

FleetWatch

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South Africa's Leading
Online Trucking Magazine

**SA's transport
sector is running
on 'failing'
wheels**

Special Report

**Diesel price
shocks**

- How operators are handling the pressure
- Expert opinions and more...



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While politicians debate ideology, businesses navigate the fallout

One of the greatest weaknesses of modern politics is that too many politicians no longer experience the consequences of their own decisions. Whether it is war in the Middle East, trade disputes, failing infrastructure, policy paralysis or poor service delivery, those making the decisions are often insulated from the fallout. Businesses and ordinary citizens are not.

The consequences of political decisions - or lack thereof - ripple far beyond the political arena. Investment decisions are delayed, expansion plans are shelved and economic growth slows. While politicians continue debating ideology, businesses are forced to navigate the fallout. Few sectors illustrate this better than trucking. The road freight industry sits at the heart of the economy, moving everything from food and fuel to medicines and manufacturing inputs. When economic activity slows, freight volumes decline. When infrastructure deteriorates, transport costs rise. When policy uncertainty discourages investment, fewer goods need to be moved.

Take the on-going instability in the Middle East. Every escalation sends shockwaves through global energy markets and pushes fuel prices higher. For the trucking industry, fuel is one of the largest operating costs. A conflict taking place thousands of kilometres away can quickly affect transport rates, delivery costs and ultimately the price of goods on South African shelves. The good news, however, is that according to USA President Donald Trump, the war ended last week - or wait, was it the week before? No, but it is definitely going to end yesterday, or perhaps tomorrow - or even tonight - but probably last night. Aaaaargh!!!!

The response of political leaders to such crises often highlights just how disconnected they have become from life on the ground. Political calculations, election considerations and ideological battles frequently take precedence over the practical impact their decisions have on businesses and consumers. South Africa is hardly immune from this problem. Many readers will remember President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit to Johannesburg ahead of the G20 Summit, after which he remarked that the city's condition was "not pleasing". For those who live

and work in Johannesburg every day, that reality had been evident for years. It took a rare visit from the country's leader for the obvious to become his reality.

The same pattern is evident across a range of issues. Illegal immigration, service delivery failures, deteriorating infrastructure and corruption have all generated growing public frustration. In many cases, political action only seems to occur once public pressure reaches a boiling point. The trucking industry has experienced this firsthand. Years ago, violent protests relating to the employment of foreign truck drivers resulted in trucks being attacked and destroyed. Meetings were held. Commitments were made. Plans were developed. Yet, to this day, many of the underlying concerns remained unresolved. The recent resurgence of anti-foreigner protests once again forced transport operators to prepare contingency plans and incur additional costs against the possibility of disruption. Service delivery protests create similar challenges. Road closures, burning tyres and blocked routes force transporters to divert vehicles, delay deliveries and absorb additional expenses. Every hour lost on the road carries a cost.

But it is not only political inaction that hurts the industry. Delayed decision-making can be just as damaging. At a recent Daimler Truck Southern Africa briefing, CEO and President Maretha Gerber highlighted that manufacturers already have access to cleaner, more efficient Euro 5 and Euro 6 technologies. The engines exist. The technology exists. The fuel savings exist. What is missing is the legislative progress needed to bring these advances fully into the South African market. While other countries move forward - Europe is moving to Euro 7 - South Africa is on Euro 2 legislation. "That is why I, together with our Naamsa colleagues, are lobbying the government to transform to new legislation so we can bring in the latest technologies," said Gerber. As it stands, we are being left behind the rest of the world.

This is why trucking provides such an effective barometer of the health and progress of a nation. Apart from having access to the latest technological advancements through our internationally linked OEMs, the industry itself sits at the centre of the economy. When policy fails, infrastructure deteriorates, protests escalate or investment stalls, trucking feels the effects almost immediately. Politicians often speak about economic growth, job creation and investment. Those objectives are impossible to achieve if the industries that keep goods moving are continually forced to navigate obstacles that government itself has the power to remove. The trucking industry does not need politicians to perform miracles. It simply needs politicians who understand the realities facing businesses and who are prepared to address problems before they become crises. South Africa needs the same.

Patrick O'Leary
Managing Editor, *FleetWatch*



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An aerial view – hundreds of quality trucks on offer



Utilising the ribbon

▲ It was a happy moment when the ribbon was jointly cut by Wolf Edmayr (left), General Manager of TruckStore and Maretha Gerber, President and Group CEO of Daimler Truck Southern Africa, marking the official opening of the new West Rand TruckStore facility.

Trucks for Africa

Revitalising used truck sector

The timing is right, the location is right and that's why the good folk at TruckStore, a division of Daimler Truck Southern Africa, were upbeat and positive at the recent official opening of TruckStore's massive new West Rand facility writes Patrick O'Leary.

Anyone operating in the used truck arena will know that the past few years have been a roller coaster ride of ups and downs. As Wolf Edmayr, General Manager of TruckStore, said at the launch event: "In 2023, the market saw a strong boom but then, in 2024, conditions shifted." The shift was a downward one and that's why Edmayr approved the purchase of kidney belts for his staff as the ride became an extremely bumpy one.

However, by late 2024 and into 2025, he says the market started to stabilise and light could be seen at the end of the tunnel. It was over this time that we saw another shift taking place in the used truck market. As most people know, the N12 highway that passes through Boksburg has, for many years, been the hub of used truck dealers with a cluster of them situated alongside the highway.

However, what became very noticeable is that with the West Rand providing large, affordable tracts of land alongside the N14 perfectly suited to accommodate massive truck yards, the used truck dealers started moving in and it is alongside this route that TruckStore has placed its new facility.

The location alongside the N14 offers easy truck accessibility, seamless arterial connections and stunning passing visibility and it is



thus that Edmayr says the West Rand has now become Gauteng's new used truck hub. That is not to say that the East Rand guys are off the map. Far from it. However, it would be true to say that the East Rand's N12 and the West Rand's N14 can now be considered the core of used truck activities in Gauteng - and no doubt even further afield. It is thus that Mayer says: "It was essential for us to be present here."

Drive along the N14 towards Krugersdorp and you cannot help but notice the proliferation of used truck outlets that have sprung up. It's like driving through a tunnel of used trucks - so the competition is heavy. However, the West Rand TruckStore sees its competitive advantage lying

The team

▲ The A-Team was there to celebrate the official opening: From left: KG Sebothoma (Head of TruckStore N14 Sales); Pierre Kriek (CFO DTSA); Wolf Edmayr (General Manager, TruckStore); Maretha Gerber (President and Group CEO, DTSA); Rhenier Kapp (Head of Sales TruckStore) and Mike Honiball (CEO, DTFS SA).

in the fact that every truck sold will have the full backing of services offered by its parent OEM, Daimler Truck Southern Africa, as are offered to new truck buyers. This includes finance with Mike Honiball, Head of Daimler Truck Financial Services, saying he is stationing a full-time employee from his department at this venue. Such is the confidence of good things to come.

The facility has a large and wide range of stock and to get a true appreciation of the scale of this facility, you need to qualify for a pilot's license, take off from Lanseria airport and look down on it. The holding yard is massive with hundreds of trucks on sale.

Categories for all

◀ It's not one size fits all. Trucks are categorised according to their kilometres travelled as well as several other factors to cater for different customer needs and operations. Rhenier Kapp, TruckStore's head of sales nationally, shows off the four categories of Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze.



USED TRUCKS | REVITALISATION



Finance on offer

▲ Mike Honiball (right), Head of Daimler Truck Financial Services, was there to lend support to Wolf Edmayr, GM of TruckStore, announcing that he sees the potential on such a scale that he is stationing a full-time finance expert from his division at this outlet. Such is the confidence of good things to come.

And it's not one size fits all. Trucks are categorised according to their kilometres travelled as well as several other factors. The four categories are Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze.

An important point to note is that it doesn't replace the

existing head office Centurion operation but is intended to enhance accessibility, flexibility and customer service. "With this new facility, alongside our Centurion operation, we are better positioned than ever to provide certainty, accessibility and trusted solutions in a dynamic market. This investment ensures that TruckStore remains relevant, competitive and ready for future growth," says Edmayr.

Apart from Edmayr and his crew being positive, another person who is upbeat about this new development is Maretha Gerber, President and Group CEO of Daimler Truck Southern Africa, who spoke proudly of this new facility, emphasising the strategic importance of the investment.

Rows of trucks

◀ A drive through the vast array of used trucks on offer showed rows and rows of trucks all ready to go back into the market beyond their first life cycle.

And rightfully so as South Africa was chosen as the first market outside of Europe to establish a TruckStore operation. That was in 2012, eleven years after Daimler Truck originally launched TruckStore as the organisation's focussed used truck division.

"The opening of our West Rand facility is a clear demonstration of our commitment to Southern Africa. We are invested, we are present and we are here to stay," Gerber stated with conviction and pride at the launch.

Driving value beyond the first owner

Someone once said to me that if OEMs do not have a focussed presence and firm commitment in the arena of used trucks, they are not in the trucking industry. This was indirectly endorsed by Gerber who stated that TruckStore plays a critical role in supporting customers through their re-fleeting cycles.

"For customers in the used-truck space, TruckStore ensures that vehicles continue to deliver value well beyond their first life cycle. The new facility strengthens our ability to serve our customers in the areas where they typically shop for used trucks, while reinforcing our long-term confidence in the resilience and potential of the regional trucking market."

The opening of the West Rand facility represents more than a physical expansion. It reflects DTSA's commitment to supporting economic activity and mobility across the region. As Gerber stated: "Ultimately, our business is about more than trucks. It is about enabling the people and industries that keep Africa moving."

There we go. Let's keep on trucking - way beyond the first life cycles of the trucks. □



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How operators are handling the pressure



▲ From R14.56 to R33.57 per litre for diesel



Diesel price volatility has become less of a background cost pressure and more of a structural fault line running through South Africa's road freight economy. For operators, the impact is immediate and unforgiving; margins compress overnight, cash flow tightens within days, and pricing models that were carefully negotiated over months are suddenly out of step with reality. In an industry where fuel is often the single largest operating cost, even modest upward movements can trigger outsized operational and financial strain.

While larger fleets may have the balance sheet depth and contractual leverage to absorb short-term shocks, smaller and mid-sized operators remain far more exposed. Many operate on finely balanced agreements where a few percentage points of margin erosion can determine whether a contract remains viable or not. In this environment, 'sustainability' is no longer an abstract ESG discussion but a day-to-day question of survival, liquidity and continuity of service.

Dangerous knock-on effects

Layered onto this is a broader sense of unpredictability that runs through the industry. Diesel pricing is influenced by global geopolitics, exchange rates and domestic levies that sit well outside the control of fleet operators. The result is a market that can shift materially within a single billing cycle, leaving even well-run operations constantly recalibrating rates,

contracts and customer expectations. It is this volatility, as much as the price itself, that keeps nerves stretched and planning cycles permanently under pressure.

Yet within the frustration lies a quiet resilience. Fleet operators continue to adapt through efficiency drives, tighter operational controls and increasingly

sophisticated fuel management strategies. Still, there is an underlying recognition that there is only so much internal optimisation can achieve when the cost base is being driven by external forces.

Our operators respond

What follows is a *FleetWatch* (FW) special survey, a cross-section of fleet operator

sentiment from across the road freight industry – from mid-sized regional players to high-volume national fleets – offering an unfiltered view of how diesel price shocks are being absorbed, passed on, resisted, or simply endured in real time.

Taken together, their responses map a sector operating under sustained financial pressure, where every litre has become a margin decision and every movement in price ripples instantly through the supply chain.

Here are our survey respondents' profiles, followed by their answers to 15 hard-hitting questions:

There is only so much internal optimisation one can achieve when the cost base is being driven by external forces.



The respondents



▲ RDM Logistics 130 trucks and weathering the storm.

RDM Logistics

Dale Taylor, Director and Chief Operating Officer, represents RDM Logistics, a fleet of 130 trucks serving a variety of freight sectors in cross border transport. The company consumes significant volumes of diesel each month as it moves a broad range of goods across its operating footprint.

Payloads Pty Ltd

Daan Joubert represents Payloads Pty Ltd, which operates a fleet of 55 trucks. The company consumes an average of 300 000 litres of diesel per month and specialises in the transportation of chrome concentrate, grinding media and chrome ROM.

Anonymous 1

This company, which *FleetWatch* knows, has a fleet of 175 trucks. The company uses approximately one million litres of diesel per month and focuses on the transportation of fresh produce, including fruit and vegetables, as well as frozen food products.

Faith Wheels Tankers

Jacques Fourie and Mark Fourie represent Faith Wheels Tankers, a specialist transporter operating 67 trucks. The fleet consumes around 300 000 litres of diesel each month and is dedicated to the transportation of petroleum products and hazardous goods.

Bakers Transport

Abdool Kader Tayob, Chief Executive of Bakers Transport, leads one of the largest fleets participating in this survey. The company operates 650 trucks, consumes between 1.3 million and 1.4 million litres of diesel per month and primarily hauls WBG material.

Anonymous 2

This fleet consumes approximately 2.5 million litres of diesel per month and is involved in the transportation of FMCG products, citrus, other fruit and dry-volume goods.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

DIESEL PRICE INCREASES following the outbreak of war in the Middle East have placed unprecedented pressure on transport operators. *FleetWatch* understands that diesel is the single biggest cost driver for most fleets, meaning every cent increase has a direct impact on already thin operating margins.

With this in mind, *FleetWatch* compiled this report to highlight the real-world impact of rising fuel costs on the trucking sector. While diesel price increases affect the broader economy, the full implications for transport operators are often not widely understood. We therefore wanted to hear directly from those at the coalface and gain insight into how they are responding to a fuel environment that continues to shift faster than planning cycles can comfortably absorb.

To do this, we distributed a questionnaire to a number of transport operators and sincerely thank those who responded openly and honestly. Their contributions provide valuable insight into how businesses are adapting to a crisis not of their own making. In keeping with assurances of confidentiality if required, two respondents requested anonymity and are identified in this report as Anonymous 1 and Anonymous 2.

We have titled the report "How Operators are Handling the Pressure" because that is precisely what it seeks to uncover: the strategies, challenges and lessons emerging from the industry's response to escalating fuel costs. For operators facing similar pressures, the experiences shared here may offer useful ideas and reassurance that they are not facing these challenges alone.



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How have recent diesel price increases affected your daily operations and total operating costs (as a percentage)?

RDM Logistics: As diesel is our biggest cost component as a transporter, between 37-40%, the April and May price increases massively affected our operating costs. The increases resulted in an increase to operating costs of between 26-29% combining the two months.

While there was no disruption to our daily operations, these unprecedented increases required urgent reaction and adjustment to transport rates. A spike of this magnitude can also place a massive strain on cash flow, as transporters are forced to allocate significantly more working capital to keep the fleet fuelled before client payments clear.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Yes. By 45% to 60%.

