

Press release

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Rand-Air long-term equipment hire an 'ore-some' cost-saver for mining operations

Mines require a range of hire equipment from time to time. Precisely what equipment is needed depends on the type of mine, explains Rand-Air's Business Development Manager for Long Term Rental, Henry Fourie. For instance, on an open-pit mine, generators and lighting plant are most frequently hired. "Some of the mining contractors also use our high-pressure diesel compressors for exploration as well as blast-hole drilling," he explains.

On surface during shaft sinking, the mines use electric or diesel 1500 cfm machines. Once the mine is established, then Rand-Air is also capable of supplying air from surface for the underground mining operations to power rock drills of various types. "For this, a popular choice is the 1765 - 2119 cfm electric machines which we have supplied in various quantities, from as few as two units up to 10 units on a compressor bank," he continues.

Rand-Air also has specially modified electric units for use underground. A major deep-level gold mine, for example, will have a two kilometre deep shaft down to a certain mine level. And then from the shaft, it can be as far as a kilometre or more to the rock face where drilling is actually happening. Many older South African mines have been in existence for decades; and, over time, the compressed air pipe systems have deteriorated, allowing air to escape and pressure to dissipate from numerous leaks before air actually reaches the driller.

Some of South Africa's older mines also have surface compressors feeding air underground which have been operational for some time. With these compressors, there is a much greater chance of periodic failures which can take some time to repair. During these periods, hire compressors can play a cardinal role in keeping the mine operational.

Asked what hire period constitutes a long-term rental, Fourie explains that there is no given period - although the minimum is usually 12 months, which can be extended to some years. With longer rental periods, Rand-Air will give the mine an option to renew the rental contract if it so wishes. "We have one mining company on our books who has had long-term rental equipment from us for 12 years," explains Fourie.

Long-term rentals come with the benefit of a lower rate to the mine. With long term rentals, Rand-Air offers very favourable service level agreements which it takes pride in honouring. "Our rapid response times, which we take pride in meeting, form a key part of these agreements," continues Fourie.

A further factor in favour of long-term rentals is that the mine does not have to employ skilled people specifically to service and maintain compressors or generators.

The challenge that faces Rand-Air with long-term rentals is that production pressures on mines are invariably immense - and both men and machinery sometimes have to work in exceptionally harsh environments. However, with both short-term and long-term rentals, customers are always assured of a Rand-Air machine that will look and perform as well as a brand-new unit.

Rand-Air service technicians are assiduous in supporting both short-term and long-term rentals. Should a customer ever experience difficulty with a rental unit, the Rand-Air staff member concerned is prepared to field calls from the mine – even in the middle of the night. If need be, after such a call, the sales representative will phone a technician on-call who will immediately drive to the mine and rectify any issues forthwith.

In terms of any responsibility the mines have for Rand-Air's hire equipment on a long-term rental, Fourie explains that, apart from not intentionally damaging the machines, they have none. "Rand-Air takes full responsibility for maintenance as we pride ourselves on our service levels, response times and knowledge of our equipment," he explains.

Depending on the number of machines on site, Rand-Air will have a dedicated staff member on site to ensure continuous faultless functioning of any hire equipment.

Regarding whether Rand-Air carries out long-term hire contracts outside of South Africa, Fourie explains that the company has done this in the past where it serviced a Botswana mine from South Africa. However, further afield, Rand-Air would look to its parent company Atlas Copco to service long term contracts.

"Anyone who works in the mining environment will know what a challenging environment it is in which to meet demanding production targets," asserts Fourie.

"So having someone to provide trouble-free compressed air, power or lighting benefits the mine in every way. Should the mine expand, and it needs more equipment, this is a phone call away without having to find additional capital first.

When this happens, we will give the mine a solution that is custom-made exactly to their requirements," he says.

"There are many benefits to mines hiring equipment on a long-term basis. Ultimately, by looking to a third party to provide ancillary services, mining operations can conserve

operational cash flow as well as capital. In the longer term, this promises the mining company a viable sustainable future with increased profitability horizons," he concludes.

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(834 words)

Note to editors

About Rand-Air

With 10 branches and agencies spread across Southern Africa, and eight in South Africa, Rand-Air continues to expand its footprint to service a diverse market. Since 1973, Rand-Air has been driven by an ethos to exceed customer expectation and satisfaction. This is complemented by a product offering that adheres to the highest quality standards in the industry. Rand-Air's products portfolio includes oil-free compressors, industrial air compressors, diesel compressors, electric air compressors (all screw compressors), diesel generators and lighting towers.

As the market leader in portable air compressors and generator rental, Rand-Air upholds its reputation through regular training and upskilling in business related and product-specific matters.

Rand-Air is part of the Atlas Copco group and is a Level 4 B-BBEE rated company.

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