

[Media Statement]



P O Box 10335 Centurion 0046
Tuinhof Building 265 West Street Centurion 0157
Tel: + 27 12 683 1200 Fax: + 27 12 683 1300
e-mail: mmageda@tcta.co.za

TO: All Media
EMBARGO: For immediate release
DATE: 28 April 2022

EASTERN BASIN AMD PLANT CLOSED SINCE FEBRUARY 2022

Prompted by concerns from its stakeholders, the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) announced, today, that the Eastern Basin Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Plant has been temporarily shut down since February 2022, due to failure of its last remaining pump motor.

The plant started experiencing challenges with the pumps in early April 2021, when two motors broke down, leaving it operating on one pump. “An additional spare motor was installed, increasing the capacity of the plant to 67% of its design capacity of 110MI/d, effectively pumping 70MI/d. However, the spare motor only ran for two months, which once again left the plant operating on one pump”; said Johann Claassens, Executive Manager: Project Management and Implementation.

Due to international travel restrictions, a technical team from Germany, dispatched by the supplier, Andritz, could only arrive in South Africa in October 2021, to assess the damage to the motors and possible reasons for the failures.

After the assessment, spare parts for the failed motors were ordered and were expected to arrive in December 2021, with planned repair of the two pumps intended to be completed in February and March 2022. The delivery date could not be met at the agreed time.

“The supplier informed TCTA that, as a result of supply chain challenges related to Covid-19 lockdown, the spares were not available for dispatch in December 2021, and made an undertaking to deliver in part by mid-February 2022”; stated Claassens.

The first batch of spares arrived in February 2022 and the repair to one pump commenced. “Unfortunately, a further setback occurred when it was discovered that during the testing of the pump, before installation, the motor windings had failed, requiring complete rewiring of the motor. The copper wiring could only be delivered by the end of April 2022, which will effectively delay the recommissioning of the two pump sets to June 2022, thus, leaving the plant operations suspended until early June 2022”; said Claassens.

The expected service life of the pump-sets, at the time of installation, was 30 years with limited service requirements, based on experiences in German coal mines.

Andritz committed to further investigate the failure of the motors which is now expected to be related to the installed cooling system and to provide a technical solution to ensure the reliability and longevity of the pump-sets in accordance with initial expectations.

Based on the initial assessment on the rise of the water level, it is very unlikely that the water level, which is currently at 64.4m below ground surface, will rise above the danger zone of 25 meters by the time operations are resumed. In the light of the current rate of rise, and if existing conditions prevail, it is estimated that this will not be reached earlier than December 2022. According to studies conducted, the AMD will start to decant when the level in the shaft reaches 25m below ground level, resulting in environmental degradation.

TCTA fully appreciates the dangers posed by a prolonged closure of the plant and is doing everything in its power to restore operations in the Eastern Basin AMD Plant. It is unfortunate that the Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted in such a severe manner on the AMD operations, given our reliance on international suppliers to provide the scale and technical sophistication of the equipment required to operate an AMD plant.

...Ends...

Enquiries:

Project Communication: Chris Mahlubandile Mageda +27 (0)82 8031669, mmageda@tcta.co.za

OR

Head of Communication: wanda mkutshulwa; +27 (0)82 908 2692; wmkutshulwa@tcta.co.za