Anonymous 1: First major increase we adjusted the pricing by between 17 and 13% - depending on the routes. Second adjustment for May was between 8% and 10%. Depending on the routes.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Although any movement in the diesel price has an impact on operations and operating costs (8% - 12%), March and April have been severe. Anyone with storage, cashflow or access to product, stored, bought and sold as much as they can. Added pressure has been placed on all operational staff, without compromising safety, rules or regulations.

Bakers Transport: Panic buying and product hold causing a few disruptions at month end and 1st week of new month.

Both months impacted by 12/15% hike in total operating costs.

Anonymous 2: The recent diesel price increases have placed significant strain on both our cash flow and overall operating costs. As a business that purchases large volumes of diesel on a cash basis, the sharp increases have had an immediate impact on working capital requirements.

From an operational perspective, we estimate that diesel-related cost increases added approximately 30% between April & May. These are substantial increases over a very short period and have placed considerable pressure on transport operators across the industry.

Managing cash flow, maintaining service levels and recovering these costs through rate adjustments have therefore become key priorities in the current environment.

Q1

▼ Faith Wheels Tankers... a fleet of 67 trucks utilising around 300 000 litres per month.



Have you been able to pass on fuel increases to clients through rate adjustments or fuel surcharges – and how receptive has the market been?

RDM Logistics: We have different agreements with clients. Some customers are adjusted quarterly but most are adjusted monthly based off fuel price fluctuations. When the conflict broke out it was clear that there was going to be a significant shift in diesel prices. We tried to be as pre-emptive and pro-active

as possible by warning customers of the potential increases coming based off the latest reports from the Central Energy Fund.

This was in an effort to give them time to make provisions and adjustments on their side. Surprisingly we had great success in recovering the cost increases. With that said,

Q2



Fuel increases have impacted total operating costs by 12 to 15%.

Bakers Transport



there was definitely more reluctance and push back for the second increase in May.

This clear market fatigue demonstrates that the supply chain has hit its absolute ceiling. Our clients are facing their own margin squeezes, and our feelings and view are that our customers and the market are not in a position to take on any further increases without passing severe inflation down to the end consumer.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Increases were accepted, but customers are looking around for alternatives. We have not recovered the annual increase yet as it is not viable to do so under current conditions.

Anonymous 1: Getting a small amount of pushbacks, as well as a lot of new quote requests as different approaches were done. Some transporters over recovering fuel increases and then becoming uncompetitive.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Based on our long-standing relationships with clients, we have been able to pass on fuel increases. With that being said, it has still had a material impact on cash flow. As we all know, fuel suppliers have very short credit terms, while long-standing clients have more trusted and lenient terms.

Bakers Transport: Yes – with a week or a few days delay and a good, receptive approach.

Anonymous 2: Yes, we have been able to pass on fuel increases through rate adjustments and fuel surcharges, but only because the reality of the market leaves very little alternative. Transport operators simply cannot continue operating sustainably at rates that were agreed to under significantly lower fuel costs.

Our clients, particularly in the agricultural sector, understand that their products have limited shelf lives and need to reach market on time. If fuel costs increase materially, the cost of moving those goods also increases, and those realities ultimately have to be reflected in transport rates.

That said, clients have not accepted increases blindly. Every adjustment has required detailed justification and transparency. We have had to fully explain the impact of fuel price movements on operating costs and demonstrate why the increases are necessary. While clients have generally been receptive, it has only been after thorough engagement and clear communication around the cost pressures facing the transport industry.

Are you renegotiating contracts to include more dynamic fuel price mechanisms, and is this becoming standard practice?

RDM Logistics: We do not have contracts with any of our customers. We have differing agreements in place. With the significance of the increases, all customers were approached regardless of prior agreement as the increases were too big to

not pass on or try and absorb. This crisis has proven that traditional, rigid fixed-rate contracts are completely unviable in the current economic climate.

For fleets, maintaining survival and commercial longevity requires total agility,

Q3



making transparent, and highly dynamic fuel adjustment mechanisms the only sustainable way forward for both us and our clients.

Payloads Pty Ltd: We have always adjusted fuel monthly (up or down).

Anonymous 1: We built in fuel separate in the most contracts.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Fortunately, or unfortunately, this isn't the first time drastic geopolitical disruptions have occurred. Most of our contract restructuring occurred during covid in order to continue transparency and customer relations.

Bakers Transport: Most definitely and it's challenging for clients as well.

Anonymous 2: This has always been standard practice within our business and across much of the transport industry. Most contracts include fuel adjustment mechanisms, with rates being reviewed on a monthly basis. Increases or decreases in diesel prices are typically reflected in transport rates for the following month according to an agreed formula.

However, the recent surge in diesel prices has been far more significant than the normal monthly fluctuations we are

accustomed to managing. As a result, both clients and transport operators understood that substantial rate increases would be unavoidable. In many cases, contracts and pricing structures had to be revisited and revised in the short term to ensure that transport operations remained commercially viable.

The key difference has not been the mechanism itself, but rather the scale and speed of the fuel price increases, which required much closer engagement between transporters and clients than would normally be the case.

We always adjusted fuel monthly – up or down.

Payloads



▲ Payloads team – from left to right Riaan Joubert, Daan Joubert Jnr and Wahido van der Merwe

Do you believe government should intervene to cushion diesel price increases for the road freight sector – and if so, what form should that support take (extended fuel levy relief, rebates, tax incentives)?

RDM Logistics: Absolutely. Transport is an extremely challenging industry, and our margins are under constant pressure. Our industry is also a key sector that serves and ultimately affects every man and woman on the street. Government assistance would not only help keep transporters afloat, but it would also help promote trade locally and internationally, combat inflation and keep costs down for end consumers/the broader population.

Because the road freight sector acts as a vascular system of the Southern African economy, government must realize that a shock to our fuel costs is a direct tax

on the cost of living for every citizen. We need to see predictable, long-term interventions, such as a formalized tax ceilings or a sliding-scale levy reduction that activates automatically when global crude spikes.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Not sure if our government has the ability to manage something like this. It cannot even ensure all transporters comply with the bargaining council. It would simply open up greater opportunity for corruption.

Anonymous 1: I do believe that the

Q4



government fuel levy decrease made a positive impact. I do not think they could do more, but what is interesting is that they did not touch the RAF levy, which I think is outrageously high and suffers from maladministration and lots of theft in the RAF.

Faith Wheels Tankers: As an idealist, the short answer that we are all after is

YES. However, realistically, our fiscal reserves and spending just won't allow it.

Bakers Transport: Government has tried and the support is appreciated. There should be tax incentives for new fleet and cleaner fuels (Euro5 and EV) implementation.

Anonymous 2: N/A

Q5

Are current measures such as fuel levy cuts and the diesel rebate system (SARS' DRS) providing any relief to road freight transporters, or are these refund mechanisms falling short of broader industry needs?

RDM Logistics: The temporary fuel levy cuts were most certainly welcomed and a good step by government to soften the blow for not only transporters but to the entire population. While this gives temporary relief, it poses a problem when it comes time to phase these mechanisms out which results in an "artificial" pricing that will still hurt transporters and consumers at the end of the day.

We feel that there is a desperate need for government to review its basic fuel pricing methodology, specifically surrounding the fuel levy and road accident fund levy which are massively taxing and inflating our fuel prices. SARS DRS does not benefit us as transporters and we are not able to claim back from SARS. This rebate system is targeted at mining and agriculture.

We feel that transporters should most certainly be included into the rebate system as we are one of the biggest users of diesel in the country. Again, if we are able to reduce operating costs it has the knock-on effect of promoting trade and making products more affordable for companies and end users to buy.

Excluding general road freight from the SARS Diesel Rebate scheme is a massive structural blind spot, it penalizes the very sector tasked with moving those agricultural and mining outputs to ports and consumers.

Payloads Pty Ltd: No.

Anonymous 1: I think they shouldn't

tinker too much with the fuel levy as its pretty easy to collect for large sums of taxes.

Faith Wheels Tankers: The recent temporary reductions in the general fuel levy have helped soften the immediate impact of sharp diesel price increases, particularly during periods of extreme volatility. However, these measures are short term in nature and do not fundamentally solve the underlying cost pressures facing transport operators.

Bakers Transport: The main focus for government should be on illicit and illegal fuel mixing with paraffin etc. and evasion of duties. With these problems sorted out, the levies can be reduced as then all fuel is fairly taxed in full.

Anonymous 2: In our view, the relief provided through measures such as fuel levy reductions has been temporary and has not delivered any meaningful long-term benefit to transport operators. While these interventions may provide short-term breathing room, the costs are often recovered at a later stage, meaning the underlying pressure on transport businesses remains unchanged.

As a result, these measures can feel more like a delay of the inevitable rather than a genuine solution to the challenges created by sustained high fuel prices. What the industry needs is greater long-term stability and predictability around fuel-related costs, rather than temporary relief measures.

There is a desperate need for government to review its basic fuel pricing – specifically the fuel and RAF levies. These add to increased tax and inflate fuel prices

Dale Taylor
RDM Logistics



How actively is your business engaging with industry bodies like the Road Freight Association or South African Petroleum Industry Association on fuel-related policy – and do you feel your voice is being heard?

RDM Logistics: Our company is not involved and does not engage with industry bodies on these topics or issues. Like many mid-to-large-scale operators, our primary focus during a cost crisis is entirely inward and operational. While we support the macro-level advocacy of bodies like the RFA, the sheer velocity of these fuel price spikes requires us to dedicate 100% of our daily management bandwidth to protecting our immediate margins and client relationships on the ground.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Active engagement. Although voices are heard, nothing transpires from government.

Anonymous 1: We don't do too much – but we support the RFA fully.

Faith Wheels Tankers: N/A

Bakers Transport: Good engagement that can be proactively improved.

Anonymous 2: While we are not formally affiliated with an industry body, we have engaged directly with fuel suppliers and stakeholders in the petroleum sector throughout periods of supply pressure and price volatility. During recent diesel shortages and price increases, these engagements were instrumental in helping ensure continuity of supply to our operations.

Our concerns and operational requirements were heard, and despite the significant price increases, diesel remained available when we needed it. From an operational perspective, maintaining supply was critical, as a shortage of diesel would have had a far greater impact on our business than the price increases themselves. The challenge was therefore not availability, but rather managing the substantially higher cost of fuel.

Q6

Although voices are heard, nothing transpires from government.

Payloads Pty Ltd

What were the first internal measures you implemented to offset rising fuel costs – and how quickly were they deployed?

RDM Logistics: As mentioned, while we did not know the magnitude of the coming increases, when the war broke out we were aware of the impending increases that would be coming. With this in mind, outside of seeking compensation from customers, we reviewed our existing suppliers and pricing, confirmed supply and that pricing would not move inter month.

Most importantly, as we are a cross border transporter, we reviewed our fuelling strategy of where we fill and how much we fill across different sites and countries. This was in an effort to ensure that we are filling optimally when it comes to the pricing across the various countries and sites, taking as much as possible at the cheapest prices and as little as possible at the most expensive.



Q7

◀ Dale Taylor RDM Logistics



▲ Jacques (right) and Mark Fourie of Faith Wheels Tankers

This cross-border fuel arbitrage strategy had to be calculated and deployed almost instantly. When operating regionally, navigating the price differentials between South African inland regulated prices and neighbouring international markets is a vital shield for our bottom line.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Fuel supply is rationed per route and load, not so much

to manage cost but to manage availability. Costs have always been managed through daily measurement and cross-checking between drivers and routes.

Anonymous 1: Filling our on site storage tanks and keeping them full. This was a challenge due to suppliers struggling to get fuel at the right price.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Pricing on diesel started fluctuating two weeks before the increases and diesel depots and garages were exploiting the opportunity to maximize profits. We used the TFN and Fuel Search apps in order to compare pricing before we made fill-ups. We also compared bulk pricing from Sasol inland and Total coastal to ensure the best price.

Bakers Transport: Further enforced training practices and route optimisation etc.

Anonymous 2: N/A

Q8

To what extent are you focusing on driver behaviour (idling, harsh acceleration, route discipline), and what measurable gains have you seen?

RDM Logistics: This has always and will always be a major focus in our business. It is critical from a cost control and safety perspective that this area is constantly and stringently monitored. Through various inputs and systems, we generate advanced and detailed analyses on an ongoing and live basis to review driver behaviour. We engage with our drivers on a constant basis surrounding their driver behaviour, where and how they can improve and assist them with further driver training if required. By doing this we are able to reduce our diesel consumptions, reduce our R&M spend as well as reduce risk and accidents. This is a key area and pillar in running an efficient and profitable transport business.

Payloads Pty Ltd: We measure and manage daily through telematics.

Anonymous 1: We have been doing this as standard practice forever.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Although fuel consumption and driver behavior have always been a major KPI, it definitely has

added focus at the moment. A one litre per hundred km saving is the equivalent of R300 000!

Bakers Transport: N/A

Anonymous 2: We closely monitor driver behaviour through telematics, focusing on factors such as idling, harsh braking, acceleration and route discipline. Reducing fuel consumption is a top priority, as fuel remains one of the largest operating costs in our business.

We also carefully plan routes and schedules to reduce driver fatigue, which helps improve safety and avoid costly accidents and operational disruptions.

As a result of the company-wide focus on diesel savings after the big increase in diesel prices, and driver performance, we have seen measurable improvements in fuel consumption efficiency across the fleet.

Bakers Transport: Further enforced training practices and route optimisation etc.

Anonymous 2: N/A

Diesel prices started fluctuating two weeks prior to increases. Diesel depots and garages exploited this to maximise profits.

Jacques Fourie
Faith Wheels Tankers



How are you leveraging telematics data to improve fuel efficiency, and which metrics are proving most actionable?

RDM Logistics: All our trucks have telematics systems where fuel consumption/usage is monitored. We take this data and compare it to our inputs at filling sites to ensure that there is no diesel going missing and flag any incidents and anomalies for further investigation.

We also break down the individual trip consumptions which get plugged into a comparative management system to compare achieved consumptions vs target consumptions for the particular route that the truck did. The two main areas that we want to guard against and focus on here are diesel theft and that the trucks are being driven optimally from a consumption point of view ensuring the best possible consumption factoring in the route they are on.

Our most actionable metric is the direct variance between target route consumption and actual achieved consumption. Because fuel has effectively become a high-value liquid currency, this live comparative tracking is our primary defence against both operational inefficiency and the heightened risk of mid-trip fuel siphoning.

Anonymous I: For driver behaviour management. Yes – we use Telematics extensively.

Faith Wheels Tankers: We are making increased use of telematics, analytics and fleet data to improve fuel efficiency, reduce wastage, and better manage operational costs. The focus has shifted from simply tracking vehicles to actively using real-time data to influence driver behaviour and improve fleet performance.



Have you adjusted vehicle specifications, maintenance intervals, or tyre management strategies to improve fuel economy?

RDM Logistics: We are always reviewing and comparing what is in the market from a truck brand and spec perspective and what each is able to achieve. In terms of other factors that can impact fuel economy, we have identified these factors and through our technical team, try to instil good habits and procedures on all controllables that could impact fuel consumptions.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Yes - we try everything that promises to bring rising costs down.

