

Safricas is pleased with Bell backup in the DRC

As green as the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be in its rainy season that spans several months, just as bleak can the outlook be when one is just not able to find earthmoving equipment when you need it and at the right price, in this seemingly remote part of Africa.

This was the dilemma that faced the directors of multi-disciplinary civil engineering and construction company, Safricas, in 2010 when they broke with tradition and bought a fleet of earthmoving machines manufactured, sold and serviced by Bell Equipment.

Safricas was acquired by the Blattner family from the Belgian CFE company in the year 2000 and has its head office in the national capital, Kinshasa. The company has, besides specialising in civil engineering, interests in a river shipping terminal, sandstone quarries, equipment rental, erection of antennas for telecoms and ready-mixed concrete. It also has a strong presence in Lubumbashi, capital of the mineral-rich Katanga province and has been in the area since 2009.

"We urgently needed yellow earthmoving and related machines for a number of projects, including road-building in the Katanga province," Rean Nel, the Safricas Director for Earthmoving Equipment tells us. "We bought two Bell 770G Graders, three Bell 315SJ Tractor Loader Backhoes (TLBs), six Bell B25D Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs), two Bell L1806E Wheeled Loaders and a Bell 850J Dozer."

Rean mentions that the Bell 850J Dozer and one Bell L1806 Wheeled Loader were bought on the pre-owned market but is well pleased that the new equipment has slotted in very well with their existing fleet, especially with a number of Bomag compaction machines the company had acquired prior to Bell Equipment becoming the African distributor for the brand.

"We've been very impressed with our Bell B25D ADTs that are working in our quarry outside of Lubumbashi, hauling rock material off the top of a large hill to our crushing and screening plant about a kilometre away," he says. "Despite the steep inclines, these machines just keep running in both wet and dry weather and keep our aggregate and base course business flowing with full loads and pleasing fuel consumption of just 14 litres per hour."

The company uses their Bell 850J Dozer and one L1806E Wheeled Loader in the quarry operations with the former used on their stockpiles and levelling loading platforms and the latter to load the various products onto rigid tipper trucks.

"As we're involved in many road construction and rehabilitation projects all over the DRC, our Bell Graders and assortment of Bomag Compactors are in high demand," Rean continues. "But we don't only use them on roads contracts as we've used them to create platforms for one of the large mining groups to expand their infrastructure at their mine in Kinsenda as well as prepare a site for a service station in Kolwezi."

"Having our servicing under warranty done by trained Bell technicians is a huge plus and with Bell Equipment's ever expanding footprint in the DRC, we're confident of a bright future ahead due to the solid technical back-up."

As the company director with a hands-on management style concerned with technical backup and spares availability, Rean is pleased with Bell Equipment's spares stockholding and ability to supply parts quickly.

"I must stress though that having Bell Equipment on our doorstep here in Katanga Province, which is our next biggest branch, holds a distinct advantage for us and with this in mind, we are confident enough in Bell Equipment's technical backup to continue to support Bell," Rean says.

