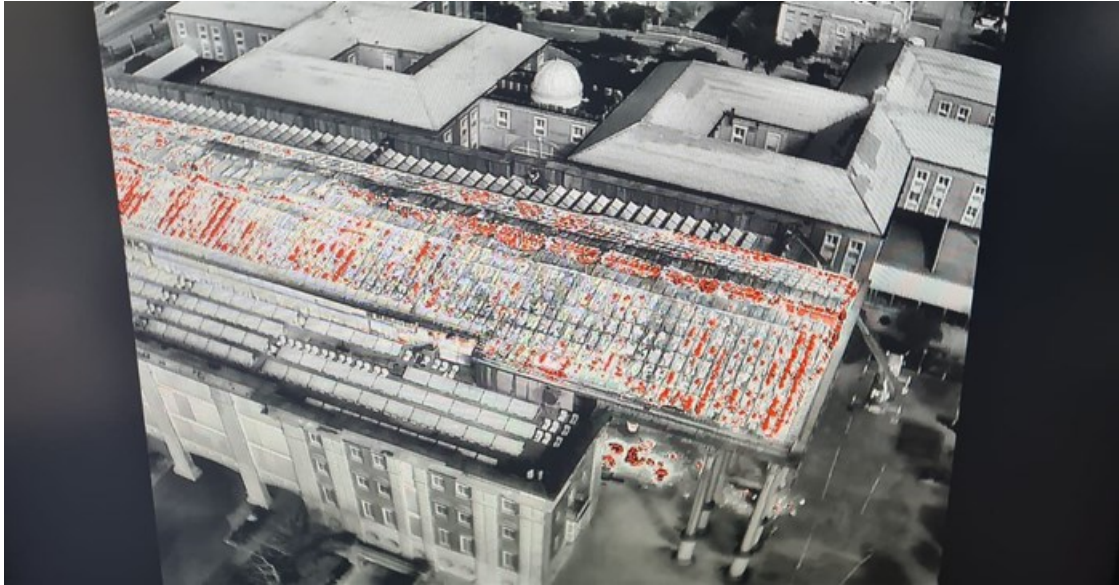


Solarworld Africa responds to uncertainty after Vodacom fire

In a dramatic turn of events on 9 July, the Vodacom building in Century City was engulfed in flames, prompting a swift response from emergency services. The cause of the fire remained a mystery until 4 August, when Vodacom released a statement based on preliminary findings. The report confirmed that an electrical fault was to blame, not the building's solar installation as had been speculated.



In the aftermath of the fire, rumours circulated suggesting that the building's rooftop solar panels were at fault. This speculation stirred unease among potential solar energy investors and cast a shadow over the quality of both the solar panels and the installation work at the Vodacom building. The ripple effects were felt across the solar industry, tarnishing its reputation.

Gregor Kuepper, MD of Solarworld Africa, is no stranger to such challenges. With over two decades of experience in the global photovoltaic industry and a deep understanding of grid-tied and off-grid applications within the Sub-Saharan African market, Kuepper is well-positioned to address these concerns. As Solarworld Africa nears its 40th year in operation, Kuepper's insights into the Vodacom fire are eagerly anticipated.



Discovery Bank's innovative approach to alleviating load shedding woes

7 Jun 2023



Presumption of fire cause

The early speculation concerning the fire that broke out that Sunday morning pointed to the solar panels on the roof. "Upon arrival of the first crews, it was discovered that the solar panels on the roof had caused the rooftop to catch fire," stated JP Smith, Cape Town's mayoral committee member for Safety and Security.

“Several statements that were made about the safety of solar shows that premature conclusions do indeed damage the trust in solar as a safe, clean and proven technology. Jumping to conclusions without concrete evidence is also harmful to the reputation of the entire industry,” adds Kuepper

“This speculation has unfairly cast a bad light on solar energy technology. Whilst we are busy finalising the investigation, we felt it prudent to place on record that the preliminary report by the forensic team has ruled out solar technology being the cause of the fire and that it was an electrical fault,” [said a spokesperson at Vodacom](#).

Concerns about solar energy safety

Solar energy has proven to be a reliable and sustainable source of power for countless businesses and households. It is crucial to remember that solar panels undergo rigorous testing and adhere to safety standards to ensure their safe operation. Businesses such as Vodacom conduct regular maintenance and inspections.

“CPA, as the operations and maintenance team on site at Vodacom Century City is dedicated to maintaining the plant to the highest standards. The plant is regularly maintained and kept up to date with the relevant safety standard and best practice in the market,” added Anthony Adriaans, national projects manager at Current Power Automation (CPA).

“The solar modules and cabling are regularly checked and replaced in accordance with the maintenance programme put in place by Vodacom and CPA.”

Suppliers and product quality

Vodacom is committed to the highest standards of safety and quality. The network provider only works with reputable and qualified suppliers who have demonstrated their expertise in the field. Any claims suggesting the use of unqualified suppliers and inferior products are unsubstantiated and cast unwarranted doubt on the business’s decision-making team.

“Disappointingly, we have also seen industry players opportunistically using this unfortunate incident to market themselves in bad taste,” explains Kuepper.

“While competition is healthy, baseless claims against manufacturers, distributors and installers and attempts to position themselves as superior by capitalising on this incident are counterproductive and unprofessional. Now is the time for our industry to support one another to ensure this important renewable energy source is not tainted.”

The solar industry has made significant strides towards sustainability and has become a reliable source of clean energy. However, unfounded assumptions can deter potential investors from embracing solar energy solutions.

It is essential to prioritise accuracy and information in such situations to preserve the reputation of the solar industry, speculation without evidence can cause undue harm to the solar industry's reputation.

“At Solarworld Africa, we are committed to solar energy as a safe and sustainable solution and urge the public and potential investors to engage with reputable when seeking information on solar solutions in general.” concludes Kuepper.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>