Anonymous I: No.

Faith Wheels Tankers: We have always maintained an aggressive replacement programme for our vehicles,

Q9

We have always maintained an aggressive replacement programme for our vehicles, which fits into our TCO.

Faith Wheels Tankers

Q10



which fits into our TCO model and appetite for preventative maintenance.

Anonymous 2: Vehicle specifications, maintenance schedules and tyre management have always been key focus areas within our business, regardless of diesel prices. These are fundamental best practices for any transport operator and are already managed as efficiently as possible.

As a result, the recent fuel price increases have not significantly changed our approach in this area, as we have always prioritised preventative maintenance and optimal vehicle performance to maximise fuel efficiency and minimise operating costs.

Q11

What changes have you made to routing, scheduling, or load consolidation to reduce fuel burn per kilometre?

RDM Logistics: We only transport full truck loads and have our existing commitments to customers which cannot change. Where we can change and review is our elected routings. Considerations here are fuel pricing in transit countries, road conditions, topography for roads/route being used and border congestion that could lead to excess idling and wasted diesel..

Through these considerations we decide on what we believe is the optimal route for delivering customer loads in the most cost effective way. Border congestion is a particularly severe operational drain.

A truck idling for 12 to 24 hours at a bottleneck border post burns purely non-productive diesel, so our routing decisions increasingly prioritize time-efficiency and infrastructure quality over the shortest physical distance.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Our routes are pretty much fixed and there are not many alternative options available.

Anonymous 1: None, always looking to improve.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Although already optimised, added focus and attention has been applied to routing, especially backload planning.

Bakers Transport: N/A

Our routes are pretty much fixed and there are not many alternative options available.

Payloads Pty Ltd



Anonymous 2: With margins under increasing pressure from rising diesel costs, we have placed even greater emphasis on reducing empty legs and improving load utilisation across the fleet. While this has always been a focus area, the current fuel environment has made it even more critical.

We simply do not have the luxury of running unnecessary kilometres at today's diesel prices. As a result, we are continuously looking for opportunities to optimise routes, improve backhaul opportunities and maximise loaded kilometres wherever possible.



Are you actively exploring alternatives such as LNG, CNG, dual-fuel systems, or EVs for certain applications – or is diesel still non-negotiable in your operation?

RDM Logistics: Operating into Africa, we do not see the network and infrastructure being there for us to consider these sorts of alternatives. With a lot of remote deliveries and collections in neighbouring countries, we feel that for the foreseeable future diesel will be our preferred fuelling option.

While alternative energies look great on paper, the harsh reality of long-haul, cross-border African logistics is that infrastructure simply does not support it. Until there are robust regional networks for alternative fuels, diesel remains completely non-negotiable for long-haul commercial survival.

Payloads Pty Ltd: The cost of these does not seem viable in the current economy. There is not enough information available from OEMs regarding this. Transporters are also too concerned about mixing fuels such as biofuel due to OEM warranty risks and other exclusions that may arise.

Anonymous 1: In our operation other systems don't work.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Due to the distances covered in most routes, there isn't enough support for LNG, CNG or EV's, so for the time being, diesel is still non-negotiable. Given the country's current energy and infrastructure restraints, we believe adoption may occur slower and later than anticipated.

Bakers Transport: Yes. EVs are very attractive and suitable for short to medium distances only.

Anonymous 2: We are always open to exploring new technologies and alternative fuel solutions, particularly given current diesel prices. However, for our operation, diesel remains the only commercially viable option at present.

While EV technology continues to improve, the upfront costs are still not competitive in the South African market. In addition, the current vehicle ranges are not sufficient for many of the long-distance applications we operate, and South Africa does not yet have the charging infrastructure required along major freight corridors to support large-scale adoption.

As a result, diesel remains essential to our business for the foreseeable future, although we will continue to monitor developments in alternative fuel technologies as they become more practical and cost-effective

Q12

▼ The Isuzu FTR CNG Dual Fuel model – uses both gas and diesel.



In the face of rising diesel costs, how are you balancing long-term sustainability goals with short-term cost survival?

RDM Logistics: We always try to take a long-term view on business with our clients from all aspects. Diesel is one that we generally, as much as possible are non-negotiable on, as it has the most direct and biggest impact on our company's profitability.

Where required and if needed, we are open to reviewing and making concessions, as long as there is a long term goal or plan that ensures the continuation of our business and guarding of margins.

Speaking to the recent increases incurred,

Q13



▲ Abdool Tayob, Bakers Transport says that industry consolidation is putting smaller operators at risk.

in our opinion it would have been suicide for a transporter to take a long term view as the quantum was too big for any transporter to absorb. In our context, "sustainability" translates directly to commercial longevity and protecting our business. If you try to absorb a massive macro spike under the guise of a 'long-term view,' you simply won't be around to see the long term.

Payloads Pty Ltd: In the short term, only fuel costs are recovered. Annual increases on other components are not recovered as customers simply cannot afford them at present.

Anonymous 1: Rolling with the punches, currently working ok. Long term always a factor.

Faith Wheels Tankers: Short term focus has been maximized to preserve cashflow, protect margins, improve operational efficiencies and reduce fuel

consumption, all of which aid in long-term sustainability.

Bakers Transport: Talking to fuel and banking partners to support additional cashflow.

Anonymous 2: At the moment, the uncertainty around fuel prices and broader economic conditions means that short-term survival is taking precedence over many longer-term goals. While sustainability, fleet modernisation and future growth remain important objectives, the immediate focus is on maintaining operational viability and protecting jobs.

Like many businesses in the sector, we are waiting for conditions to stabilise and recover. Unfortunately, given the challenges currently facing the economy and the transport industry, that recovery feels increasingly uncertain, making it difficult to prioritise long-term initiatives over day-to-day operational realities.

Q14

To what extent are high diesel prices eroding the competitiveness of South African logistics operators, and is there a risk of broader supply chain inflation if no relief is introduced?

RDM Logistics: At the end of the day, transport is an essential industry that has always and will always be around. With the main alternative to road transport, rail, not working optimally, particularly in the cross border space, companies, traders and consumers will bear the brunt of these rising costs. While transporters try to work on better utilization, reduction in operating costs and all other efficiencies that can be introduced, direct costs such as diesel can only be absorbed so much before being passed on. Because South African rail infrastructure cannot currently handle the capacity, the burden of regional trade largely falls on road transport. If high fuel costs crush the competitiveness of local hauliers, it creates an immediate domino effect, inflating the price of every commodity from manufacturing components to basic food staples on retail shelves.

Payloads Pty Ltd: Diesel price affects all transporters equally. The main issue regarding competition is ineffective bargaining council compliance. The

bargaining council does not have the ability to ensure a level playing field.

Anonymous 1: Supply and demand will determine the risk. If the pricing goes up too much, less stuff could make sense to move, but this will be long term knock-on effects rather than short term.

Faith Wheels Tankers: High diesel prices are significantly eroding the competitiveness of South African logistics operators, particularly when compared to larger operators with greater economies of scale. Fuel is the largest operating cost in transport, so sustained increases place enormous pressure on margins, pricing, and overall business sustainability.

Bakers Transport: Industry consolidation is putting smaller operators at risk.

Anonymous 2: Competition within the transport industry remains as strong as ever. However, smaller fleets are likely to feel the impact of these diesel price

Short-term survival is taking precedence over many longer-term goals.

Anonymous 2



increases far more severely than larger operators, and for many of them, survival will be the primary objective in the current environment.

The risk of broader inflation throughout the supply chain is very real. Transport is a critical component of almost every

product and industry, and when fuel costs rise significantly, those increases inevitably filter through the supply chain. Ultimately, anything that requires transportation is likely to become more expensive, which means the impact extends far beyond the transport sector itself.

Looking ahead, what concerns you most about fuel price volatility, and what would you want policymakers, clients and the wider industry to understand about the reality you're operating in?

RDM Logistics: The biggest concerns are margin compression as customers are reaching the limits of compensating transporters for increasing fuel prices, the impending rollbacks of temporary relief mechanisms introduced by government which will result in “artificial” price hikes and broader economic inflation as fuel volatility rapidly filters into higher food and retail prices.

We believe that customers and consumers need to be open to fuel surcharges and surcharge clauses while these geopolitical conflicts that are affecting global oil supply are going on. They need to understand that if transporters are squeezed too tightly on rates during fuel spikes, they risk driving transporters into liquidation. For customers to secure reliable capacity now and in the long term, they need to have a collaborative

approach to sharing and dealing with the burden of fuel price spikes.

For policymakers/government, there needs to be fuel pricing reform particularly surrounding the road accident fund and fuel levies. Road transport in South Africa and Africa plays a key role in regional and international trade due to the rail infrastructure and operational challenges. Therefore, it is vital that we as an industry are considered and looked after for the benefit of our economy and population.

Ultimately, transport can no longer be viewed as a basic commodity to be squeezed down to the lowest cent. It is a strategic partnership. If the industry is pushed past its breaking point, the resulting capacity collapse will damage the entire economic landscape far more than a transparent, shared fuel surcharge ever would.

Q15



Anything that requires transportation is likely to become more expensive, which means the impact extends far beyond the transport sector itself.



The reality is that transport businesses operate on relatively tight margins.

Faith Wheels Tankers

Payloads Pty Ltd: N/A

Anonymous 1: The fuel price is the fuel price – we are price takers. Transporters cannot absorb any of the costs, but should also calculate it thoroughly and not over apply calculations on shorter routes. The market will tell them in due course if they cannot work it out for themselves. Trading is tough but it is what it is.

Faith Wheels Tankers: The biggest concern going forward is the continued volatility and unpredictability of fuel prices. Is this going to last one month, or is it the new norm? Transport operators can adapt to gradual increases over time, but sudden and sustained spikes make it extremely difficult to plan, budget, quote, and manage cash flow effectively.

The reality is that transport businesses operate on relatively tight margins.

Fuel costs are paid immediately, yet revenue recovery often happens much later, creating constant pressure on working capital. When volatility becomes excessive, it affects not only profitability, but also investment decisions, fleet renewal, and long-term sustainability.

▼ 2008 – Diesel R10.68 per litre... the good old days!



What we would want policymakers, clients, and the wider industry to understand is that transport is not simply another service cost – it is a critical enabler of the entire economy. Almost every product on a shelf, every raw material, and every export relies on road freight at some point in the supply chain.

There also needs to be greater recognition that many transporters have already exhausted the “easy” efficiency gains. Operators are investing in telematics, route optimisation, driver training, and fuel management systems, but there is only so much internal efficiency that can offset ongoing external cost increases.

Anonymous 2: Looking ahead, our biggest concern is the continued volatility of fuel prices and the fact that South Africa remains heavily dependent on imported fuel. From a transport operator's perspective, fuel supply and global pricing are largely outside of our control, yet they have a direct impact on every aspect of our business.

Without diesel, South Africa quite literally comes to a standstill. The movement of goods, food, fuel and essential products depends on reliable transport, and sustained increases in diesel costs inevitably work their way through the entire supply chain.

The reality is that these costs do not disappear — they are ultimately absorbed by the end consumer. As transport costs rise, the price of everyday goods rises with them, placing additional pressure on households and businesses alike.

South Africa is also highly exposed to global events and geopolitical instability. Conflicts and disruptions in other parts of the world can have a significant impact on fuel prices locally, leaving businesses and consumers vulnerable to factors far beyond our borders.

In times like these, government has a significant responsibility to protect and support South Africans wherever possible. While global fuel prices may be beyond local control, policymakers must recognise the impact that rising fuel costs have on businesses, supply chains and ultimately ordinary consumers.

Greater stability, certainty and practical support measures are needed, because prolonged fuel volatility affects every South African, not just the transport industry. □

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ISUZU Motors South Africa launches Legends of the Long Run – A tribute to loyal customers and the trucks that keep going

ISUZU Motors South Africa trucks have long been synonymous with longevity, durability, and reliability. For decades, the brand has celebrated the engineering excellence behind its vehicles. The machines that have become trusted business partners to customers across South Africa.

ISUZU is now turning the spotlight onto the people behind the brand. The customers placed their trust in the ISUZU badge and, in doing so, helped make company the country's number one commercial vehicle brand for 13 consecutive years. Now ISUZU is celebrating that legacy with Legends of the Long Run, a tribute to the trucks that don't quit, where one lucky truck will receive a complete revamp by the OEM.

The winning vehicle will be carefully refurbished, with the entire restoration process documented, from the first bolt removed to the final engine start.

In industries such as transport, logistics, and construction, there is no room for downtime and no margin for error. Every missed delivery and every hour off the road translates directly into lost revenue. For this reason, successful operators don't simply purchase trucks; they invest in assets that deliver measurable returns.

In business, reliability is not a feature; it is a necessity.

This is the foundation on which ISUZU Motors South Africa has built its reputation. Known not for promises but for proven performance, ISUZU trucks continue to demonstrate their value through kilometres travelled, uptime achieved, and businesses kept in motion.

“Our success as a brand is built not only on the strength of our engineering, but on the trust our customers place in us every day,” says Mpho Nkhumeleni - Department Executive for CV Sales at ISUZU Motors South Africa. “Legends of the Long Run is a celebration of those customers and the incredible journeys they have taken with their trucks that continue to deliver value well beyond expectations.”

The vehicles that are eligible for this competition are working trucks that have clocked hundreds of thousands of kilometres, many exceeding the one-million-kilometre mark, and are still on the road, still delivering, and still generating income for their owners.

This enduring performance is no coincidence. It is the result of over a century of global ISUZU engineering expertise, combined with more than 60 years of experience in the South African market.

Tell us your story

As part of the campaign, ISUZU Motors South Africa is inviting truck owners to share their journeys and experiences with their ISUZU vehicles. One standout entry will be selected to receive a full vehicle restoration by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM).

Who better to restore a truck than the engineering team who built it? Your ISUZU could be the next legend.

Share your story and stand a chance to win.

To enter: Tell us your story at www.isuzu.co.za/legends





Diesel shockwaves leave transporters treading water

The recent diesel price spikes have done more than inflate operating costs. For transport operators, fuel is not simply another expense line. It is the lifeblood of every truck movement, every customer delivery and every commercial decision. When prices surge by unprecedented margins in the space of weeks, the consequences extend well beyond the fuel pump, affecting cash flow, customer relationships, fleet utilisation, staff morale and ultimately, the sustainability of transport businesses themselves writes *FleetWatch* correspondent Paul Collings.

Few understand those pressures better than long-haul fleet operator Ted Hughes, CEO of Hughcor.

"What can one say regarding the unprecedented increases of the last few months? The sudden start of a war in the Middle East has embroiled us all in a financial war here at home in South Africa," says Hughes.

Fuel shortages and panic buying added another layer of complexity. "In March we all experienced retailers turning our trucks away claiming that they had no stock of fuel so it became increasingly difficult to keep the fleet running, but we managed," Hughes explains. "The idea of retailers holding onto stock to sell for an extra R7 or R8 per litre in a week's time was not a pleasant thought."

