

Standardising on Bell machines makes sense for Afrimat KZN and Free State

A leading aggregates and ready-mixed concrete producer has found that standardising on its wheeled loader and haul truck fleet, that services one of its busiest regions, is paying dividends in the long term.

Afrimat Limited is one of the largest construction materials and industrial minerals supply companies in Southern Africa with its footprint extending to seven of South Africa's provinces and Mozambique. Afrimat listed on the main board of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 2006 when the Prima Group and the Lancaster Group merged prior to the listing. Its Kwazulu-Natal and Free State region comprises of no less than eight quarries and ready-mix concrete operations respectively, with six found in Kwazulu-Natal and two in the Free State.

Afrimat Kwazulu-Natal and Free State produces aggregates, concrete manufactured products, and ready-mix concrete for the construction industry.

"Due to our business really being an open cast mining operation, with material handling thrown in, we're heavily dependent on earthmoving equipment," says Afrimat's Regional Maintenance Manager for KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State Region, Monty Coleman. "We've had a good relationship with Bell Equipment as a primary supplier of our wheeled loader and haul truck fleets that dates back to 2006."

Monty explains that Afrimat's Physical Asset Manager for Mobile Equipment, Adriaan Lategan, follows the strategy of PASS:55 regarding the Group's equipment of which one of the objectives is standardisation of fleet. Together with the Bell B30 Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) and Bell L2106 Wheeled Loaders, the Bell L1706-sized Wheeled Loader is also one of the product lines on which the Group has standardised. Since the previous C and D-series models the Group has not deviated from this decision.



Bell Sales Representative, Daniel van Huyssteen (left), with Monty Coleman, Afrimat's Regional Maintenance Manager: KZN & Free State, in front of a new Bell L1706E Wheel Loader that was delivered to the Vryheid branch in March 2016.

"One of the big advantages of the standardised fleet is that should a machine need to be moved to another business unit within our region, there is commonality with spares and consumable items that we keep in stock," Monty says. "Another advantage is that the operators and our own technical staff are confident with operating and maintaining the machines. With our past experience of service levels and the supplier network of Bell Equipment the relationship adds value to our operations."

Monty oversees a large geographical area with quarries situated in Vryheid, Dundee, Ulundi, Hluhluwe, Scottburgh, Pietermaritzburg, Harrismith and Qwa Qwa. Ready-mix concrete plants are to be found at Vryheid, Dundee, Ulundi, Mkuze, Hluhluwe, Ladysmith, Harrismith and Qwa Qwa. Two mobile batching plants are used for remote sites.

"Our quarries see especially high demand on the utilisation of our Bell material handling and haulage machines and although we work mainly in daylight, extended hours are worked when demand is high," Monty adds. "I must point out though that our Bell machines deliver constantly high mechanical availabilities. I have been overseeing the maintenance on the machines in this region for the past two years and can tell you that we have very little downtime on our Bell fleet. When we have needed Bell Equipment to do servicing or repairs, their response times and parts availability has been excellent. In rare cases of a part not being in stock, it is generally delivered to us within two days."

Monty goes on to say that both warranty and out-of-warranty services are planned each Monday morning so that contingencies are in place for when machines are

withdrawn from the operation. The Bell L1706E Wheeled Loaders are used primarily to load trucks delivering bulk materials to clients and to a lesser extent to stockpile the material.

"Afrimat's most recent four Bell L1706E Wheeled Loaders have been supplied with extended warranties on their wet drive trains and hydraulics that have the machines fully covered to 36 months or 6 000 hours," says Daniel van Huyssteen, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative for the Northern KZN area. "This sees Bell Equipment mechanics doing all scheduled servicing and repair, if the latter is needed, but allows Afrimat's maintenance staff to change tyres, ground-engaging tools or edges on buckets and small consumables, for example light bulbs."

"This standardisation on our Bell Wheeled Loaders extends to the Bell ADTs in our quarries where we believe the Bell B30D has for many years been a real stalwart in getting the raw material from where it is mined in-pit, to our primary crushers," Monty continues. "These Bell B30s just keep on running and have proved themselves to be very dependable, ensuring a constant feed of raw material from the pit."

"In the long run, we believe this standardisation of equipment works for us and we're now in the process of standardising on the Bell L1204E Wheeled Loader for our concrete products division. Suffice to say it's a two-way street as we can depend on Bell Equipment in providing quality products coupled with their legendary back-up service and ready parts availability, at any time," Monty says.

