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**Johnson Crane Hire Bolsters Its Heavy Lift Capability And Now Operates
The Largest Crane Fleet In South Africa**

Johnson Crane Hire has bolstered its crane fleet in terms of its heavy lift capability on both the crawler and hydraulic side. It now owns and operates the largest crane fleet in South Africa, with a total of 270 cranes, having completed a four-year fleet replacement programme in 2014 at a total investment of R600 million.

“We have added some major equipment into the top end of the fleet, with a strong focus on keeping our fleet modern and up-to-date. This is to ensure we can meet the growing demand of our core client base and to support our philosophy of providing new and reliable equipment,” Peter Yaman, Executive, Johnson Crane Hire, says.

Established in 1976 as a crane hire company, Johnson Crane Hire is now firmly established as a total lifting services provider. “We can supply a full scope of project services, from crawler and hydraulic cranes to ancillary services,” Yaman says. “We are not only a crane company; we are a projects company.”

“We are up there with the major players in terms of equipment and engineering and services,” Cornelis Grotius, General Manager: Heavy Lift Division, says. “The fact that we are a South African company, operating alongside major multinationals in this highly competitive market, is a testament to our home-grown success story.”

Another key factor is that the Heavy Lift Division operates across a range of sectors, with Johnson Crane Hire’s latest highly successful diversification being into the wind-energy sector. “We spread our risk over different sectors, meaning we are not wholly reliant on construction, mining or heavy industry,” Grotius says.

Johnson Crane Hire’s heavy-lift crane fleet consists of some of the largest cranes available in the South African market. These range from lattice boom crawler cranes (200 t to 750 t) to a 750 t lattice boom truck-mounted crane specifically for the wind-energy industry and hydraulic boom crawler cranes (100 t to 220 t).

In terms of a total package, Johnson Crane Hire is able to offer upfront engineering, project management, heavy transport and heavy rigging services. Part and parcel of its total lifting solutions capability is a focus on alternative lifting technologies. While Johnson Crane Hire has already used jacking and sliding techniques to great success on some projects, other complementary technologies include hydraulic gantries and strand jacking. The latest trend in this regard is Self-Propelled Modular Trailers (SPMTs).

Johnson Crane Hire has branches in all the strategic regions of South Africa, from Cape Town and Durban on the coast to the heavy industrial areas of Secunda, Vanderbijlpark, Rustenburg and Middelburg, and then specific project areas such as the Medupi and Kusile power stations. “We have a branch at Lephalale in Limpopo, east of the Waterberg Coalfield, and have a newly-established branch in the Northern Cape at Deben, close to Kathu,” Yaman explains.

“The Heavy Lift Division, besides have its own dedicated crane fleet, also offers technical and engineering expertise to the branches, which are our regional strong points in being able to service our customers,” Yaman says. It is this highly flexible approach that has resulted in Johnson Crane Hire being the preferred mobile crane hire and lifting service provider for its core client base.

Johnson Crane Hire also operates successfully in southern Africa, with an operation in Botswana and having recently completed work in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. “We currently carry out projects on an ad hoc basis in Africa as a whole, dependent on the risk-versus-reward ratio,” Yaman says. Investing in the latest technology in terms of its crane fleet also means that Johnson Crane Hire adheres to the highest possible health and safety standards in the industry.

“We focus on safe lifting techniques as part of our SMART (Safety, Maintenance, Availability, Reliability and Total cost effectiveness) business philosophy,” Grotius says. This means that all lifting equipment is kept in optimum condition through regular, proactive maintenance schedules and ongoing inspections and load testing. In addition, the company invests in highly skilled and trained operators to ensure they are completely familiarised with the application of Johnson Crane Hire’s comprehensively documented and implemented safety systems.

“Our philosophy is to bring operators up through the ranks. As the Heavy Lift Division has grown in terms of increased capacity and more project work, so have we developed the skills and expertise of

our operators to a commensurately high level. We have invested significantly in this aspect of the business, and have developed our in-house expertise both progressively and organically,” Yaman says.

Johnson Crane Hire’s total solutions approach is easily discernible in its involvement in the wind-energy sector, where the logistics of moving cranes on-site and to different project areas pose a considerable challenge. “That is a totally different ball game. At the end of the day, a lift is just a lift, but the attendant logistics and safety issues, and the ongoing pressure of meeting targets and deadlines, makes it a lot more challenging. Johnson Crane Hire has the inherent flexibility and in-house resources to be able to meet all such challenges,” Yaman says.

It also has the capability to take a project from its early stages through to successful completion. “We sit down with the client right from the start, in planning a project, and develop the process to take it all the way through to execution. It is this upfront engineering and technical planning capability that differentiates us as a heavy lift service provider as opposed to a one-off crane hire company.

“A trend is to build bigger and bigger components off-site, as such modules minimise the erection and construction work on-site. However, you need to work around those sorts of issues early enough, plan for the equipment that is needed, and then carry out the necessary engineering, which results in major advantages for the client in terms of cost-saving and overall efficiencies,” Yaman says.

An example of Johnson Crane Hire’s successful application of a total lifting service was at the Natref Clean Fuels project for client Fluor, where it consulted with the client in terms of the crane sizes needed and then was able to plan the transportation and installation accordingly. “We conducted a rigging study analysis that enabled the client to formulate the costing and feasibility estimates for the project. It also afforded the client the opportunity to develop a proper methodology.”

At present some of the most technically challenging lifts being undertaken by Johnson Crane Hire are for the wind-energy industry, where up to 100 t have to be lifted to as high as 80 m. Current projects include a 184 t lift for a new headgear installation at a major diamond mine in South Africa, as well as a 143 t lift at a 43 m radius for a planned refinery shutdown in Durban in May, which will see the impressive deployment of a range of cranes supplied from Johnson Crane Hire.

HEAVY LIFT DIVISION PIC 01 : Johnson Crane Hire's 750 ton lattice boom crawler crane.

HEAVY LIFT DIVISION PIC 02 : In a recent heavy lift at Zimplats, Johnson Crane Hire was tasked to remove an old mill weighing 225 t, with a radius of 31 m, and it to replace it with a new one weighing 170 t.

HEAVY LIFT DIVISION PIC 03 : Johnson Crane Hire's heavy-lift crane fleet consists of some of the largest cranes available in the South African market.

HEAVY LIFT DIVISION PIC 04: Some of the most technically challenging lifts being undertaken by Johnson Crane Hire at present are for the wind-energy sector.

HEAVY LIFT DIVISION PIC 05: Johnson Crane Hire's total lifting solutions capability includes alternative technologies, such as jacking-and-sliding this heavy base for a waste-heat boiler at Sasol.

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