A cash-flow crisis before a transport crisis

According to Hughes, one of the

◀ Impact on Hughcor fuel expenditure...

March saw 17,59% increase, April saw 39,58% increase in fuel spend.

biggest challenges facing operators is the timing mismatch between fuel expenditure and customer recovery. "Increased costs obviously directly impact cash flow," he says. "Rate increases will often only be realised in 60 to 90 days. Transporters bear the brunt over that period where our costs are upfront."

That reality has forced operators into a reactive position, with rate adjustments often lagging behind rapidly escalating costs. Hughes points out that the timing of the diesel price surge could hardly have been worse. The increases coincided with several public holidays, reducing fleet movement and increasing standing time across the industry. As a result, operators were simultaneously faced with higher fuel costs and fewer productive operating days, placing additional strain on cash flow and asset utilisation.

"Rate increases have to almost be reactive as opposed to proactive. Rates cannot go up before the increases as customers will not tolerate increases beforehand," Hughes notes.

While most customers have ultimately accepted the need for fuel-related adjustments, the process has not been without strain. "Having to approach clients with increases was difficult but all understood that this was a tough time and we had no choice but to increase our rates," he adds.

The hidden cost of standing still

Beyond the direct cost of diesel, Hughes highlights a series of secondary operational impacts that are often overlooked. Fuel shortages and purchasing restrictions forced trucks to make additional stops, queue at filling stations and, in some cases, park while waiting for stock to become available.

"As a truck owner it has been a frustrating time. The price of fuel has varied from one supplier to another,



the amount we were allowed to fill also varied, so journey times were impacted due to several fuel stops sometimes on a trip," says Hughes.

The knock-on effects include delayed deliveries, increased standing time, strained customer relationships and rising operational inefficiencies.

"Vehicles have been forced to park at truck stops waiting for fuel. This impacts standing time and relationships with customers as well as inflated costs at truck stops," he says.

Pressure throughout the supply chain

The consequences are not limited to transporters alone. Hughes notes that many customers have altered shipping patterns in response to rising transport costs, consolidating loads, reducing shipment frequency and seeking multiple quotations before awarding work.

"Customers who traditionally will send stock more often will restrict transport to complete loads instead of traditional part loads," he explains. "Customers who traditionally will not really query price will now seek three or more quotes for the same load. Customers have become hyper aware of diesel and seem to think it's the only cost we incur and this has strained long-standing relationships," Hughes says.

The inflationary pressure has extended well beyond diesel itself. "Parts prices across the board have increased dramatically due to increased transport and general freight costs," Hughes notes. Tyres, consumables and maintenance inputs have all become more expensive, while even routine administrative functions are costing operators more.

"Administrative costs increased, due to customers demanding original documents. Courier fees have increased dramatically, especially airfreight," he says. "Parts that were traditionally delivered to premises now require inflated minimum orders to compensate for fuel on the people delivering."

Staff and security under pressure

The impact extends beyond vehicles

and balance sheets. "Staff behaviour has changed. There is added pressure on their costs to be at work as well as overall cost of living," Hughes explains. "This results in lowered morale among staff as they feel hard done by and expect more from the company over and above increases received."

At the same time, diesel itself has become a more valuable commodity, increasing security concerns throughout the industry. "Vehicles forced to stand at truck stops have an increased risk of theft. Not only cargo but equipment, lights, diesel and personal belongings," Hughes warns.

"The risk on the road, as diesel has increased in value coupled with rising unemployment, means targeting trucks is a major concern." He says operators are having to devote increasing resources to monitoring and control measures to protect both assets and fuel stocks.

The numbers tell the story

The scale of the recent increases becomes stark when viewed against average diesel prices. According to Hughes, indicative national averages for 50 ppm diesel climbed from approximately R17.95 per litre inland in February to R31.17 per litre inland by May. Coastal pricing followed a similar trajectory, rising from around R17.19 per litre to R30.34 per litre over the same period.

The impact on Hughcor's own fuel expenditure has been severe. "March saw a 17.59% increase in fuel spend," says Hughes. "April saw a 39.53% increase in fuel spend." Those increases, he notes, are immediate and unavoidable, while recovery from customers can take months.

"Logically, as stated above, these costs are upfront and immediate. Increases in charges to customers other than those who will pay COD will only be harnessed by us much later," Hughes says. "This has forced not only ourselves but all of the road freight sector into turmoil. We are left treading water."

Looking beyond the crisis

Despite recent signs of easing geopolitical tensions, Hughes believes the industry remains under pressure for the foreseeable future. "The task



▲ Ted Hughes, CEO Hughcor

"We are embroiled in a financial war back home."

is not by any means insurmountable but we will be under severe pressure for the foreseeable future. One needs to remember these costs and losses will take time to recover," he says.

"It would be remiss in my view to think we will see any meaningful easing of pressure until well into the first quarter of 2027 optimistically." Hughes adds that recent developments in global trade and energy markets may offer some encouragement.

"With recent exchanges between the USA and China appearing to be productive and agreeing to keep the Strait of Hormuz open we may see improvement sooner. However as we all know this will not happen overnight," Hughes concludes. □

Editor's Comment: The significance of diesel price shocks extends far beyond transport company balance sheets. Every litre burned by a truck ultimately moves food, fuel, raw materials and consumer goods through the economy. As Hughes' experience demonstrates, volatility affects far more than fuel bills - it disrupts planning, strains customer relationships, tightens cash flow and places additional pressure on businesses already operating on narrow margins. The concern for the industry is not simply the cost of diesel itself, but the growing unpredictability surrounding it. In an economy where road freight remains the dominant logistics backbone, prolonged instability risks becoming a problem shared by transporters, their customers and ultimately every South African consumer.

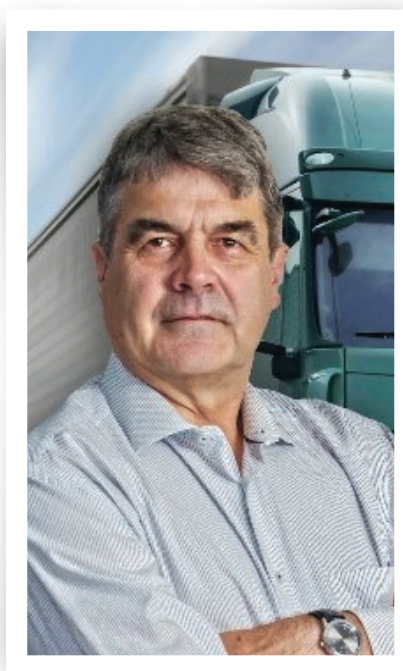


Diesel reductions, but RFA warns of ongoing pressure on road freight

The Road Freight Association (RFA) has welcomed the June reduction in diesel prices - approximately R3.25/l for 0.05% sulphur diesel and R2.62/l for 0.005% sulphur diesel - as a partial reprieve for long-haul freight operators but notes with concern that petrol prices have increased by R1.43/l across both 93 and 95 octane grades. Taken together, this is a mixed announcement that deserves closer scrutiny says Gavin Kelly, CEO of the RFA.

"Diesel is the lifeblood of the road freight sector, accounting for between 30% and 50% of a typical operator's total cost base and the diesel decrease will provide some relief to operators of heavy commercial vehicles, who have absorbed elevated fuel costs over recent months," he says.

"However," he adds, "the petrol increase will be felt across lighter commercial fleets, company vehicles



▲ Gavin Kelly RFA

and - critically - by employees whose commuting costs directly influence wage expectations. When household budgets are under pressure from rising petrol prices, the knock-on effects on consumer spending and freight demand are real."

The RFA has urged caution on the headline diesel saving, as two structural factors significantly dilute the benefit. The slate levy - a surcharge applied to recover the

R18.28-billion cumulative under-recovery in the fuel pricing system - has increased by R0.35/l to R1.58/l, absorbing a meaningful portion of the international price reduction. Additionally, the general fuel levy relief is being halved to R1.96/l for diesel in June, with full removal expected from July.

"Together, these factors mean the net benefit to operators - and therefore the reduction on fiscal pressures through the greater economy - is considerably smaller than it first appears," says Kelly.

Adding impacts on the broader front, he points out that the road freight industry continues to navigate a challenging operating environment. "Poor road infrastructure, rising toll costs, skills shortages and currency volatility all compound the fuel pricing challenge. South Africa's logistics competitiveness - and the cost of living for ordinary citizens - depends on a stable, predictable and equitable fuel pricing framework."

With all this mind, the RFA is calling on the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources and National Treasury to address the growing deficit with a credible long-term plan, to manage the withdrawal of fuel levy relief in a structured manner, and to pursue reforms that reduce the sector's vulnerability to external price shocks. □



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In Southern Africa's commercial trucking arena, the pressure points around 'rolling rubber' are intensifying. Cost-per-kilometre (CPK) continues to climb under volatile input costs, while total cost of ownership (TCO) is increasingly shaped by tyre life, casing value, fuel efficiency and downtime risk. Uptime expectations are universally uncompromising, while safety and traction performance remain non-negotiable under load and on mixed road surfaces.

In direct response to these operating realities, Bandag Southern Africa has introduced the R-DRIVE 001+, a premium drive-axle retread engineered in South Africa specifically for these interconnected fleet challenges.

The R-DRIVE 001+ is positioned as a lifecycle-focused performance solution rather than a conventional replacement tread, targeting the core operational pressures facing transport operators – lower CPK, improved casing utilisation, stronger uptime and more consistent traction and stability in real-world conditions.

Developed by Bandag SA over five years and validated through extensive Southern African fleet testing, the R-DRIVE 001+ reflects Bandag's approach of combining global retread engineering capability with locally proven performance requirements.

More than three million kilometres of real-world local testing informed the final design, across multiple

fleets, routes and duty cycles, ensuring the product was benchmarked against actual operating conditions rather than theoretical performance alone.

The objective throughout was clear: to balance mileage efficiency, durability and operational stability in a single premium drive-axle solution designed for Southern African realities.

Developed specifically for Southern African operations

According to Monal Naik, Marketing Manager at Bandag Southern Africa, the R-DRIVE 001+ programme was built around the recognition that local conditions demand a specific engineering approach that can be successfully implemented in this country.

"Bandag is consistently looking for ways to improve product performance to ensure fleet operators are receiving the best in global R&D," says Naik.

However, he notes that South African operating environments require additional resilience in both design and compound selection.

"South Africa is a demanding terrain. We look for robust product designs and compounds which are best suited to our market conditions," he explains.

The R-DRIVE 001+ sits within Bandag's premium retread range and is built using the company's latest INFINITY compound.

While global engineering input informs development, local validation remains central to product approval.

"It is a critical part of how we select products for our local market conditions," says Naik. "Our product range is unique when compared to other regions because we place an emphasis on product development while ensuring the needs of our local market conditions are met."

Engineered through five years of multi-fleet validation and testing

The R-DRIVE 001+ was developed through an extensive programme designed to replicate real fleet operating conditions across Southern Africa.

"The launch of R-Drive 001+ was a five-year long project in which we tested three product and five rubber compound options," says Naik.

"We tested at five different end users travelling different routes and transporting varying goods. The product needed to be the benchmark in South Africa. To achieve this, it had to perform on wear rate and wear



"The Bandag SA R-Drive 001+ delivers lower CPK, improved casing utilisation, stronger uptime and more consistent traction and stability in real-world conditions."



out as well as deliver predictable even wear."

More than three million kilometres of testing were completed across multiple fleets and duty cycles, providing a broad dataset of real-world performance outcomes.

"While South African fleets are very sophisticated, they require products that are robust and versatile while still giving exceptional mileage," says Naik. "Very few products are able to do this while still providing optimum CPK.

"R-Drive 001+ managed to achieve it all," he says.

Designed for traction and long-life

From a technical perspective, the R-DRIVE 001+ incorporates tread geometry and compound improvements aimed at improving real-world drive axle performance.

Key features include asymmetrical groove design and shoulder tie bars, engineered to improve stability, handling and wear consistency under load.

"The directional tread pattern offers increased traction and, together with an improved compound, also offers longer wear," says Naik.

Bandag also places strong emphasis on casing integrity during the retreading process, which includes the application of a proprietary adhesive between casing and tread.

"The casing-to-tread bond is achieved by using Bandag's cushion gum," explains Naik. "This specially formulated bonding layer fills minor irregularities on buffed casing surfaces to get a uniform contact between the casing and tread.

"This makes the Bandag retreading process one of the best

and ensures that a Bandag is always a Bandag – anywhere it is bought."

A valuable feature of the R-DRIVE 001+ is the 20.1 mm cut depth, which Bandag says reduces casing stress while maintaining strong mileage performance when paired with premium casings.

Additionally, the stabiliser bars in the R-DRIVE 001+ further support handling consistency and structural stability in demanding drive-axle applications, Naik adds.

"Stabiliser bars in the R-DRIVE 001+ support handling consistency and structural stability in demanding drive-axle applications."

Competing beyond purchase price in a high-cost environment

Bandag positions the R-DRIVE 001+ as part of a broader response to rising fleet cost pressures and increasing competition from lower-cost imported tyres.

"R-Drive 001+ has presented a win-win-win proposition," says Naik. "Bandag has reaffirmed its leadership position in the drive segment with a product that delivers exceptional mileage, improved traction, exceptional handling and superior robustness to master South Africa's diverse road conditions.

"It also allows our franchisees to compete confidently against many new tyres, including cheap imports."

Retreading remains central to fleet economics, particularly under current cost pressures, Naik says:

"The directional tread pattern offers increased traction and, together with an improved compound, also offers longer wear."

"Retreading can cut tyre cost-per-kilometre by 40–60% and reduces downtime through planned maintenance, making it critical for fleets facing rising fuel, tyre and operating costs. It also lowers fuel burn and emissions, helping fleets manage cost, efficiency and sustainability pressures that are felt today."

From mere 'tyres' to managed fleet assets

Truck fleet procurement patterns, Naik points out, are shifting away from transactional tyre purchasing towards a lifecycle asset management approach.

"Fleet operators in Southern Africa expect tyres to deliver lower cost-per-kilometre, higher uptime, all backed by data and service support, shifting from buying on price alone to managing tyres as a managed asset," he says. "As such, they are looking for business partners like Bandag."

He adds that ongoing innovation in tread design and compound development remains central to improving fleet reliability:

"Tyre innovation improves uptime, safety, mileage performance and reliability through better compounds and tread designs, enabling predictive maintenance, and delivering more consistent product performance."

The regional trucking industry is transforming rapidly and Bandag Southern Africa is easing the pain points by offering rolling rubber solutions that simultaneously reduce costs while enhancing tyre capabilities.

"As operating costs continue to rise across the Southern African transport sector, Bandag's new R-DRIVE 001+ offers a premium retread solution aimed at balancing performance, safety, sustainability and lifecycle value in equal measure," Naik concludes. □

"Fleet operators in Southern Africa are shifting from buying on price alone to managing tyres as a managed asset,"

Monal Naik, Marketing Manager of Bandag SA.

