

Taking Much Asphalt into the 21st Century : People and Technology

TECHNOLOGY and better trained and equipped people will differentiate Much Asphalt from other companies, says the company's chief executive, Phillip Hechter. The company has, he says, significantly changed direction investing heavily in state-of-the-art technology by building two world-class plants – one in Natal and another in Gauteng – and embarking on a concerted drive to upgrade its staff's skills levels.

"We are committed to our staff and believe we are demonstrating this by actively upgrading the skills of our people by introducing a learnership programme for all those involved in the manufacturing process," says Hechter.



Much Asphalt chief executive, Phillip Hechter.

A company training facility is also currently being established in Port Elizabeth where the company's operations director, Chris Lange – considered to be a leading expert in asphalt plant technology – will train key personnel on the new plants and the technology used in them.

According to Hechter, the decision to

upgrade the two plants was twofold. Firstly, both were outdated and had to be upgraded to match world standards and incorporate environmentally friendly standards. Secondly, the problem of "human error" needed to be eliminated.

"Not only do the new plants offer this but they also offer clients a superior product. To do this cost effectively we needed to ensure that the technology we use is the best available. Coupled with our trained and motivated staff, who know they are valued, we are assured of maintaining our high standards," says Hechter, adding that offering clients a world-class product is what the company does best.

One step ahead – always!



MUCH Asphalt's state-of-the-art, world class computerised premix batching plant has been built at Coedmore in KwaZulu-Natal - one of the first in the country capable of producing premix products, which exceed current specification requirements.

This flagship plant can produce 72 x 2.25t batches an hour - which equates to 162 tons per hour. Included in the facilities at the plant are eight cold feed bins, a 2.4 diameter drying drum, mixing tower and dust collection system.

According to Chris Lange, operations director of Much Asphalt, the new plant also has a unique air filtration system which includes a multi-clone dust collector and reverse air pulse filter baghouse, specifically designed to suit local conditions.

"Virtually no dust escapes into the atmosphere and the system is capable of collecting all the fines and metering the exact amount back into the mix to ensure consistent voids in the mix," he says.

Another advantage offered by this world-class facility is the new twin shaft double drive, high intensity, mixer locally designed and manufactured to suit local conditions and match similar mixers already used overseas.

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The new state-of-the-art plant in Coedmore, KwaZulu-Natal.



Chris Lange, operations director of Much Asphalt.

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New premix batching plant

It ensures fast, complete mixing and discharge while all the raw material feeders are equipped with dribble feeds to the plants scales - ensuring precise weighing and complete accuracy.

Controlled and operated by a state of the art, windows-based computerised batching system - with full display graphics - the plant features a computerised SCADA system as an integral part of the batching system. This ensures that both operators and management have access to on-line trending and alarming information at the push of a button. Process variables such as temperatures, pressures and flows are continuously logged and monitored allowing the operators to optimise conditions - ensuring consistent quality of product at all times.

Designed

The fuel reticulation system and automatic burner were designed to ensure that the heavy fuel is efficiently burnt at the correct atomisation temperature - thereby ensuring that no unburned fuel particles will remain on the aggregate prior to coating with bitumen.

Says Lange; "The plant has also been equipped to produce proprietary and special application mixes such as Nova Chip, SMA, red asphalt and latex modified mixes as well as the standard mixes."

Attention to detail has ensured that the site layout is user friendly for customers as well the suppliers of raw materials. More specifically the site is absolutely flat - a definite plus in the eyes of the haulers!

Says Lange; "By keeping up with world technology and best practice Much Asphalt aims to be at the forefront of asphalt production well into the future offering our local customers as good as, if not better service and product than found anywhere else worldwide"



Plant staff (left) and administration staff (above) are proud to service all their KwaZulu-Natal clients from the new state-of-the-art Coedmore plant. Wayne Hardman (above, fourth from left) is Much Asphalt's Coedmore plant manager.



KZN regional manager
Daryl Jorgensen.

Salviacim a hit with Durban Metro



A 13.2mm popcorn briquette.



The Durban Metro workshop clearly showing the two halves before the entire floor was coated in Salviacim.

SALVIACIM, a tough semi-rigid surfacing process that combines the flexible characteristics of bitumen macadam with the abrasion and wear resistant properties of polymer cement concrete, has successfully been used in two Durban Metro Council projects.

Metro's mechanical workshop is used to service trucks and buses. Conventional asphalt failed due to oil, grease and diesel spillages.

Two years ago - project one - Salviacim was laid on one half of the workshop for a trial period. The results were so successful, the company was called in to complete the second half late last year.

A 9.5mm open graded mix, known as "popcorn", was used and the aggregate was an ordinary concrete stone with a maximum flaky index of 30%. Values higher than this would have caused lower voids and mix failures.

The trial period was critical, says Daryl Jorgensen, regional manager of Much Asphalt in KwaZulu-Natal, as this allowed for any

unforeseen problems, which needed to be rectified before the final mix was laid, to be assessed.

