

'Prioritise skills for improved safety'



SHAFT SINKING

Rapid, safe sinking includes concurrent vertical shaft sinking and lining, creating single lifts well over 2 500 m, 'mucking' rates exceeding 200 t/h and sinking rates of more than 200 m a month



JANNIE HOOMAN

Safety considerations are introduced to every project, in design and execution

Local firm Shaft Sinkers has committed itself to being involved in a higher number of learnerships, and will be offering communities training in mining and engineering skills, it reports.

"We have committed ourselves to providing skills and management training to the surrounding areas of Welkom, Mpumalanga and Britz," maintains Shaft Sinkers division director of corporate services, **Tom Pietrzak**.

He says that Shaft Sinkers is currently facing a shortage of skills in the industry.

However, this challenge is being

actively addressed through the expansion of the company's training facility and the formation of tripartite alliances with clients, suppliers and contractors regarding training, which adds great value to the industry.

The company was recently awarded a contract from Aquarius Platinum SA for the sinking and lining of two ventilation shafts at the Everest platinum mine, near Lydenburg, Mpumalanga. Shaft Sinkers project manager, tending **Rouan du Rand** explains that the one shaft is 4 m in diameter, 43 m deep and is concrete-lined.

The second shaft being sunk by Shaft Sinkers is 5,6 m in diameter, 163 m deep and is concrete-lined to 35 m, with the remainder of the shaft receiving a wetcrete lining.

Work on the project began in June this year and the expected completion date is the end of the fourth quarter, 2006.

At peak, the project will employ some 135 employees, which will mainly be sourced from the local community.

Shaft Sinkers is a pioneer in safety, quality and training in the shaft sinking and contract-mining industry.

In 1995 Shaft Sinkers created a unique training facility where employees undergo regular skills and management training in shaft sinking and mining.

According to Pietrzak, the centre is run with great success by the SHEQT department, providing service to the entire group and its clients. The facility is recognised by the Mining Qualifications Authority and carries its accreditation.

Shaft Sinkers has been involved in the mining industry for over 40 years, offering a wide range of services, including shaft sinking, mining contracting, underground construction, large underground excavations, tunnelling, design, consulting and draughting, as well as engineering, procurement and contract management.

Shaft Sinkers MD **Jannie Hooman** adds that Shaft Sinkers recently went through a significant restructuring process.

The company now consists of three different divisions—namely mining, shaft sinking and its in-house design division, METS.

He says that the new structure will allow each division to concentrate on its core competences and a major focus will be given to research and development, new technology and innovations. The company's customers and stakeholders will benefit from the new structure.

Safety considerations are introduced to every project, both in its design and execution.

Every decision is evaluated and then executed in accordance with strict safety specifications followed by regulatory risk assessments.

Safety, health, environment and quality-management programmes are integral elements of the company's management style.

Shaft Sinkers has mastered the art of rapid, safe sinking.

This endeavour includes concurrent vertical shaft sinking and lining, creating single lifts well over 2 500 m, 'mucking' rates exceeding 200 t per hour and sinking rates of more than 200 m a month.

Shaft Sinkers Mining is executing a number of mining contracts using the latest in trackless mining technology equipment. In addition, the company is rapidly ramping up its contract-mining production levels.

This will place it amongst the significant South African mine producers in the near future, Hooman concludes.

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