South Africa should never have been exposed to diesel shocks

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Despite Sasol, South Africa is still vulnerable to imported oil disruptions.

MIDDLE EAST WAR

IMPORTED OIL

- RELIANT ON IMPORTED OIL
- PRICE VOLATILITY AND INFLATION
- SUPPLY RISKS BEYOND OUR CONTROL
- SOUTH AFRICA STILL EXPOSED

DIESEL PRICE R33.57

THE WORLD DISRUPTS. WE STILL PAY.

PROMISE NOT DELIVERED

Sasol was supposed to be our shield. Today, the Middle East war reminds us:

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE REMAINS AN UNFINISHED PROMISE.



By **Albrich van Niekerk**
Group CEO – Pander Holdings (Pty) Ltd

Under the pressure of Middle Eastern tensions and global oil uncertainty, South African transporters are once again left carrying the burden of decisions - or lack thereof - made years ago.

Every war in the Middle East sends shockwaves through our economy. Every geopolitical flare-up weakens the Rand, pushes up oil prices, inflates transport costs, and ultimately raises the price of almost everything South Africans consume.

The question we should be asking is simple: Why is South Africa still this vulnerable?

Recently, Gavin Kelly, CEO of the Road Freight Association (RFA), rightly pointed out that government should have done far more to protect the country against exactly these types of external shocks. One of the examples

he referenced was Sasol - a company originally built around the strategic idea that South Africa could convert its enormous coal reserves into fuel and reduce dependence on imported crude oil. That was not merely an industrial project. It was an economic shield.

South Africa understood decades ago that energy security was national security. We knew our geographic position, currency volatility and reliance on global oil markets would always expose us to external events beyond our control.

Yet today, despite having some of the world's largest coal reserves and one of the most advanced coal-to-liquid technologies ever developed, we remain dangerously exposed to every international conflict and oil disruption. But the failures do not end there.

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TODAY!**

Very few people remember the ambitious sugar beet biofuel project that was planned for the Eastern Cape years ago. That initiative carried enormous potential - not only for fuel security but also for agriculture, rural development, job creation and support for South Africa's struggling sugar industry.

At a time when the sugar sector has been under immense pressure, biofuel production could have opened an entirely new value chain for farmers and processors alike.

- Imagine where South Africa could have been today if large-scale biofuel production had become part of our national fuel strategy.
- Imagine if a meaningful portion of our diesel consumption could have been offset through locally produced agricultural biofuels.
- Imagine if the trucking industry had some insulation against global oil spikes.
- Imagine if rural economies in provinces like the Eastern Cape had benefited from entirely new agricultural demand.
- Instead, the projects stalled, momentum disappeared and South Africa remained heavily dependent on imported oil pricing.

What makes the current situation even more dangerous is the reality that the transport industry is no longer entering these crises from a position of strength. The past three years have placed transporters under extraordinary financial pressure. The after-effects of COVID-19, the collapse in coal volumes, commodity instability, rising operating costs, weakening freight rates and prolonged economic stagnation have already drained most operators' cash reserves.

This is no longer a case of one storm hitting the industry. It is storm after storm after storm. And every time the industry starts finding its feet again, another external shock arrives.

The problem is that transporters cannot endlessly absorb these increases. The operator with trucks on the road still has to pay



Dangerous situation

What makes the current situation even more dangerous is the reality that the transport industry is no longer entering these crises from a position of strength.

Albrich van Niekerk

diesel, salaries, tyres, maintenance, insurance, tracking, toll fees, licence renewals, and bank instalments - regardless of what the global oil price is doing.

Yet many transport contracts cannot simply be adjusted overnight to recover sudden fuel increases. That leaves operators trapped in a dangerous squeeze between rapidly escalating costs and fixed or delayed-rate contracts. And after years of pressure, many no longer have

the reserves to survive prolonged volatility.

This is where both government and financial institutions need to understand the reality on the ground. Government should have done more years ago to build energy resilience and reduce exposure to imported fuel shocks.

But financial institutions also need to recognise that the transport industry has endured one of the longest and harshest downturns in recent history. Looking purely at historic numbers without understanding the context of the industry helps nobody when the sector responsible for moving the economy is fighting for survival.

Transporters are not asking for handouts. They are asking for an environment where they are not left completely exposed every time the world enters a geopolitical crisis.

Good governance is not merely about reacting to crises after they happen. Good governance is about anticipating risks before they become disasters. Wars will happen. Oil prices will fluctuate. Currency volatility will remain. Those factors are outside our control.

What is within our control is whether South Africa builds enough strategic resilience to withstand them. Because without trucks, South Africa stops. □

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South Africa's road freight sector operates at the sharp end of global volatility and the latest conflagration in the Middle East is quite literally a 'bleeding edge' for fleet owners. Every fluctuation in oil markets, every shift in currency strength and every geopolitical tremor directly affects the cost of moving goods across the country. For operators navigating an already fraught business environment, diesel price shocks aren't simply 'economic variables' - they're an existential risk.

While the Middle East War continues to rage, **Gavin Kelly, CEO of the Road Freight Association**, unpacks the structural vulnerabilities underpinning South Africa's exposure to global petroleum trends, while posing a set of urgent, strategic questions about how the country can reclaim a measure of energy security. Over to Kelly...

Why SA remains exposed to fuel shocks – what must change

Global fuel market dynamics play an enormous role in determining fuel

How SA can mitigate the effect of the global fuel price

prices. Supply and demand remains very relevant in what the (global) customer is prepared to pay for a barrel of oil, as well as the perceived shortage that drives a buying spree and thus the price for a barrel.

Secondly, as oil is primarily bought with US Dollars - the value of the Rand against the Dollar plays a further (in our case) negative role resulting in more expensive fuel at the pump.

Unfortunately, most petroleum products (crude oil and refined

petroleum products) consumed in South Africa are imported and this directly results in the domestic fuel cost either rising or falling.

The March increase was primarily caused by the increasing global oil prices, geopolitical concerns and the growing instability in the global supply of energy networks.

The political turmoil in major oil producing countries has now caused increased volatility to the market, which has led to worries about possible interruptions to the major distribution and transportation routes.

Oil markets typically react quickly to geopolitical risks, pushing crude prices higher and driving up the cost of refined fuel products downstream. For an economy like South Africa that imports oil, the outcome is often inevitable: higher domestic energy prices.

The ripple effect across the economy

Unfortunately, the fuel price increase does not end with the consumer at the pump. Once fuel



prices increase, the cost of moving goods from agricultural, mining and production sites, to manufacturing/processing/distribution centres and finally to retailers, is exposed to these input price increases.

Road freight logistics plays a crucial role in the long-distance moving of goods among ports, factories, warehouses, and retail locations. These will all feel the effect of increases.

Companies need to remain financially viable and thus transport companies must choose whether to increase their rates (by a variety of factors of either full fuel price increase or a percentage thereof), or whether they have the financial reserves to withstand the increases.

The latter will place pressure on cashflow and reserves. Rate adjustments are often inevitable due to the recurring fuel price strain, even if some transport operators may temporarily withstand the cost to preserve contracts and relationships with clients.

Navigating the future

The recent fuel price increase illustrate how vulnerable the country's transport sector is to international energy trends. With this in mind, South Africa should focus on the following key questions:

1. Why can we not produce enough of our own (synthetic) fuels?

- We created SASOL decades ago to produce fuel to meet the energy needs of the country. What has happened to this capability?
- We are a coal rich country so supply of raw material is not the question (and it is cheap for us).
- What happened to Union Spirits (an ethanol fuel programme we had during World War II)?
- We have the capacity to grow sugar cane (the chief ingredient) and other crops to supply this industry. This would save Tongaat-Hulett and the industry at large and create massive

employment opportunities, investment opportunities, etc.

2. Where are we with alternative fuel/energy resources?

- Battery driven vehicles have been around for some time (yes, still in the technology infancy phase). Why have we not consciously and purposefully driven a move to this? Again, infrastructure development would create massive employment and investment opportunities.
- Many manufacturers and mines, warehouses and related distribution centres, commercial and retail businesses have moved to solar. Why is this not encouraged - rather than opposed - by Eskom?
- There is so much scope in the South African context for us to become energy (fuel) self-sufficient.
- Hydrogen and related technology has also been scarcely looked at.

3. The fuel levy - how can it help?

- Against the backdrop of the scaling fuel price increase, the levy seems small. However, how about freezing increases for a while?
- What is the long-term plan to ensure that the fuel levy remains a sustainable and viable investment into the country? If not all spent on roads - which is not the case - shouldn't it be spent on developing the ability to be energy (fuel) self-sufficient?

Policy, pricing and the levy question

One must remember that the fuel levy is seen by Treasury as general income into the fiscus - and it is a rather large one. It has not been "ringfenced" for road users' requirements. One can argue that those who buy fuel and pay the levy, require well maintained roads. Those who buy fuel (especially diesel) and use it for farming or shipping are able to claim the fuel levy back via SARS.

At the onset of the Ukraine war in 2022, there was hot debate about reviewing the Basic Fuel Price methodology which had the then Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) and Treasury

announcing a temporary R1.50 reduction in the general fuel levy. More importantly, there was a proposal for reviewing the Regulatory Accounting System (RAC).

To the best of the knowledge of the Association, the RAC was not reviewed - and perhaps it is time to review this together with the questions posed by the Association.

It is important to consider that the fuel levy is termed a "general fuel levy" and that this implies that portions of the generated funds through the levy are applied to various aspects of the fiscus. Thus, any relaxation in the level (amount) of the levy would have a material effect on the funding requirements of Treasury.

A call for energy self-sufficiency

South Africa certainly cannot continue to remain vulnerable to international fuel prices when it has both the means and the ability to fairly quickly, and reasonably affordably, build the infrastructure to secure its own energy (fuel) needs. □

Editor's Comment: Kelly's argument cuts to the structural heart of South Africa's fuel vulnerability: import dependence, currency exposure and policy inertia. For fleet operators, the consequences are immediate and unavoidable - rising costs, throttled margins and difficult commercial decisions. But the bigger issue is strategic. Without a coherent national drive towards fuel diversification, synthetic production and alternative energy adoption, the sector will remain at the mercy of global forces it cannot control. In today's volatile energy landscape, the questions posed here are becoming impossible to ignore. It's time, South Africa, to build national economic independence!

Should you wish to comment or add your own thoughts to what Kelly has outlined above, please feel free to email The Editor at fleetwatch@pixie.co.za. Don't sit on the sidelines. Get involved in the debates.



◀ Daimler Truck launched its eActros 600 at the IAA show in 2024. South Africa is slowly moving to electric vehicles but diesel will be with us for many years to come. On this front, *FleetWatch* would like to point out to the Minister that we are still on Euro 2 emissions legislation while Europe is moving to Euro 7.

With the war in the Middle East wreaking havoc on global oil markets, South Africa's road freight sector finds itself at a historical juncture - where diesel volatility faces off against the push for net-zero trucking, a key theme of the inaugural National Transport Conference 2026 held in Johannesburg.

With road transport responsible for a large amount of emissions, the stakes are high - not just for environmental compliance but for economic resilience, fleet sustainability and long-term energy security.

Policy signals and global alignment

Opening the conference, Transport Minister Barbara Creecy underscored the sector's dual role as both an economic enabler and an environmental challenge, noting that road transport must evolve in step with climate realities.

President Cyril Ramaphosa reinforced this in his keynote, stating that "South Africa needs a modern, inclusive and efficient transport system, but it should also reduce the cost of transport to the economy."

For industry stakeholders, that balancing act - cost versus compliance - remains the defining tension.

Presenting at the event, Hiten Parmar, Executive Director of Electric Mission (an SA-based not-for-profit organisation with extensive experience in the electric mobility and energy sector), said South Africa is positioned within a broader global shift:

"Specific actions are being taken to decarbonise transport in every region, where countries across the world are already making progress. This is not unique to South Africa."

National Transport Conference

Oil shocks sharpen focus on trucking's decarbonised future

Road transport must evolve in step with climate realities.

Barbara Creecy
Minister of Transport



Technology pathways - promise meets practicality

From a technology standpoint, Parmar pointed to zero-emission vehicles as an immediate lever. "On the technology front, zero-emission vehicles are an immediate solution to eradicating tailpipe emissions. South Africa already has a positive ratio across the country of electric vehicle charging stations to the fleet of electric vehicles," he said.

While fuel cell electric vehicles remain absent from the local market, battery electric platforms are steadily gaining traction across passenger vehicles, buses and, increasingly, heavy-duty applications.

For fleet operators, however, questions remain around total cost of ownership, range, charging infrastructure and payload penalties - all critical factors in long-haul logistics.

Regulation as a catalyst

Beyond technology, regulatory reform is expected to play a decisive role. Parmar highlighted supply-side mechanisms such as fleet mandates and emissions standards as key levers to accelerate change.

"A key regulatory reform for the transport sector is on the supply side mechanisms, which may include a fleet mandate, fuel efficiency or vehicle emissions standards. These allow fleet-wide performance benchmarks, encouraging vehicle manufacturers to innovate," he noted.

Such measures could reshape OEM strategies and fleet procurement decisions - but only if implemented with clarity, consistency and industry consultation.

Energy sovereignty – the missing link

Yet perhaps the most pressing issue raised at the conference was South Africa's structural dependence on imported oil. In a world of escalating geopolitical risk, this reliance is increasingly seen as both an economic and strategic vulnerability.

"In the context of geopolitics and conflicts, an overreliance on fossil fuel imports cannot achieve the aims of decarbonisation. South Africa will remain at the mercy of global dynamics until it achieves energy

sovereignty. Greater action from government and an agile, enabling environment for the private sector will reduce sole reliance on the global oil supply," said Parmar.

The Middle East conflict - and its ripple effects on oil prices and inflation - serve as a real-time case study of that vulnerability, with direct implications for transport costs and consumer prices.

Investment, resilience and the road ahead

Looking forward, Parmar framed the energy transition as an opportunity as much as a necessity. "A transition to electric mobility can mitigate the impact of geopolitical shocks, while also strengthening the local economy, creating resilience and attracting investment," he said.

"With key energy transition minerals, size of the labour force, and

potential for growth, South Africa can be an investment haven in Africa, with key socio-economic benefits," Parmar concluded. □

Editor's Comment: For South Africa's trucking sector, the oil crisis is doing what policy alone has struggled to achieve - forcing a hard, immediate rethink of energy dependence. While the transition to electric and alternative drivetrains will not happen overnight, the direction of travel is unmistakable. The real challenge lies in bridging the gap between ambition and operational reality - ensuring that decarbonisation does not become a cost burden that cripples logistics but rather a strategic shift that strengthens it.

SA needs a modern, inclusive & efficient transport system, but needs to reduce the cost of transport to the economy

Cyril Ramaphosa
President, South Africa





When regional hubs go dark

The conflict in the Middle East has severely disrupted the global supply chain, placing both people and the free flow of products and parts at risk.

