

# Standardising on Bell Loaders makes good business sense for Afrimat



*An Afrimat Bell L2106E Wheel Loader doing material and product handling on an iron-ore mine in the Northern Cape.*

**Although supplying and selling aggregates and sand make for high volume sales, it is commonly known that these products have low margins, which has seen a leading South African supplier really sweat yellow machines in its material handling fleet to particularly higher hours.**

And to do this confidently, only original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) with a wide geographical footprint and sustainable service track records are selected as OEMs of choice.

“These are important considerations that have seen us, as a leading South African construction materials supplier, choose Bell Equipment as one of our primary OEMs,” says Adriaan Lategan, Physical Asset Management Lead for Afrimat (Pty) Ltd. “Our company and its founding partners go back a long way with Bell Equipment and our confidence in the company’s equipment and back-up service has never waned.”

According to Adriaan, Afrimat’s early founding partners, Lancaster Quarries, Prima Klipbrekers and Malans Quarries all ran Wheel Loaders designed and manufactured by Bell Equipment, so creating a continuing legacy between the OEM and its eventual unified client, Afrimat.

When asked why Afrimat has maintained this relationship with Bell Equipment, Adriaan explains: “As part of our total physical asset management approach, we have policies and strategies in place which comply with the physical asset management standard, PAS55, which equates to the new ISO 55000 standard. Thus, when buying material handling and haulage equipment, according to our strategy, standardising on certain sizes makes good sense to us as they fit the specific needs of our varying operations.”

These operations are mainly quarries, sand mines and material processing contracts on mines. Bell Equipment makes reliable equipment that meets those size and standard criteria. Due to acquisitions, Afrimat runs a wide range of Bell Wheel Loaders with the fleet currently covering almost all the sizes - L1004, L1204, L1506, L1706, L1806 and L2106 of both the D and E-series. However for standardisation models mainly focus on the L1706 and L2106 sizes. All machines are bought with extended warranties up to 6 000 hours. Adriaan and his team view the extended warranty policy as an advantage as it ensures quality workmanship in maintenance and repair, which adds to the machine’s life expectation.

Adriaan says: “When it comes to replacement of machines, Afrimat takes three main criteria into consideration when meeting with the operational teams. An operational risk number is calculated for each unit (RPN), the actual hours of the machine are compared against a set replacement hours for the respective model and the current running cost per hour for each model is evaluated.

“The calculated RPN also helps with the fleet distribution amongst the different operations. This risk number is calculated taking into account the priority of the operation a machine is deployed on, our internal risks - for example our means of maintenance support - and then the external risk. With the external risk the OEM is rated in terms of how accessible service and parts are and in what perspective the footprint of the OEM covers our needs. With regards to the external risk, Bell Equipment has never disappointed us, and has contributed to our inherent risk by providing information and training to our own maintenance teams.”

Cost per production tonnes at each business unit within Afrimat is taken seriously, especially when it comes to fuel consumption. Managers of business units each receive a full report of diesel capture at noon every day and work this in with other production information for a complete daily analysis.

“These are all factors which make our business sustainable, and I can tell you that we’ve stayed with Bell Wheel Loaders as their fuel consumption is low and their mechanical availability is high,” he adds.

Afrimat’s operations are mostly conducted during weekly daylight hours although longer shifts are worked when demands on their products or services dictate this. Most tasks involve material handling in plants, loading of road and off-road trucks and housekeeping. The handled material is generally abrasive and the company has developed an in-house bucket maintenance division that does bucket lining. Buckets are fitted with either ground-engaging tools or straight edges and half-arrows depending on the nature of the material.

The company’s Bell Wheel Loader fleet consists of 47 machines with three additional Tractor Loader Backhoe machines, which are mainly used for housekeeping duties. Seven Finlay mobile crushers and screens and 80 Bell Articulated Dump Trucks, mostly B30D models, complete the fleet.



*Afrimat’s Physical Asset Management Lead, Adriaan Lategan.*