"If the voids are incorrect and the grout is unable to penetrate, the support coat will not reach its intended strength and failure may occur," he says.

Salviacim was also laid on the surface of the Argyle and Umgeni Roads intersection - one of Durban's busiest. The high volume of the trucks and busses using the intersection and their turning action had caused rutting. The idea was to lay the product on one intersection as a trial and monitor the results.

To do this, all work had to be carried out at night to lessen the disruption to traffic. The Salviacim was left to cure over a weekend and rapid curing cement was used.

Says Jorgensen; "The asphalt was paved by Murray & Roberts and Salphalt's team followed with the grout. The final product looks very good and everyone involved was impressed with the process and its effectiveness."

Much Asphalt works towards ISO 9001-2000 quality standards

ALL Much Asphalt's manufacturing facilities are working towards obtaining ISO 9001 and 2000 quality standards certification.

According to Raj Rajcoomer, the group's quality assurance manager, high quality standards are playing an increasingly important role in business.

"Quality management systems improve production efficiencies," he says, adding that a third party certification will give Much Asphalt's clients the reassurance they need that the company's products are of the highest quality.

As a leading supplier of bituminous road surfacing materials, Much Asphalt already has an ISO 9002 - 1994 accreditation from the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). The listing, known as the "Network Listing" includes Much Asphalt's head office in Cape Town and 10 other branches situated countrywide.

Later this month the company will again be audited by the SABS for a 9001-2000 listing. This will include 13 branches, the company's laboratory in Eersterivier in Cape Town and all mobile operations. According to Rajcoomer,

quality standards within the group have progressed rapidly. "This accreditation will simply reinforce the guarantee we give as a company that our asphalt is manufactured under stringent controls and that it is regularly tested to a set of job specifications in order to ensure consistent quality and standards.

"Our manuals, instrument logs, calibrations, plant and laboratory equipment, company policies and instruction manuals are also regularly audited internally to ensure the company complies with the quality standards set by the SABS and ISO," he says.

Phambili Surfacing and Much Asphalt alliance created

AN alliance between Phambili Surfacing and Much Asphalt in KwaZulu-Natal is set to rejuvenate the region's asphalt surfacing sector.

Phambili Surfacing has started a new asphalt paving initiative in KwaZulu-Natal and is working in association with major asphalt producer Much Asphalt.

Phambili Surfacing is a division of Gauteng-based Ndivela Road Surfaces, which has more than 15 years experience in the asphalt paving industry and is considered a market leader in the country.

Since its inception in the market three years ago Phambili has had considerable success, says the company's manager Roland Tickle, adding that the focus will now be on hot mix asphalt paving, surface seals and asphalt-based contracts.

Tickle is assisted by Bruce Bartels, operations manager for Phambili, and Ndivela personnel will further support the Phambili team.

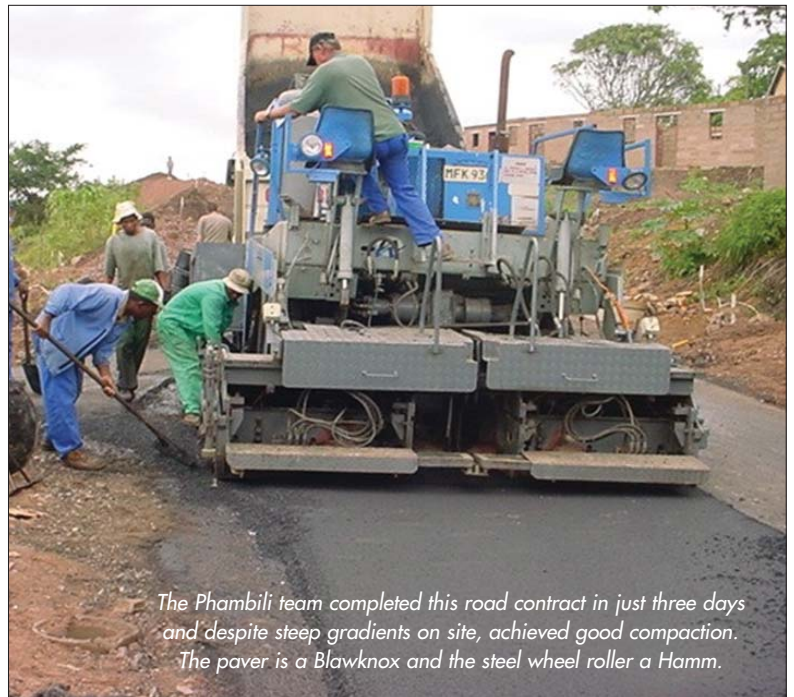
"The Much Asphalt/Phambili Surfacing alliance is looking forward to the challenges ahead and remain committed to growing this new paving venture into one of the leading role-players in the bituminous road construction industry," says Tickle.

Four pronged campaign fights AIDS

AIDS is a serious issue and Much Asphalt has launched a four-pronged attack on this dread disease by encouraging employees to become involved in a positive, healthy way.