However, this is not simply a regional issue.

The fallout has put a spotlight on the fragility of modern global supply chains, with the sector's focus on efficiency creating dependency on a small number of highly concentrated hubs.

Following a period of relative stability in global markets and significant local investment in infrastructure and creating a conducive business environment,

Dubai emerged as a vital central multi-modal re-export hub for European manufacturers and parts distributors that want to connect to the high-growth markets in Africa and Asia.

Hub concentration creates a single point of failure

The supply chain shock from the COVID pandemic also prompted companies to adopt Just-in-Time (JIT) manufacturing to minimise inventory storage costs, a method that works optimally when logistic chains are reliable and uninterrupted.

This focus on efficiency meant companies channeled vast amounts of trade through a few concentrated, highly efficient hubs, but this concentration created a single point of failure.

The Iran conflict and the subsequent effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz have transformed this strategic gateway into a high-risk zone for people and logistics services that impact customers, while also



**By Andre Scholle,
ZF Aftermarket**

introducing macroeconomic risks amid rising oil and gas prices and supply shocks to base materials, which all feed into cost structures.

The unfolding crisis in the Middle East has exposed the structural vulnerability that business-to-business leaders have quietly ignored for years, an over-reliance on single regional hubs, such as Dubai, as the nexus for serving entire continental markets.

Customers in East Africa and Asia, traditionally served through Dubai, suddenly needed alternative routing overnight, forcing companies to adapt by rerouting cargo around the Cape of Good Hope or shifting to premium air-freight solutions or costlier overland transport modes, like trucking.

Scenario planning and people-first strategies take priority

While this seems like a logistics problem on the surface, it's a strategic design flaw in global supply chain resilience and redundancy that has business leaders rethinking their Middle East supply chain dependency.

While companies operating global distribution networks still view the Middle East as strategically important, no business strategy should override the obligation to keep staff safe. Companies must prioritise solutions that protect their people before finding alternative paths for products. This may entail moving established regional offices - either temporarily or permanently, depending on how the crisis unfolds - to ensure the safety of staff.

The necessity to remain agile and make decisions against the backdrop of a dynamic and rapidly evolving situation highlights the strategic importance of scenario planning.

Scenario planning is not about predicting outcomes, but about pre-authorising decisions before emotion and urgency take over.

Risk management strategies require that regional heads work through multiple scenarios with local teams, mapping out what the trajectory of different potential developments means for operations. Each possible scenario requires a defined decision tree that maps out the specific steps and actions needed to ensure teams can "fly by sight".

In this instance, if the scenario continues to worsen and the world faces a protracted regional war, companies will need to rejig regional supply chains away from their reliance on Dubai to continue fulfilling customer demand and safeguard the business.



Making informed decisions about how to respond requires a balanced view of the dynamics at play. A critical error that business leaders can make is focusing on Western media for information on the path and trajectory of the conflict in the Middle East.

Allowing biased or single-source reporting to drive strategic business decisions can lead to myopic assumptions. Leaders operating in complex regions can't afford to be passengers of Western media narratives when making operational calls. They need information discipline. In complex situations like these, ground-level intelligence matters more than headlines to construct resilient strategies.

Decentralised networks key to long-term supply chain resilience

While the global logistics chains that connect via Dubai and the Middle East have not broken down just yet, now is the time to look for alternative strategies that can meet customer demand and best serve the long-term needs of the business.

Whatever happens, the conflict in the Middle East and its impact on global supply chains have reaffirmed the value of a decentralised model

▲ "The Iran conflict and the subsequent effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz have transformed this strategic gateway into a high-risk zone for people and logistics services that impact customers, while also introducing macroeconomic risks amid rising oil and gas prices and supply shocks to base materials, which all feed into cost structures." - Andre Scholle, VP and Head of Region India, Turkey, MEA and CIS at ZF Aftermarket.

and the importance of diversity in locations, with customer proximity creating more resilient logistics networks.

This is not the first crisis of its kind - and is unlikely to be the last. The businesses that emerge from these situations are those that consider every scenario and have a plan in place to pivot the business in the necessary direction, to not only survive but also thrive by finding opportunities in the market dislocation.

Adaptability, flexibility and the ability to ramp up the business on demand offer businesses with a global footprint the competitive advantage they need when the regional hubs they have come to rely on go dark. □



Eco driver training is now more crucial than ever



With geopolitical instability having driven up global oil prices resulting in higher diesel costs, fuel savings matter now more than ever as every cent added to the diesel price lands directly on a fleet's bottom line. While one can look at many ways of managing fuel, one of the biggest fuel-saving opportunities sits behind the wheel: the driver.

In the current climate of high diesel prices, driver training is no longer a nice-to-have. It is one of the most powerful tools available to cut fuel consumption, reduce operating costs and improve profitability. While fleets have limited control over diesel prices, they can control how fuel is used.

In this context, professional driver training has become one of the most effective and immediate ways to manage fuel expenditure. Fuel-efficient (Eco) and Defensive Driving techniques have consistently been shown to reduce fuel consumption through improved driver awareness, smoother driving behaviour and preventive driving practices.

FleetWatch spoke with Naveen Sook, Team Leader for Fleetboard and Driver Training at Daimler

Truck Southern Africa (DTSA), who outlined the key considerations and techniques that can significantly enhance driver performance and improve fuel efficiency. Here are his pointers.

1. Preventive Driving: Reading the road ahead

A key component of Eco Driving is anticipating situations early. Drivers must understand:

- How to read the road ahead.
- When to accelerate and when to ease off.
- How to approach traffic signals.
- How to avoid unnecessary stops.

Bringing a 56-ton combination vehicle to a complete stop at a traffic light and accelerating again to 80 km/h can easily waste diesel. Maintaining momentum not only avoids this waste but also reduces wear and tear, improves safety and even helps reduce vulnerability to hijackings by avoiding unnecessary stationary moments.

2. Using torque, power & engine bands correctly

Modern trucks are designed to deliver high torque at low RPM, enabling fuel-efficient operations.

Trucks deliver, drivers need training

▲ Naveen Sook, Team Leader for Fleetboard and Driver Training at Daimler Truck Southern Africa: "Modern trucks are designed to deliver high torque at low RPM, enabling fuel-efficient operations. However, not all drivers use these features correctly."

However, not all drivers use these features correctly.

- Green-band driving is important but is not the only factor.
- Understanding the physics of momentum - especially on inclines - matters.
- Drivers should use higher gears with lower engine speeds and apply power only when necessary.

Some drivers still select manual mode, over-rev during gear shifts, or climb hills at unnecessarily high RPM. This leads to excessive fuel burn.



3. Trusting Automated Transmissions & Driver Assistance systems

Today's trucks come equipped with advanced assistance systems:

- Automated transmissions.
- Gradient sensors.
- Cruise control.
- Adaptive cruise control.

These systems are engineered to select the optimal gear at the optimal time, skip gears and maintain efficient power delivery. Drivers must be trained to trust and correctly use these systems - especially on inclines - because they now outperform manual shifting in most scenarios.

Modern technology can make a driver complacent if not trained properly. However, these systems also serve as valuable teaching tools. When drivers learn efficient habits using high-tech vehicles, they can apply the same techniques even when driving more basic trucks.

4. The role of telematics

Driver training alone is not enough. To achieve long-term improvements, fleet operators must use accurate telematics systems to:

- Monitor driver behaviour.
- Identify training needs.
- Provide real-time coaching.
- Offer regular performance feedback.
- Telematics closes the loop by ensuring drivers maintain good habits after training.

Key techniques for fuel-efficient driving

1. Plan Ahead - "Be great, anticipate."

The safest, most efficient drivers use their service brakes the least. No cause? No pause.

2. Maintain Momentum

Avoid unnecessary stops. Every stop wastes fuel, time and components.

3. Green Band Driving - "Be seen in the green."

Spend as much time as possible in the engine's optimal RPM band.



4. Accelerator Control
"Master control." Use full throttle sparingly. Smooth accelerator movements save fuel.

5. Uniform Speed
Avoid unnecessary speed fluctuations. Steady drivers are the most fuel-efficient drivers.

According to Sook, driver development is becoming increasingly important in the transport industry, not only because modern commercial vehicles continue to evolve with advanced technologies but more so now because a trained driver can impact positively on reducing fuel consumption thereby adding to the bottom line; something which all operators are desperate to achieve.

"With fuel costs forming a major component of Total Cost of Ownership, our most sought-after and effective intervention is the 2-Day Economic and Defensive Driving Programme, delivering measurable improvements in fuel consumption, safety, and driver behaviour," says Sook.

Endorsing his view is Ziyad Gaba, Vice President: Customer Service, Parts and Value Chain, who says that modern trucks are engineered for exceptional fuel performance but realising that full potential depends greatly on how the vehicle

▲ Active Brake Assist

Drivers must be trained to ensure these systems are utilised to best effect.

is driven.

"Well-trained drivers understand how to optimize gear shifting, manage acceleration, make better use of cruise control and predictive systems and reduce idling, each of which can significantly lower fuel consumption," says Gaba.

"As a leading commercial vehicle manufacturer, we consistently see that driver training is one of the most powerful tools fleets can use to improve operational efficiency. Investing in structured driver training not only enhances safety and reduces vehicle wear but also ensures that businesses achieve the best possible return on their vehicles through reduced fuel costs and more sustainable operations. It's a critical component of any fleet's efficiency strategy," he concludes.

There is nothing transport operators can do to influence the price of diesel. What they can do, however, is maximise each litre of diesel by ensuring their drivers are trained to drive economically and safely. The two go hand-in-hand as both contribute to the bottom line in this high-cost environment we're living in. □



Pressure on operations

◀ For commercial fleet operators, the current diesel price shocks place extreme structural pressure on daily operations, directly affecting margins, operational efficiency and long-term planning.

“For commercial fleets, that means fuel can no longer be treated as a variable cost alone. It needs to be managed as a strategic risk.”

Global instability and rand weakness continue to drive prices

At the core of the fuel price is the Basic Fuel Price, largely determined by international factors such as global oil prices, shipping costs and the rand-dollar exchange rate. Because South Africa imports most of its fuel, it remains highly exposed to global disruptions.

“Ongoing geopolitical tensions have disrupted global oil supply, and instead of stabilising after the initial shock, prices have remained elevated and unpredictable,” says Avhaphani Tshifularo, CEO of the Fuels Industry Association of South Africa.

“For a country like South Africa, which is heavily reliant on fuel imports, this creates ongoing vulnerability to international market shifts.”

Currency weakness adds further pressure. “Even in periods where global oil prices decline, a depreciating rand can keep domestic fuel costs high,” Tshifularo adds.

On top of this, regulated costs such as the General Fuel Levy, Road Accident Fund levy and carbon tax continue to shape the final price.

“People often assume fuel prices are purely about oil,” Nikelo explains. “But for businesses, especially those running fleets, there are multiple layers to the price and very few of them are within their control.”

Wesbank weighs in on crisis-driven fuel management

South Africa’s road freight and logistics sector has once again been staring down the barrel of punishing diesel increases. With global oil markets rattled by geopolitical instability, a volatile rand and mounting domestic cost layers, diesel is rapidly evolving from a manageable operating expense into a systemic business risk.

In light of this, WesBank says fleet operators can no longer afford to treat fuel purely as a fluctuating line item, arguing that smarter fleet management, data-driven efficiency and even selective electrification are becoming critical tools in protecting profitability in an increasingly unpredictable operating environment.

Fuel volatility has become a structural business threat

South Africans have felt the impact

of fuel price increases once again. While there may be occasional relief in the months ahead, the bigger picture is clear. Fuel price volatility is something businesses will need to actively manage for the foreseeable future.

For commercial fleet operators, the current diesel price shocks place extreme structural pressure on daily operations, directly affecting margins, operational efficiency and long-term planning.

From a Fleet Management and Leasing perspective, says WesBank, businesses are moving from simply absorbing fuel increases to actively managing them.

“Fuel price increases are often seen as a short-term shock, but in reality, they reflect deeper global dynamics that South Africa has very little control over,” says Andisiwe Nikelo, CEO of WesBank Fleet Management and Leasing.

From fuel bill to operational risk

For commercial trucking fleets, diesel price volatility is becoming an operational risk that affects pricing, delivery timelines and customer commitments. “Fuel price instability is no longer occasional. It has become a continuous, systemic risk that businesses need to actively manage,” says Tshifularo.

South Africa’s reliance on imported fuel, combined with limited strategic reserves and ongoing exchange rate pressure, means this volatility is likely to persist.

Geopolitical instability continues to compound the issue.

“Conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war and tensions involving Iran can disrupt global oil supply and drive price volatility,” Tshifularo adds. “At the same time, exchange rate fluctuations and global supply decisions add further uncertainty.”

At the same time, inefficiencies in how fuel is distributed locally can create additional pressure, particularly when demand spikes or supply chains are constrained.

“In many cases, shortages are not due to a lack of fuel, but rather constraints in how efficiently it can be distributed when demand increases suddenly,” Tshifularo notes.

Smarter fleet management is becoming essential

In a high-cost, high-volatility environment, fleet management becomes one of the most effective ways to control fuel spend, yet it is still underutilised by many businesses.

Fleet Management and Leasing is not just about financing vehicles. It is about giving businesses the tools, data and insights to run their fleets more efficiently.

Key practices making measurable differences include route optimisation using telematics and data to reduce unnecessary mileage, managing driver behaviour such as speeding and excessive idling, matching the correct vehicles to specific operations, maintaining



Visibility is key

◀ Andisive Nikelo, CEO of WesBank Fleet Management and Leasing: “Visibility is critical. Once you understand how fuel is being used across your fleet, you can start making smarter decisions that reduce waste and improve efficiency.”

vehicles properly and closely monitoring fuel usage to identify inefficiencies or misuse.

For many businesses, these are practical interventions capable of delivering meaningful savings without major disruption.

“Visibility is critical. Once you understand how fuel is being used across your fleet, you can start making smarter decisions that reduce waste and improve efficiency,” Nikelo says.

Electrification enters the fleet conversation

Electrification is also beginning to feature more prominently in commercial fleet discussions, although adoption in South Africa remains at an early stage.

Electric vehicles reduce reliance on fuel, helping businesses limit exposure to ongoing diesel increases over time. However, WesBank stresses that the transition must remain practical and commercially viable.

Urban delivery applications, where routes are predictable and charging infrastructure is more manageable, may present the strongest early opportunities. The company also argues that fleet operators should evaluate total cost of ownership rather than focusing solely on upfront acquisition costs.

“Electrification is not a silver bullet, but it is part of the long-term solution,” says Nikelo. “For some

fleets, even a partial shift can start to reduce exposure to fuel price risk.”

Diesel pressure is rippling through the wider economy

Fuel costs continue to affect the broader economy, particularly in sectors heavily dependent on transport and logistics. Diesel remains a critical operational input for mining, manufacturing and freight transport.

