

Bell addresses inter-provincial delegation on training initiatives

Senior management of South Africa's nine provincial Departments of Public Works and Transport, joined by colleagues in the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation, gather annually for an end-user forum where they effectively exchange ideas and learn new ones.

Towards the end of 2015, representatives of eight of the nine provinces gathered in Bloemfontein to discuss, dissect and above all, exchange ideas of how to run their departments better to so benefit the tax-paying citizens of their provinces. Representatives of Gauteng were unable to make the gathering this year.

"We meet under the title of the Mechanical Services Sub-committee (MSSC) which operates as a sub-committee for the Government Motor Transport Division," explains Retief Oosthuizen, Chief Engineer: Free State Fleet Management whose department organised the 2015 forum. "This sub-committee in turn reports to the Roads Coordinating Committee, which serves as an advisory board for the National Government's Ministry of Transport."

"Each year during this gathering of ours, we invite different speakers to address us and in doing so, we learn about a host of subjects which have a direct impact on our work," Retief adds. "This year, we have been privileged to have a full team of representatives here from Bell Equipment, which apart from being one of our main suppliers, is also the one truly South African original equipment manufacturer we support."

The Bell Equipment team was headed by Bruce Ndlela, Director: Business and Public Sector Development, accompanied by Riaan de Klerk, Technical Training Manager – Apprenticeships & Factory Skills, Isaac Arendse who heads up operator training and the full public sector sales team under the leadership of Sales Manager, Philani Gumbi. The Public Sector sales team consists of David Papi, Luc Hannan, Nomthi Mazibuko, Sam Malaza and Aaron Sibiyi.

Making full use of this opportunity to address a specialised target audience, Bell Equipment's Riaan de Klerk addressed the delegates and opened by posing the question as to why industry needs artisans and technicians. He went on to explain the advantages of having qualified artisans and technicians and their typical roles and the benefits they bring to any industry.

Riaan fully explained the roles of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), TVET colleges (also known as FET colleges), the Transport Education Training Authority (TETA) and the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (merSETA). He emphasised the role played by hosting companies such as Bell Equipment and ended his presentation with a full explanation as to how apprenticeships are conducted and how the Bell Equipment artisan training system works. Bell Equipment's Training Centre is widely recognised as a leader in the field of artisan training.

Isaac Arendse enlightened his audience with all aspects of operator training and the benefits it presented to owners of earthmoving equipment and fleet managers. Afterwards Bell Equipment hosted a dinner in the form

of a braai for all the delegates at the Windmill Casino in Bloemfontein. In a relaxed atmosphere, there was much talk of Bell Equipment's presentation and many positive comments were heard.

"We're mostly aware of the many SETAs and training facilities but the specialised training Bell Equipment offers, is much closer to home, so to speak," said George Lekagane, Fleet Manager for the Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure. "Riaan de Klerk really put Bell Equipment's training courses and facilities in perspective and how they can benefit us and in the end, help us to realise our objectives."

Brian Valentine is the Control Engineering Technician for Roads and Public Works in the Northern Cape. He said: "Looking ahead, we can clearly see that an OEM such as Bell Equipment is not merely here for equipment sales and the company has really impressed us with the effort it is making in developing technical skills. This presentation has given me much food for thought especially now that we're undergoing a revitalisation exercise of our twelve workshops in the province."

"I'm very impressed with Bell Equipment training apprentices the way I was trained many years ago, using a minimum of four years to gain experience and knowledge," said Loffie Eloff, Chief Artisan for Public Works and Roads in the Northwest Province. "The company is to be commended for the work it is doing training both public and private sector artisans and I'm positive that this experience will create artisans with the correct fault diagnostic experience which ultimately saves time and money."

"KwaZulu-Natal has always placed a lot of emphasis on training but I have been pleasantly surprised by what Riaan de Klerk told us today regarding Bell Equipment offering different aspects of training such as product

support, hydraulics and electrical disciplines," said Sizwe Ndlovu, Controlling Engineering Technician for

the KZN Department of Transport. "We have training centres in four regions in our province namely Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Empangeni and if we are able to conduct on-going refresher courses for our artisans through Bell Equipment, we would really benefit by this."

"Experienced and quality artisans are difficult to find and to hold onto and being able to utilise training such as that which Bell Equipment is offering, can be a massive boost to elevating our existing workforce in this field," said Mxolisi Giyose, Chief Engineer of the Department of Roads and Public Works in the Eastern Cape. "With the established and strong relationship we have with Bell Equipment, we can access the transfer of such skills and so boost the knowledge of our apprentices, existing mechanics and machine operators."

"In the Western Cape, we realised some time ago that to prevent a future skills shortage, we were duty-bound to start apprenticeship training as a matter of urgency and did this some six years ago," said Handré Strydom, Chief Engineer Mechanised Services: Department of Transport in the Western Cape. "The detail Riaan and Isaac went into about what Bell Equipment offers in terms of training was refreshing and the fact that they emphasise that there is no shortcut to proper training, is good to hear."

"We were impressed with the outlay and content of the training courses Bell Equipment offers as this is all new to us," said Deon Lourens, Deputy Director: Government Motor Transport and Plant in Mpumalanga Province. "It seems to us that there is a big push to train artisans in the traditional way and by doing this, Bell Equipment really seems prepared to go the extra mile with its training."

Understanding the responsibilities as a local manufacturer Bell Equipment, in addition to providing training and promoting skills development, is also continuously looking at ways of increasing the local content of its locally manufactured products to benefit local suppliers and support job creation.

