

Unitrans Mining chooses Bell Equipment as machinery supplier

Unitrans Mining, a leading player in the mining industry, has selected Bell Equipment as one of their machinery suppliers for their latest contract. The decision was driven by the unparalleled availability and unwavering support offered by Bell Equipment, setting them apart from their competitors.



Kobus Burger, Operations Executive: Unitrans Mining, emphasised the long-standing relationship the company has cultivated with Bell Equipment over the years. "As a group, we have always relied on Bell Equipment for many of our mining, haulage, material handling, and agricultural machinery requirements," Kobus states. "This enduring partnership has been built upon the foundation of trust and reliability that Bell Equipment consistently delivers to Unitrans."

When the time came to fulfil the requirements of their new contract for a leading South African cement manufacturer, Unitrans Mining again turned to Bell Equipment without hesitation. Their specific needs called for 30-ton Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) complemented by 50-ton Excavators. Bell Equipment's

machinery perfectly matched Unitrans Mining's criteria, including competitive pricing, availability, and life cycle costings.

In the past, says Kobus, it was common to pair the right loading tool with a suitable haulage vehicle when establishing a fleet of yellow equipment for an opencast mining operation. "However, today, the process has become more analytical. Various factors, such as life cycle costings, have gained significance in determining the fleet's efficiency, return on investment, and long-term viability."

The Unitrans Group specialises in supplying logistics and handling services in petrochemicals, industrial and freight solutions, mining, and bulk material

handling, tailored agricultural services, food, and consumer logistics and people transport.

Due to the nature of the mining division's work, large fleets of yellow machines are inherent to their operations. As part of its established policy, new machine fleets are procured whenever new contracts are secured. The latest contract will see the team mining limestone that will be used to manufacture cement and for this it was necessary to procure the relevant equipment.

As an opencast mining operation, the contract entails several tasks. Firstly, it involves the removal of topsoil and overburden, with the topsoil being stored for future rehabilitation of the mined areas. In addition to excavating the desired product, Unitrans Mining is also responsible for constructing access ramps into the mining pit and maintaining haul roads, with particular emphasis on dust suppression.

Kobus explains that in determining what yellow machines are needed for such a specific contract, as much information as possible is gathered from the client. "Establishing the appropriate cycle distances and frequencies associated with the shifts worked is crucial. This information allows us to determine the optimal pairing of loading tools and haulage vehicles and the quantity required to ensure a sustainable service."

Part of this process includes researching the broader equipment market to determine which suppliers have the matching loading and haulage vehicles and then look at availability, price, and the all-important life cycle costings. These include fuel, maintenance, and the proven technical support that they as clients can rely on from the equipment supplier.

For this limestone mining contract, it was not just the technical aspects that influenced Unitrans Mining's decision to opt for Bell Equipment, but also the aftersales service. Drawing from their past experiences, Unitrans Mining knew they could rely on Bell Equipment's solid support network, ensuring their machines' smooth operation and maintenance throughout the contract's duration.

New fleet acquisition

Unitrans Mining took delivery of a number of Bell B30E ADTs and Kobelco SK520XDL-10 Excavators in December 2022 for the limestone mining operation. The fleet was put to work almost immediately. The Bell B30E ADTs were fitted pre-delivery with automatic lubrication systems and the Kobelco Excavators with lubrication and fire suppression systems.

"We have for several years successfully, and very satisfactorily run ADTs manufactured by Bell Equipment in a variety of sizes, but we're new to the experience of owning Kobelco Excavators," continues Kobus.

"We've been impressed by this combination of Kobelco loading tool being ideally matched to the Bell Equipment haulage vehicle, and given the general length of our contracts, there is enough time within the contract to justify the capital investment and expectation of a solid return, especially with these two brands."

Unitrans Mining focuses on load and haul operations while subcontracting the drilling and blasting process when mining limestone. Collaboration with the drilling and blasting contractor ensures efficient operations, explains Kobus.

"The average haul distance for limestone is 1,2km to the run-of-mine tip in one direction and 1,8km to the waste dump. The machines clock between 250 and 300 hours in a month. Mechanical availabilities generally exceed 90%.

"The Bell B30E ADTs were purchased with standard warranties of 12 months and unlimited hours, while the Kobelco SK520XDL-10 Excavators can rely on 12 months or 2 500 hours of specialised care," concludes Kobus.