As fuel costs rise, those increases move through supply chains and ultimately contribute to broader inflationary pressure across the economy. For transport operators, efficient fuel management is therefore becoming as much about competitiveness as profitability.

Better coordination could ease pressure

There is also a role for industry and policymakers in improving how the fuel system operates, WesBank notes. Practical interventions such as improving the reliability of existing pipelines, terminals and storage infrastructure could help ease pressure without requiring major capital investment.

“Improving coordination across storage and distribution, as well as better visibility of available fuel, can significantly reduce pressure during periods of volatility. In many cases, the challenge is not supply, but how effectively that supply is managed and moved,” Tshifularo suggests.

Nikelo concludes: “Businesses need to shift their mindset. You cannot control the price of fuel, but you can control how efficiently you use it.” □



Supply chains face critical reality

▲ The Gulf war is hitting local transport operators where it hurts - at the pump. As diesel prices climb, vessels reroute and costs stack up, South Africa's truckers are left carrying the pressure across every kilometre, with the knock-on effect felt all the way to the shelves.

As the Middle East crisis hits home, the shockwaves worldwide are being measured in diesel, delivery schedules and daily living costs. For South Africa's road freight sector - the backbone of the economy - the war in the Middle East is already translating into tangible pressure across supply chains, states industry body SAPICS.

Disruptions to energy markets, shipping routes and logistics insurance are compounding the cost and complexity of moving goods into and across Africa. As these pressures build, businesses will have little choice but to pass costs downstream to consumers, SAPICS stresses.

Diesel: the system's pressure point

"Supply chains are highly interconnected global systems," says SAPICS president Thato Moloi. "When geopolitical tensions affect major energy corridors or shipping routes, the consequences travel quickly through logistics networks and ultimately reach businesses and consumers everywhere."

At the centre of the disruption lies diesel - the lifeblood of freight transport. From trucks and freight rail to port handling equipment and agricultural machinery, the sector remains deeply dependent on stable fuel pricing. Any spike feeds almost immediately into transport costs.

For African economies, where logistics already accounts for a disproportionately high share of final goods pricing, the effect is amplified.

"Higher fuel prices increase the cost of every kilometre travelled by a transporter," says Moloi. "That cost moves through the entire supply chain and eventually shows up on store shelves."

Rerouted trade, rising costs

Beyond fuel, the conflict is reshaping global shipping patterns. Carriers are increasingly avoiding high-risk zones, diverting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope rather than utilising the shorter Trans-Suez route. While safer, this

adds both time and cost to already strained global schedules.

“For supply chain managers, longer routes translate into longer lead times, higher fuel consumption and increased freight costs. At the same time, global shipping schedules, which are already under pressure from recent disruptions, could become even less predictable,” Moloi says.

Compounding the issue are additional surcharges linked to “war risks” and “emergency conflicts”, further inflating freight bills.

Insurance shocks ripple downstream

Insurance markets are introducing another layer of volatility. War-risk premiums for vessels operating in affected regions have surged, with marine hull insurance in the Gulf reportedly rising sharply. Insurers have also been issuing rapid cancellation notices - sometimes within 48 to 72 hours - to reassess exposure and reprice risk.

“These changes can significantly increase operating costs for shipping companies. And as with fuel and freight costs, those increases ultimately move through supply chains and into the price of goods,” Moloi explains.

The cumulative effect of higher fuel costs, longer shipping routes and rising insurance premiums is broad-based inflationary pressure. From food and consumer goods to construction materials and industrial inputs, few sectors remain insulated. Economists are already cautioning that anticipated interest rate cuts in South Africa could be delayed as oil-driven inflation filters through the economy.

From efficiency to resilience

“The war in Iran highlights a growing reality for supply chain professionals: disruption is no longer the exception, it is the norm,” Moloi states. “Over the past five years alone, supply chains have faced pandemic aftershocks, geopolitical conflict, climate



The Middle East conflict is a reminder that global logistics networks operate in an increasingly volatile environment.

Thato Moloi
President SAPICS

events, port congestion, skills shortages and cost volatility.

“The current Middle East conflict is a reminder that global logistics networks operate in an increasingly volatile environment. As a result, companies are shifting

their approach to supply chain management.

“Businesses are moving away from a narrow focus on cost efficiency toward building more resilient supply chains. This includes diversifying suppliers, building buffer stock for critical goods, investing in supply chain visibility technologies and closely monitoring geopolitical risks that could disrupt transport corridors.

“Events like this show why supply chain management has become such a strategic function in modern organisations,” Moloi says.

“The decisions made by supply chain managers determine how effectively businesses navigate uncertainty and how well they protect both customers and the broader economy from ongoing global disruptions.

“Supply chain leaders have been operating in what many describe as a state of ‘permacrisis’ for years. The organisations that have responded by redesigning their supply chains to absorb disruption and that have invested in skilled, knowledgeable, suitably qualified supply chain professionals, will be best placed to weather the impacts of the war in Iran,” he concludes. □

Editor’s Comment: South Africa’s road freight economy has long operated at the mercy of global shocks, but the current escalation underscores a harder truth: energy security and logistics resilience are now inseparable. With diesel still firmly entrenched as the sector’s primary energy source, any instability in oil markets hits road transport first and hardest. While diversification and digitisation offer buffers, the industry remains exposed. Until meaningful progress is made on alternative fuels, infrastructure efficiency and regional supply chain integration, South African operators will continue to navigate a world where distant conflicts are felt most acutely at the fuel pump - and ultimately, at the till.



◀ “On-road testing is an important milestone for our hydrogen combustion engine trucks. We see great potential for hydrogen combustion engine trucks and they will have a role to play in the transformation to zero tailpipe emission transport. Several technologies will be needed to decarbonise.” – Jan Hjelmgren, Head of Product Management at Volvo Trucks.

Volvo pushes combustion tech to combat energy security fears

With geopolitical tensions around the Strait of Hormuz disrupting oil supply routes, the fragility of global energy logistics is back in sharp focus. For road freight operators this translates directly into diesel volatility, cost unpredictability and renewed urgency around energy diversification. It is precisely into this environment that Volvo Trucks is advancing its hydrogen combustion strategy, underscoring how renewable and alternative propulsion is shifting from a sustainability agenda to a supply chain resilience imperative.

Hydrogen combustion moves from concept to road testing

Volvo’s hydrogen combustion trucks are now in real-world trials, with commercial introduction planned before 2030. The company is positioning the solution as a high-

performance alternative within its broader decarbonisation roadmap, highlighting improvements in energy efficiency, fuel consumption and engine output compared with conventional hydrogen combustion systems.

At the center of the development is High Pressure Direct Injection (HPDI), a system that uses a small quantity of ignition fuel injected at high pressure to initiate combustion before hydrogen is introduced. Volvo is already deploying this technology at scale in gas-powered applications, with more than 10 000 units in operation globally.

“On-road testing is an important milestone for our hydrogen combustion engine trucks. I feel confident that they will be the best in the industry if you look at fuel efficiency, power, torque and drivability. Customers will be able to operate them just like diesel trucks. Our experience with HPDI

technology in more than 10 000 gas-powered trucks is strong proof of its performance,” says Jan Hjelmgren, Head of Product Management at Volvo Trucks.

Diesel-like operating logic for long-haul reality

Hydrogen combustion is being targeted particularly at long-distance applications and markets where battery-electric infrastructure remains limited or operationally constrained. In these cases, range, refueling time and payload consistency remain decisive operational factors.

Volvo notes that hydrogen combustion trucks, when paired with renewable HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) as ignition fuel, have the potential to deliver net-zero CO² emissions on a well-to-wheel basis.

Under EU CO² regulatory frameworks, such vehicles are

We see great potential for hydrogen combustion trucks – they will have a role to play in the transformation to zero tailpipe emission transport.

**Johan Hjelmgren
Volvo Trucks**



▲ Volvo Truck's development uses High Pressure Direct Injection (HPDI), a system that uses a small quantity of ignition fuel injected at high pressure to initiate combustion before hydrogen is introduced. In this picture, a high-pressure hydrogen refueling nozzle is being connected to a test truck. These nozzles use specialised jaw-locking safety systems and sealed couplings.

classified as Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV), reflecting their lifecycle emissions profile rather than tailpipe output alone.

Technically, the system builds on Volvo's established diesel powertrain architecture, allowing fleets to retain familiar drivability characteristics while transitioning to significantly lower carbon fuel pathways.

HPDI and fuel flexibility at the core

Volvo's hydrogen combustion development is closely linked to HPDI technology supplied by Cespira. The system delivers diesel-like performance characteristics while significantly reducing CO² output when paired with low-carbon fuels.

Alongside hydrogen combustion, Volvo is also advancing fuel-cell electric truck development, with low-volume introduction planned

before 2030 as part of its broader electrification roadmap.

A multi-path decarbonisation strategy under pressure

Rather than committing to a single propulsion route, Volvo continues to pursue a three-track strategy: battery-electric, fuel-cell electric and combustion engines using renewable fuels such as hydrogen, biogas and HVO.

"We see great potential for hydrogen combustion engine trucks and they will have a role to play in the transformation to zero tailpipe emission transport. Several technologies will be needed to decarbonise.

"As a global truck manufacturer we offer a variety of decarbonisation solutions and help our customers choose the best alternative based on transport assignment, available infrastructure and green energy prices," Hjelmgren concludes. □

Editor's comment: The significance of Volvo's hydrogen combustion programme is not just technological - it is strategic. As instability around critical maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz reinforces the vulnerability of oil-linked logistics systems, fleet operators are being pushed towards energy optionality rather than single-path dependence.

Battery-electric solutions remain central to the long-term transition but they are not yet universally deployable across all duty cycles and geographies. Hydrogen combustion, particularly when layered onto proven diesel-derived architectures, represents a pragmatic bridge technology - not as a replacement ideology, but as a resilience mechanism. For the road freight sector, the direction of travel is becoming clearer: decarbonisation is no longer only about emissions targets. It is about maintaining movement in an energy system that is becoming increasingly unstable.



DFSK offers shorthaul LPG-petrol solution



▲ Frugality switch: DFSK SA cites a fuel saving of 30-50% with the LPG unit fitted to a DFSK petrol engine.

As rising fuel prices continue to squeeze margins across South Africa’s delivery economy, DFSK South Africa has introduced an LPG Autogas conversion for its petrol-powered engines, aimed squarely at short-haul operators seeking immediate cost relief. The dual-fuel solution targets high-frequency, urban delivery cycles where vehicles rack up mileage quickly and where fuel spend has a direct and often decisive impact on profitability.

Positioned across its petrol vehicle range, the dual-fuel system enables operators to reduce running costs without fundamentally changing how their fleets operate.

“Fuel prices are not coming down anytime soon and expecting our customers to absorb those costs is not a strategy,” says Gina

Giani, CEO of DFSK South Africa. “We’ve made a clear decision – we will not let high fuel costs stop our customers from being competitive.”

Built for the demands of urban delivery

The LPG Autogas system allows vehicles to run on both petrol and LPG, with seamless switching between the two fuels. For short-haul delivery work - typically defined by stop-start driving, predictable routes and frequent depot returns - this offers a practical balance between cost efficiency and operational continuity.

DFSK South Africa cites fuel savings of between 30% and 50%, with a return on investment expected within six to 12 months. Unlike fully electric alternatives,

the system avoids charging downtime, while also sidestepping the range constraints that can complicate route planning.

At the same time, the conversion is fully approved and does not affect the vehicle warranty, with LPG’s cleaner combustion potentially contributing to reduced engine wear, adds Giani.

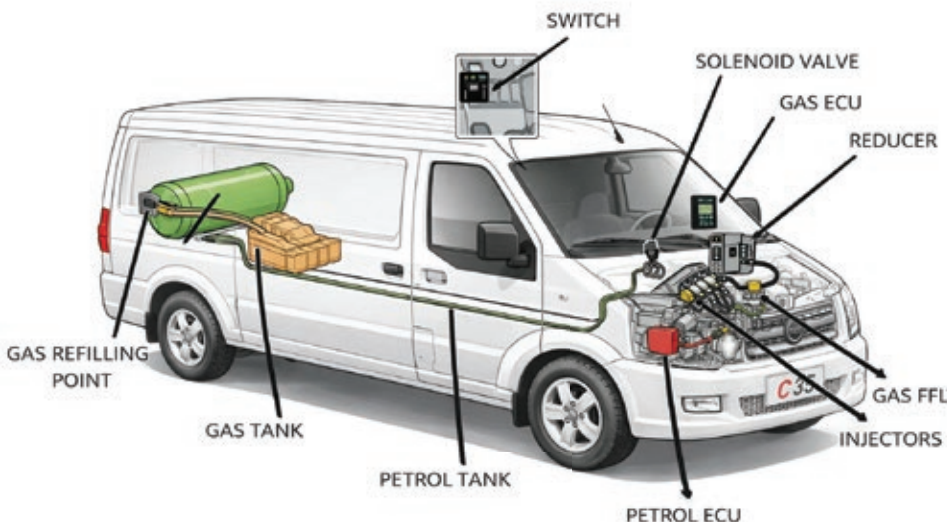
Practical economics over long-term transition

The company expects strong interest from fleet operators, SMEs and high-mileage users operating in urban and peri-urban environments. In these segments, the emphasis remains firmly on cost control and uptime, rather than long-term technology shifts.

While electric vehicles continue to form part of the broader mobility transition, DFSK South Africa maintains that many operators require solutions that deliver immediate, measurable benefits within existing operational frameworks.

The LPG Autogas conversion will be rolled out through DFSK South Africa’s dealer network, with availability for both new and existing vehicles. Customers will also be able to include the conversion in vehicle finance agreements, improving accessibility for cost-sensitive operators. □

◀ Cost reducer: The LPG unit can be retrofitted to in-service DFSK petrol vehicles.



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Fuel efficiency comparison based on independent tests between the Scania Euro 3 and Scania Euro 3 Super models. Results showed up to a 10% improvement in fuel consumption for the Scania Euro 3 Super under standard operating conditions. Savings equivalent to approximately R8 352 per 10 000 km are indicative and may vary depending on load, route, driver behaviour and prevailing diesel prices.



SCANIA



Boosting fleet efficiency with automatic tyre solution

In heavy-duty trucking, tyre pressure management on trucks and trailers has evolved to become a frontline operational discipline. Getting it wrong invariably leads to downtime, blown budgets and compromised safety, which is why Goldfields Logistics has turned to an automatic tyre pressure management solution from Loadtech to keep its fleet running at peak performance.

It is common fleet management knowledge that correct tyre inflation across all axles underpins vehicle

stability, braking performance, tyre longevity and fuel efficiency. For fleets running high-mileage combinations across national highways and rural routes, the margin for error is thin, which is why leading fleets like Goldfields Logistics have equipped their rigs with advanced tyre inflation systems.

