

# Exclusive report:

## Refrigerant cocktail poses risk!

A potentially hazardous substitute for the refrigerant R134a has reportedly surfaced in the Johannesburg market.

R415b, one of the substitutes currently on sale, is a blend of the refrigerants R22 and R152a – highly flammable because of the latter’s presence.

It is alleged that the products, which are said to be offered at far cheaper prices than conventional 134a, are also packaged to mimic that of the true R134a refrigerant canisters. Along with the familiar light blue colour, the ‘cocktail’ drums are boldly branded as 134a, with barely noticeable text stating “R415b replace”.

According to Lukas Koster, member of the South African Fluorocarbon Association (SAFA), the majority of the companies selling these refrigerants are simply trying to make a ‘quick buck’, with very little concern for the clients

they are selling them to.

“Many compressors have not been designed to accommodate this type of refrigerant,” says Koster, “As not all compressors are necessarily explosion proof, and given the flammability of this particular refrigerant, there exists a considerable risk to users.”

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At the time of going to press, it was unclear as to where these refrigerant blends are bottled and packaged. The following South African wholesalers have, however, responded to an enquiry by RACA journal, confirming that they



**What to look for: R134a is highly visible on the canisters while ‘R415b replace’ is in small, more unnoticeable text surrounding that .**

will neither stock nor sell the potentially dangerous product: Reco, Kovco and Metraclark.

Both customers and consumers of R134a are urged to take note of this new blend’s flammability hazard if using it as an alternative refrigerant.

Ensure that all refrigerant canister labels are scrutinized and the refrigerant you intend to use is correctly identified. If there are any doubts as to your compressor’s limitations, consult the manufacturer’s data sheet for detailed information.

Members of the industry are urged to report any suspect canisters by calling the tip off line on page 25 in this edition of RACA journal.

**Highly flammable: a test on the refrigerant blend, R415b, undertaken at a BOC operation in the East.**

