

Mill gear unit powers chrome mine output

(Date), 2015: A chrome mine in Mpumalanga is able to continue production of up to 110 000 tons of chrome per month, following the installation of a technologically-advanced mill gear unit (MGU) by SEW-EURODRIVE.

The latest SEW-EURODRIVE installation was completed recently when the mining operation experienced technical difficulties with its two gearboxes, which had been running since the mine's inception in 1997.

Only one of the gearboxes could be repaired, and SEW-EURODRIVE Nelspruit area sales manager **Jonathan McKey** states that this prompted the company to offer one of its latest M2 MGU series solutions to replace the defunct unit.

“Powered by a 250 kW motor, the new unit includes a pressure lubrication system, an oil/air cooler, a sight glass and radial labyrinth sealing which protects the unit from dust,” he explains.

McKey adds that the unit was adapted according to the customer's specific needs. “Condition monitoring sensors were also mounted to the gearbox, and an overload coupling was fitted on the HSS shafts.”

Developed as an upgraded version of SEW-EURODRIVE's successful M1 MGU series, McKey points out that the M2 MGU series meets the highest quality, reliability and performance requirements.

“Products in the series feature a horizontally split housing which is equipped with facilities for lifting, an oil inlet and outlet, an oil heater, a lubrication unit attachment and an oil sight glass, along with various other components,” he continues.

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M2 MGU products are sturdy and rugged, with the housings composed of various materials, ranging from fabricated steel to cast iron. All of the gears and pinions in the MGU range also meet ISO 6 standards.

Additionally, the gear mesh properties have been specially selected in order to minimise the noise and vibration levels, as well as to reduce the risk of surface wear to the unit.

The high speed shafts are equipped with a three-bearing arrangement and the radial load component from the gear mesh is supported by two radial bearings.

An additional thrust bearing load is included to compensate for the axial load component. If necessary, thrust bearings can be spring loaded to avoid minimum load condition for non-loaded bearings.

“Thrust bearings on HS, IM and LS shafts are located on the same side of the housing. This causes a thrust load on HS shaft and a counter thrust load on IM/LS shaft to be compensated close to each other, thereby minimising the housing deflections,” notes McKey.

According to McKey, SEW-EURODRIVE’s relationship with the mine began in 2008 when the company was commissioned to supply the mine with swingbase solutions for its strike and rom drives.

“The relationship has grown from strength-to-strength and today, we supply the operation with all of its geared and industrial gear solutions for operations above and beneath the mine’s surface,” he says.

SEW-EURODRIVE also supplies the mine with IG MC lateral strike conveyors. These feed the mine’s incline and rom belts, which transfer raw chrome ore to the surface.

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McKey notes that SEW-EURODRIVE's geared motor and smaller IG MC products are also currently found on smaller conveyor belt networks throughout the plant where the chrome ore is readied for transport.

"We are fully-committed to providing more efficient and modern engineered solutions to our customers. Given the nature of our relationship with this chrome mine, we also offer a 24/7 service which provides the customer with full peace-of-mind," he reveals.

Given the ongoing success of the relationship, McKey is confident of the future outlook. "SEW-EURODRIVE prides itself on improving and reinventing products and drive solutions. We will continue to advise the mine on how we can better improve its solutions, reduce downtime and ultimately save money on running costs," he concludes.

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