The "attack" on AIDS involves encouraging employees to adopt a positive attitude, to become aware of the disease and its ramifications, to adopt a healthy lifestyle and to help one another by becoming involved in a peer educator programme.

"We endeavour to make our people and the communities from which they are drawn, aware of the disease and sexually transmitted infections (STI's) in every sense. This includes an extensive distribution programme of condoms, posters, booklets, pamphlets and videos," says Raj Rajcoomer. Formalised education, training programmes forums and a volunteer peer educator programme have also been initiated. Working under the auspices of a network of doctors, health-care organisations and the Department of Health, the volunteers support and counsel infected people and their families.



The Phambili team completed this road contract in just three days and despite steep gradients on site, achieved good compaction. The paver is a Blaw Knox and the steel wheel roller a Hamm.

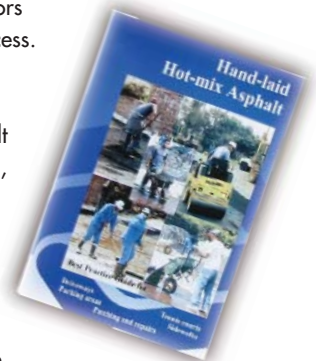
"Help" handbook a huge success

THE "Best Practice Guide" handbook specially written and published by Much Asphalt to assist supervisors and workmen working for emerging contractors and smaller companies has been a huge success.

According to John Onraet, the company's marketing director, the booklet which details specifications for all hand laid hot mix asphalt such as that normally used to pave driveways, tennis courts and sidewalks as well as patch and repair roads, has ensured that a uniformly high standard of asphalt is laid.

"We have had extremely positive feedback on the book and, in an effort to further assist the smaller companies we are now putting in place demonstrations, which will be given by some of our own customers who are proficient in hand laying asphalt," he says.

Pointing out that hand laid asphalt is often a much cheaper option than bricks, Onraet, went on to say that it is a growing market which should be fully utilised to reach its full potential. "The market can only grow and if we assist smaller companies and emerging contractors we are sure asphalt will become the first choice for smaller contracts," he adds.



THE KwaZulu-Natal region has many small, one-man bands operating in the bitumen laying business and they are just as important to Much Asphalt as the large contractors.

According to Daryl Jorgensen, small contractors collectively have substantial buying power and make up a large portion of Much Asphalt's business in the region.

In the light of this the Much Asphalt team are always on standby to offer advice and assistance to any contractor, no matter how small, should he need it.

"Not only do we offer advice but we have also specially manufactured cheaper products, specifically designed for jobs such as residential driveways which we are able to offer the smaller businessman," says Jorgensen, adding that workshops will soon be held to demonstrate the best ways of hand laying asphalt.

"We want to help the smaller contractor lay the right mix and look forward to being of assistance where we can," he says.



Small contractors are an important part of Much Asphalt's business.

Small businessman just as valuable

R24 million N3 upgrade uses more than 22 500 tons of asphalt

MORE than 14 000 tons of high specification asphalt wearing course and a further 8 500 tons of base course - which was mix treated with modified binder - was used to rehabilitate the busy N3 highway between Candella Road and Pinetown in Natal.

According to Much Asphalt's regional manager in KwaZulu-Natal, Daryl Jorgensen, the contract was

completed under a Product Performance Guarantee System (PPGS) for the eastern region of the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL).

"The PPGS conditions specified a six-year liability period and a guarantee of R4.5-million in place of a retention payment. The guarantee also required that the main contractor submit a quality assurance document

and that all parties complied with the conditions of this document. A full-time technician monitored operations on site," he said.

The stringent technical and operational specifications of the contract made it an extremely demanding project, adds Jorgensen, emphasising that detailed planning and coordination had to start months before work actually began on the project.

"The N3 is one of the busiest highways in South Africa and it is subjected to extremely heavy volumes of traffic and very high axle loads. Added to this, the section worked on featured steep grades and difficult geometrics as well as high temperatures, humidity and rainfall," he says.

The contract specified the selection and technical aspects of the materials that had to be used. The high temperatures required a minimum binder softening point of 58° and Much Asphalt had to develop a special manufacturing process to facilitate the complex procedures needed to order and receive the special bitumen needed for the Durasphalt™ modified base mix.

Says Jorgensen, "Careful streamlining and good coordination between all the stakeholders meant the contract could be completed close to schedule."



T-time for players at last year's annual golfing weekend at the Wild Coast Sun.

IT'S going to be THAT time of the year soon - when clients, various consultants and contractors pit their golfing skills against one another on some of the most beautiful golf courses in the country.

For three glorious days titanic battles will take place as street-wise contractors try to outwit and outplay their crafty opponents - those debonair consulting engineers - on various golf courses down the balmy Natal South Coast.

An annual event, the three-day golfing weekend is the perfect opportunity to build relationships, meet new people and generally interact with colleagues who work in the same industry.

"Much Asphalt is committed to playing an important role in the bituminous industry and part of this role is fostering good relationships with, and among, the major players in the industry," says John Onraet, marketing director of Much Asphalt.

Anyone for golf?

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