



Press Release from Atlas Copco Mining and Rock Excavation Technique

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For Immediate Publication
15th June 2016

Drilling just got smarter with new Atlas Copco SmartROC

Atlas Copco's new ground-breaking SmartROC D65 down-the-hole drill rig combines brains and brawn to set the industry benchmark in intelligent, powerful and efficient high-precision drilling for improved production, productivity and ultimately profitability.

In the current protracted tough economic climate with its weak Rand and low commodity prices, mines, quarries and plant sustainability and profitability hinge on driving down operational and maintenance costs and driving up efficiencies and productivity. The trend is also towards increased safety and smaller carbon footprints. To assist customers and end-users to meet these ever-increasing demands, Atlas Copco has come up with a smart solution that revolutionises the drilling experience. The SmartROC D65 is equipped with smart technology to optimise drilling and blasting, improve accuracy, machine availability, equipment lifecycle, operator safety and performance, and reduce fuel consumption.

Precision drilling by this smart rig which is designed with leading-edge varied level automation technology, ensures consistency in operation and quality as well as increased safety throughout the process resulting in optimum blasting for applications such as drill production blast, pre-split and buffer holes as well as in-pit grade control with reverse circulation. The SmartROC D65 delivers significant cost and time related benefits to customers and end-users and is ideal for use by large mining houses, contract firms and even small rig quarry operations for limestone and aggregate quarries, open-pit and selective mining as well as construction.

“Featuring full drill cycle automation, this highly automated, strong, rugged and reliable rig drills holes on its own,” says Atlas Copco Mining and Rock Excavation Technique’s SED (Surface and Exploration Drilling) Business Line Manager, Hedley Birnie.

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“It ‘knows’ to drill in the right place at the right depth and at the right angle, every time! It also allows you to reach desired hole depth while drill tubes are added and extracted automatically. This automation which also allows for automatic overburden drilling, delivers a multitude of benefits including reduced risk of manual error as well as potential safety hazards from dropping rods.” Birnie adds that the auto-rod handling function reduces wear on the rig and on consumables.

The smart functions allow the operator to communicate with the rig via Wi-Fi network or data stick. Drill patterns, hole angles and depths are sent to the rig with GPS coordinates. Using HNS (Hole Navigation System), the drill rig locates the exact coordinates and drills precisely to plan and all this information is reported back to the office. “HNS is an intelligent option which delivers a faster set-up, improves precision and reduces non-drilling time, fragmentation and explosive quantities,” elaborates Birnie. As manual marking and surveying of hole positions is eliminated, the system removes operators and surveyors from hazardous areas. Drilling with extreme accuracy adds to the bottom line as production and productivity increases and fuel consumption decreases. The smart technology incorporates a new engine management system that ensures up to 15% less fuel consumption by the powerful efficient turbo-charged diesel power unit. “By using Atlas Copco office management systems such as ROC Manager, customers can access important statistics such as rig availability, actual drilling time, fuel burn, etc.,” adds Birnie.

The SmartROC D65 will perform at optimum efficiency within hole ranges from 110mm to 203mm and hole sizes of up to 223 mm, to a maximum depth of 54 metres on a long feed rig using 6m x 114mm drill pipes. 127mm and 140mm diameter drill pipes are also available if and when required. The standard feed rig uses a 5m x 114mm drill pipe and allows to drill to a depth of 45m with the same hole diameter range.

Up to three SmartROC drill rigs can be operated from one BenchREMOTE base station at a distance of up to 100m. This in effect transforms the SmartROC into a dependable, low-maintenance co-worker on the bench and leads to significantly improved operational efficiencies. Alongside reduced operator error, operator safety and productivity is boosted. The operator can monitor progress from the comfortable FOPS and ROPS approved cabin.

With no pipework in the cabin, the operator enjoys a more ergonomic, spacious dry ‘office in which both noise and the risk of oil leakage are minimised.

Using the Rig Control System (RCS) to control the rig limits extreme usage and safeguards it against operator abuse. Alongside extended rig lifespan, this built-in control also helps to improve uptime and availability.

The SmartROC product line is backed by an extensive aftermarket support network that covers South Africa with regional support to Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Services include specialised operator and technical training, maintenance support that can be customised to meet the requirements of the customer, an extensive parts supply as well as a component rebuild facility that repairs the components back to OEM standards.

Atlas Copco offers theoretical and practical aftermarket operator and technical training on the SmartROC to ensure correct operation (safety and reliability) and optimum performance of the drill rigs. Service support, management and the workshop situated in Jet Park, Boksburg, Johannesburg, backed by branches in Rustenburg, Middelburg, Lydenburg, Kuruman and Springbok ensure excellent customer service and fast turnaround times. Aftermarket parts are supplied from the central warehouse in Jet Park and regional warehouses in Lydenburg and Kuruman.

Atlas Copco offers various levels of support through flexible aftermarket service and maintenance options. “With our Scheduled Field Service, we can schedule services in accordance with OEM requirements, whereby the equipment can be serviced by Atlas Copco Field Service staff providing parts and labour,” explains Birnie. “Our Man-on-Site option basis a technician at the operation for a period of no less than three months to perform maintenance services, repair breakdowns as required as well as skills transfer.” Additional service options from Atlas Copco include Care Agreements, Maintenance Management Support Service as well as Full Maintenance Contracts.

According to Birnie, five SmartROCs are currently operating in South Africa, two in the Northern Cape and three in Mpumalanga. “While this is fairly new technology for Southern Africa, these units have been around for a number of years and there are more than 150 rigs operating in Australia. We are seeing a lot of customer interest and the future for smart technology looks bright. Smart mining and quarrying companies realise that it is time to drill smarter.

SmartROC is exactly what these industries need right now to put them a cut above by ensuring sustainable production for a profitable future,” concludes Birnie.

A Rock Drill Rebuild facility which currently boasts a rebuild/repair capacity of 20 rock drills per week, an Axle Rebuild facility with a capacity to repair/rebuild five axles per week as well as a Boom Rebuild Facility are housed at the Jet Park head office.

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Atlas Copco is a world-leading provider of sustainable productivity solutions. The Group serves customers with innovative compressors, vacuum solutions and air treatment systems, construction and mining equipment, power tools and assembly systems. Atlas Copco develops products and service focused on productivity, energy efficiency, safety and ergonomics. The company was founded in 1873, is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has a global reach spanning more than 180 countries. In 2015, Atlas Copco had revenues of BSEK 102 (BEUR 11) and more than 43 000 employees. Learn more at www.atlascopcogroup.com

***Atlas Copco Surface Drilling Equipment** is a division within Atlas Copco's Mining and Rock Excavation Technique business area. It develops, manufactures, and markets rock drilling equipment and mobile crushers and screeners for various applications in civil engineering, quarries and open pit mines worldwide. The division focuses strongly on innovative product design and aftermarket support systems, which give added customer value. The divisional headquarters and main production center is in Örebro, Sweden.*

***Atlas Copco Underground Rock Excavation** is a division within Atlas Copco's Mining and Rock Excavation Technique business area. It develops, manufactures, and markets a wide range of tunneling and mining equipment for various underground applications worldwide. The division focuses strongly on innovative product design and aftermarket support systems, which give added customer value. The divisional headquarters and main production center is in Örebro, Sweden.*