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PRAISE FOR AFRISAM AT R1 BILLION THARISA MINE EXPANSION PROJECT

AfriSam has been commended for the high quality and consistent strength above specification of readymixed concrete delivered to Tharisa Mine's R1bn chromite and platinum expansion project near Marikana in North West Province.

Work on the Tharisa expansion project started in last May and the new facility will process an estimated 3.6 million tpa of ROM ore with plant commissioning on schedule for August 2012. The Tharisa Mine has the largest known single chrome resource deposit in the world.

Burt van der Merwe, project manager for Civcontract Civils (Pty) Ltd, the civils contractor on the project, says that during the project peak in recent months an estimated 220 m³ of readymix was poured each day. "We've been satisfied that the quality and the strength of the readymix delivered has consistently been above specification."

"AfriSam, the leader in advanced composite cement, secured the contract to supply up to 22 000 m³ of readymix by road in November last year," says Gerhard Maree, branch manager, AfriSam Readymix: North West province.

Cem2A-M (V42) High Strength Cement was used in the readymix with a 35 MPa specification required for the primary crusher and 45 metre diameter circular thickener, and 30 MPa for other structures.

"Our challenge was to ensure a smooth supply of readymix during three big pours: 725 m³ for the SAG mill one base, followed by two pours of 687 m³ and 715 m³ for the SAG mill two bases. The first pour, with product supplied from our 600 m³/day Marikana plant, 15 km from the project site, was completed at 21h00 due to a late start resulting from a delay at the project site.

"With the second pour, we split supply between our Marikana and Brits plants, the latter providing 200 m³ of product. The Brits plant is 45 km from site. Deliveries were completed by 18h00, given that we had earlier access to the project site."

At all times, another AfriSam plant was on standby, and Maree explains that the geographic location of the site allowed the company to have standby plants at Brits and Rustenburg.

Maree indicated that the extent of the large pours as well as the need to ensure smooth supply to the project site and to AfriSam's other customers motivated a strategic decision to supplement the existing fleet of AfriSam readymix trucks in the Rustenburg area with additional vehicles from Johannesburg.

"We had two concrete pumps on site with a third concrete pump on standby for the big pours, and thereafter a concrete pump was on site from 07h00 to 18h00 daily for 37 consecutive days. In addition to this, AfriSam had concrete pumps on site on 42 other occasions," Maree says.

On some days, AfriSam delivered readymix to 4 different pours at the same time and had 2 concrete pumps on site pumping concrete for two different foremen.

An additional logistical challenge was to ensure that sufficient supplies of cement, aggregate and slagment were available on time at the Marikana plant to manufacture readymix in sufficient quantities to meet peak pour demands.

Aggregate is supplied by a third party while cement is drawn from AfriSam's Dudfield plant in Lichtenburg. Slagment is delivered from Vanderbijlpark, about 160 km from Marikana. In addition, AfriSam supplied readymix to Cape Island, a Civcon sub contractor also working on the project.

Over this period, AfriSam's maintenance crew did daily inspections on the Marikana plant and backup plants to ensure the smooth running and prevent any unplanned stoppages. A maintenance team leader was also available during all major pours

"Since we view our customers as partners, I was on the project site throughout the major pours and had various meetings with Civcontract Civils to discuss their ongoing requirements. In addition, a site and service coordinator was in attendance at the site during the large production runs to manage the workability of the concrete, control the trucks on site and ensure that high safety levels were maintained.

To monitor the quality of the AfriSam product, concrete samples were taken on a daily basis and tested in the company's laboratory in Rustenburg. A production team leader was also in attendance at AfriSam's Marikana plant to maintain quality and ensure appropriate levels of service as per the company's service pledge.

AfriSam guarantees the quality of its product and maintains standards by undertaking product specification checks including workability of the readymix material. The AfriSam plants are all automated and any material variance over 1 % is immediately picked up by our highly trained batchers.

Junithan Moodley, Civcontract Civils site agent on the Tharisa Mine project, says that substantial quantities of readymix were required for much of the extensive civils work that forms part of the contract on the expansion project.

Among the civils elements which Civcon constructed using readymix supplied by AfriSam are the foundations and 21 metre-high wall for the high primary crusher; a 47 metre diameter by 11.3 metre high circular thickener chamber, three flotation lines ranging in height from 6 metres to 18 metres; foundations and bases for two SAG mills as well as a bore mill - the biggest readymix pours on the project with 85 tons of reinforced steel; two stockpile tunnels each 72 metres long by 8 metres high from the bottom of the foundation to the top of exterior walls; and a 16 metre high concrete trestle to support the stockpile conveyor.

Further deliveries of readymix were required for the construction of concrete bases and columns for the secondary and tertiary crushers; the foundations, columns and floor slabs for the primary and secondary spiral; the construction of a process water area comprising circular tanks ranging from 3 metre to 30 metre in diameter; bases and columns for steelwork for the 20 metre by 20 metre mill screening building, and bases and columns for structural steel work for the PGM plant.

All these structures required 150 mm concrete surface beds with bund walls and sumps. A total of 2 100 tons of reinforced steel was used on the project.

The scope of work was increased over the duration of the project with concrete required for the construction of a 15 metre diameter thickener, the secondary and tertiary crushers, the platform of the Eskom incoming 88 KVA feed substation, outgoing 11 KVA feed, and six mini sub stations

throughout the plant yard, chrome dewatering pads comprising a 80 by 60 metre surface of 150 mm reinforced with 30 MPA concrete.

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