SA no longer puts up with shoddy products

By Graeme Hosken   20 Oct 2017

Exploding electronic game boxes, melting cellphones, ill-fitting paint-stripper bottle lids, lethal kitchen appliances and faulty cars. For years South Africans have borne the brunt of manufacturers' product faults, but not anymore.

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Consumer protection lawyers and rights groups have reported an upsurge in the number of people taking on manufacturers over their product safety flaws. A year ago Cape Town law firm DCS Attorneys did not receive a single request for legal assistance in terms of seeking damages against manufacturers. Now it receives more than three a month.

"It's thanks to 'Dr Google' that consumers have become so aware of their rights," said Kirstie Haslam of DSC Attorneys.

She said the Consumer Protection Act was a strong piece of legislation that South Africans were using to take on product manufacturers not wanting to accept liability for defective products.

Haslam said under the act manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers could be held liable for any harm caused if a product was defective or harmful and there were no adequate safety warnings.

Magauta Mphahlele, the Consumer Goods and Services ombudsman, said the number of complaints it received against manufacturers was on the increase. "Consumers are definitely becoming more aware of their rights through awareness

campaigns on consumer protection matters."

Electrical appliances and cellphones were among the products that made up most of the complaints. The majority of product safety complaints received related to food poisoning, she said.

National Consumer Commission spokesman Trevor Hattingh said although it had not noticed a higher number of consumer complaints about potentially dangerous products, there had been an increase in the number of recalls that manufacturers, distributors and suppliers had brought to its attention, mostly came from the automotive industry.

Source: The Times

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