

Hose company supplies sector amid challenges



HIGH STANDARDS As more people in the fire industry become aware and educated about local hoses standards and stricter specifications, Astore will continue to see more growth in that regard

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Although hoses manufacturer Astore Keymak supplies 80% of its hoses to the local mining industry, business development director **Malindi Nkambule** says there are a number of challenges – in the main cheap imports and rising input costs such as raw materials and labour.

“Most of our competitors import their raw material for hoses from countries such as China as it is more affordable for them to do so. With input costs in this country rising at speeds that we cannot control, this is the reality that local businesses have to live with.

We strive to use as much quality, locally manufactured raw materials as we can.”

Nkambule notes that health, safety and environmental considerations will always be a concern for industries that Astore Keymak operates in, and the company “has come a long way” in improving the internal processes which are used to manufacture its hoses. While the imports factor is, for the most part, out of Astore Keymak’s control, country policies such as the recently gazetted Mining Charter III – which emphasise the need for

mines to procure their goods locally – have worked in the company’s favour. This facilitates the company performing better in the mining industry, compared with the other industrial markets which it supplies.

“We pride ourselves on being a proudly South African company. We make use of locally manufactured raw materials and we have a fully equipped lab on our site, which tests the quality of our products. Our certification is always up to date and we extend an invitation to our clients to come and audit our processes as well as our products on a regular basis,” Nkambule enthuses.

Further, over the last two years, the mining industry was not performing as well as it currently is, Astore Keymak started to diversify its approach by tapping into other industries such as agriculture and industrial. The company has experienced the most growth in the fire hoses industry, says Nkambule.

“Most of the imported fire hoses are branded in European EN 694 standards, but it is important to note that the local South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) is actually of a higher quality. We have gained some ground on that by converting some of our big clients to adhere to local standards in recent years.

“As more people in the fire industry become aware and educated about local standards and stricter specifications, we will continue to see more growth in that regard,” she explains.

For the year ahead, Astore Keymak will look to export to other parts of Africa starting with countries in the Southern African Development Community, such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland, where the company’s sales team has already introduced its range of products.

“We applied for a licence with the South African Revenue Service last year, we are also fully compliant with the SABS so we are really geared for expansion in that area,” she concludes. 

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