A proactive approach to a persistent problem

Under-inflated tyres are a silent cost driver. Even minor pressure deviations accelerate tread wear,

▲ **Top:** Jacques Kloppers (left), Tyre Inflation Divisional Manager at Loadtech, with Duncan Halliday, Supervisor: Transport Operations at Goldfields Logistics. Redefining fleet efficiency through an automatic tyre pressure management solution.

▲ **Inset:** The system's inflation gauge which shows the set pressure for the tyres..

increase rolling resistance and raise internal tyre temperatures. According to Loadtech, industry data shows that running just a few PSI below recommended pressure can cut tyre life by up to 25% and increase fuel consumption by around 0.8% for every 1 PSI shortfall.

Jacques Kloppers, Tyre Inflation Divisional Manager at Loadtech, explains that improper inflation contributes to the majority of tyre failures - including cuts, flats and retread separations. For a logistics operator, those failures translate

directly into unscheduled stops, missed delivery windows and higher maintenance costs.

“Goldfields Logistics recognised that manual checks alone were not enough in a high-utilisation environment. The answer was automation,” says Kloppers.

How the system works

At the centre of the strategy is the Loadtech Tyre Inflation System - an automatic tyre pressure management solution designed to maintain preset pressures continuously, even while the vehicle is in motion.

Unlike conventional tyre pressure monitoring systems that merely alert the driver to a pressure loss, Loadtech says its system detects pressure changes in real time and automatically reinflates the affected tyre from an auxiliary air supply, without requiring driver intervention.

That distinction is critical. In long-haul logistics, stopping to manually correct pressure is not always practical - and ignoring the warning is not an option. By actively maintaining pressure, the system removes the decision-making burden from the driver and closes the risk gap immediately.

Safety, stability and compliance

For fully laden trucks and trailers, correct tyre pressure directly affects handling stability, braking efficiency and heat build-up within the casing. Automatic inflation reduces the risk of sudden blowouts and structural failures, particularly on extended highway runs.

Loadtech notes that maintaining optimal pressure enhances vehicle control and minimises tyre-related incidents. In an environment where safety performance influences contract awards and customer confidence, proactive tyre management strengthens operational credibility.

Extending tyre life and cutting fuel burn

One of the most tangible benefits



▲ Goldfields Logistics recognised that manual tyre pressure checks alone were not enough in a high utilisation environment. The answer was automation.



▲ With the pressures on all tyres being monitored, automatic inflation reduces the risk of sudden blowouts and structural failures, particularly on extended highway runs.



◀ The module booster on the Loadtech Tyre Inflation System is responsible for increasing the air flow to the tyres when any deflation is detected.

reported by Goldfields Logistics has been improved tyre service life. Consistent pressure reduces uneven tread wear and prevents premature casing damage, leading to fewer early replacements and better retread performance.

“Correct inflation reduces rolling resistance, allowing the engine to work more efficiently. Across high-mileage fleets - especially performance-based standard (PBS) combinations operating long distances - even marginal gains translate into significant annual cost savings,” says Kloppers, adding that maintaining optimal pressure delivers measurable efficiency

improvements that compound over time across large fleets.

Uptime is everything

Downtime is the ultimate enemy in road freight. “With the Loadtech system actively maintaining pressure, the likelihood of roadside inflation stops or tyre-related breakdowns drops significantly. Drivers are informed of pressure changes but can continue their journey with confidence. The result for Goldfields Logistics has been improved delivery reliability, fewer unscheduled interruptions and stronger operational continuity,” Kloppers concludes. □

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High spirits in Malalane

Malalane in Mpumalanga was the venue for our last *FleetWatch Brake & Tyre Watch* event - and what a success it turned out to be. Not only did traffic officials attend but so too did members of the South Africa Police Services as well as Fire Services bringing the total number of delegates to 72.

Having these three disciplines training together to identify signs of unroadworthiness on trucks and trailers will have tangible benefits out on the road - as has been proven in Kwa-Zulu Natal where the different units also joined together for the training and are now working together. Roadblocks are often held with traffic, police and fire in attendance and having

them all working off the same page will, without doubt, result in greater success in getting dangerous, unroadworthy vehicles off the road.

On this point, we compliment Enock Sifunda, Chief Traffic Officer for the Nkomazi Municipality, on taking the initiative of bringing these three departments together for the training. Malalane is situated on the N4, a busy route not only to the Kruger National Park but also to Maputu harbour. It thus has a mix of business and leisure vehicles driving the route.

That the inspection of trucks is necessary in this area is borne out by the fact that out of the four trucks taken randomly from the road for testing on the second, practical day of training, not one of them got a clean bill of health. All four failed due to

various faults - one having no brakes at all on the trailer, another for a non-functioning ABS, and the other two with braking (one drum on one of the trailers had absolutely no brake shoes fitted) and other faults which deemed them unroadworthy.

The purpose of *Brake & Tyre Watch* is to uplift and empower Traffic Officials with the knowledge and confidence to identify unroadworthy vehicles. If we can empower even one person and help save one life, then this initiative is worthwhile - and the Malalane event was certainly worthwhile. □

Patrick O'Leary
Managing Editor
FleetWatch



Partners Valuable trainers

A full day of lectures is pretty intense for delegates so we mix the 'hard' knowledge with fun interactions including the hand-out of prizes. Tremendous camaraderie between the trainers and delegates is built up throughout the day.



▲ **ZF Aftermarket (Wabco):**
Johan van der Merwe of ZF Aftermarket - WABCO - is our brake expert seen here rewarding a delegate for the correct answer.



▲ **Powerfleet:**
Nadine de Kock from Powerfleet educates on the benefits of telematics to road safety.



▲ **FleetWatch:**
Patrick O'Leary of FleetWatch, facilitator of the training. "The Power of One life saved" is what we work on.



▲ **Accident Specialist:**
Craig Proctor-Parker of Accident Specialist, with a group of prize winners.



▲ **Bridgestone:**
Our tyre expert, Dries Venter from Bridgestone enlightens delegates on all things related to tyres.



▲ **BPW Axles:**
Ruan Renkin of BPW Axles covers all the essential components on a truck axle and what to look for to spot faults.



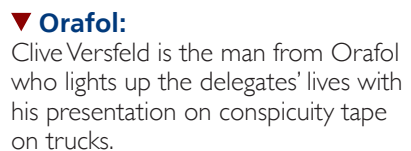
▲ **DAF Trucks:**
Dean Temlett of DAF Trucks spells out the safety features incorporated in modern day trucks.



▲ **JOST:**
Manie Roux from JOST covers that often-overlooked safety component - the Fifth wheel - its functions and components



▲ **JC Auditors:**
Gift Nhlabathi of JC Auditors in full swing explaining the benefits to road safety of fleets being RTMS accredited.



▼ **Orafol:**
Clive Versfeld is the man from Orafol who lights up the delegates' lives with his presentation on conspicuity tape on trucks.



▲ **Lighting up**
Delegates use their donated torches to spot patches of reflective tape on the walls.





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An overseas visitor from a leading OEM once mentioned after attending a Brake & Tyre Watch event that it is not a world-class event. "Rather," he said, "it is a 'world leading' event and it is thanks to the enthusiastic participation of our partners that this is so. We salute you one and all.



▲ Enock Sifunda, Chief Traffic Officer for the Nkomazi Municipality, was sincerely appreciative of the effort made to empower the Traffic, SAPS and Fire delegates.



Full House ▲

A full house of 72 attendees from the Traffic, SAPS and Fire departments attended the Malalane training event. Not only are delegates empowered with knowledge on the technical aspects of trucks and trailers but so too are they shown their wider role in the economy. Keeping the roads safe is not just about saving lives. It's also about keeping the wheels of the economy moving which has multiple benefits to society as a whole.

Enthusiasm ▶

"I know the answer. I know it," is what this Traffic Officer is enthusiastically indicating. As the day progresses, the interaction between presenters and delegates rises to the point where great camaraderie is built up and a team-spirit develops to embrace all in the quest to improve safety on our roads.



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▲ **This magnificent** PBS rig was loaned to us by DAF Trucks' client VR Cargo. Delegates were shown around the DAF truck tractor and Afrit trailer by our expert trainers to highlight all aspects and components which deemed it to be perfectly roadworthy.

Thanks to DAF and VR Cargo

Our OEM partner for the Malalane project was DAF Trucks which invited its client, VR Cargo, to participate by lending us a brand-new PBS rig to start the practical day by showing the delegates what a roadworthy truck and trailer should look like. Our thanks go to both DAF Trucks and to VR Cargo for this great gesture. Your efforts truly added value.

The shoe shine tale

Maybe it's because of my army days that I get excited when I see a 'boned' shoe cap. To get such a mirror-like finish, thick layers of wax polish are rubbed into the leather with a cloth using small, circular motions with the final finish being perfected by spitting on the cloth to really bring out the shine. It takes time and a 'boned' shoe cap strikes a chord of pride in appearance. It is thus that, when I spotted such a shoe worn by one of the traffic officers, I had to highlight his sense of pride in his uniform. This pride earned him a prominent place on the podium for all to see. Salute to you Sir.



▲ **Throwing their** weight behind the FleetWatch Brake and Tyre project to train traffic officials from VR Cargo were, from left: Werner Bekker, Fleet Manager; Francois Lourens, Fleet Manager and August Vusi Moiane, driver trainer and assessor - seen here with Enock Sifunda, Chief Traffic Officer, Nkomazi Municipality.

► **Imke Barnard** (right), daughter of Marius Barnard, MD of DAF Trucks, popped in to see what her dad is doing to help make the roads safer for her. She is seen here with Mariette Joubert of DAF Trucks. Imke was in the area conducting play-based education with practitioners in Early Childhood Development Centres.





JOST SOLUTIONS

TRANSPORT



DCA – Durable Compact Axle

Intelligent axle systems with multiple talents

- ◆ In January 2015, JOST acquired the Mercedes-Benz Trailer Axle Systems business, establishing itself as a leading manufacturer of trailer axle systems in Europe.
- ◆ The DCA range provides the ideal axle solution for all common 9-tonne trailer configurations, from curtain-siders to tippers. Designed around a fully modular platform, the DCA series offers exceptional flexibility while minimizing the number of different components required.
- ◆ This modular design delivers significant benefits to customers, including reduced spare parts inventories, lower stockholding costs, and reduced total life-cycle costs. Combined with JOST's renowned quality and reliability, the DCA offers outstanding long-term value and performance.
- ◆ For applications requiring superior maneuverability, the DCA can be equipped with the technically advanced JOST CSA command-steer axle. This solution easily meets the highest demands for the maneuverability of semi-trailers and trailers, ensuring enhanced operational efficiency in even the most challenging environments.

JOST

JOST ROCKINGER TRIDEC Quicke HYVA



▲ **Parade** The practical day starts with a full parade after which our 'Sergeant-Major' Craig Proctor-Parker, MD of Accident Specialist and one of our *Brake & Tyre Watch* expert partners, takes over and spells out the day's proceeding. Once teams are selected and allocated a team leader, the action starts for a day's hands-on, real life, action packed training that can be implemented out on the roads.



▲ **Inspecting** the test centre facilities with Enock Sifunda, Chief Traffic Officer for the Nkomazi Municipality (centre) prior to the practical day are, from left: Patrick O'Leary, FleetWatch; Dries Venter, Bridgestone; Clive Versfeld and Charl Whitaker, both from Orafol.

Putting theory into practice

Brake & Tyre Watch events involve both theory and practical training with the lessons learnt on the first day of class-room presentations put into practise on the second day. The delegates are split into teams and each team then has the chance to inspect the trucks which are randomly selected from the road and brought into the test station. The training then becomes real-life where, under the guidance of our expert trainers, the teams are led through the various inspection stations to evaluate the rigs for roadworthiness. It's real-life learning at its best.



▲ **Rapt** attention to what one of our trainers is showing these officers demonstrates the willingness to learn under the maxim we preach on *Brake & Tyre Watch*, namely, that 'Knowledge is True Power.'



◀ **SAPS**, Traffic and Fire personnel worked together in teams to gain much-needed knowledge that can be implemented out on the road. Having these three disciplines working from the same page in daily operations holds great benefits for road safety.

▶ **Quiz Winners** The two-day training culminates in an exciting quiz with each team selecting a leader to represent them with the winning team taking home an accident investigation kit donated by Craig Proctor-Parker, MD of Accident Specialist, seen on the right with the Malalane winners. It's all great camaraderie.





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BPW's AirSave allows you to continuously control your tyre pressure while driving.

The tyre pressure is constantly monitored and automatically adjusted to the desired level via a control box. Should the pressure deviate from the norm, for example in the event of a puncture, a warning light informs the driver to this effect so that they can promptly drive to a service station instead of having to stop on the side of the motorway. This significantly reduces the risk of accidents, theft, downtime and saves fuel by maintaining optimal pressure at all times, while reducing CO² emissions.

Advantages

- One source of supply
- Two year warranty
- Three years maintenance friendly
- Reduction of fuel consumption
- Increased uptime
- Increases safety
- Reduces tyre wear
- Reduction of CO²

Please note: Stator, rotor, valve tube to be replaced after 3 years



A Call to
ACTION

Essential CHECKLIST

A
FleetWatch
INITIATIVE

Pre-Trip Inspection for Trucks

This is an essential procedure for both driver maintenance managers and drivers - it will ensure less costly down-time, and a safer truck means safety for the truck driver and the road users.

Driver _____ Vehicle Reg # _____ Beginning Km's _____ Date _____

Instructions: Inspect each item on the vehicle:

- Do a pre-trip inspection on every shift or driver change of 12 hours
- Each sheet to get completed by driver, mechanic & supervisor

Covid-19 Precautions



Engine/Fluid checks, Interior and Exterior

	OK	X		OK	X
Check windscreen for damage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check reflectors and chevron	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check under vehicle for oil, water, fuel or fluid leaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for emergency triangles and fire extinguishers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coolant level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check fire extinguisher service date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engine oil level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for jack and tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clutch fluid level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for first aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brake fluid level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check internal heater, air conditioning, fans and defroster	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fuel level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for licence disc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check caps and dipsticks are correctly fitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for RTQS documents - COF etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check V belt condition and tension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheels: Check tyre condition and look for trapped stones or other debris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drain air tanks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check wheel nuts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check warning lights and buzzers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check spare wheel condition and security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Start engine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check tyre pressures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check oil pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check valve caps are fitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check air pressure build up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check number plates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check alternator charging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check tow hitch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check water temperature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grease and check 5th wheel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check hooter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Load must be secure and protected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check wiper blade operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brakes; Check system for air leaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check steering operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check foot brake operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check rear view mirrors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check hand brake operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check lights: - head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check exhaust brake operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- running	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check tachograph operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- tail and parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check if the seat belt is operational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- brake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check if air suzie couplers are operational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- indicators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check if trailer plug is operational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check if side window winders are operational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bunks secured properly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check if doors close properly and lock	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify defects below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check if the seat mechanism / airbag is operational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
No loose object in cab	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Does any problem circled require the vehicle to be taken out of service? YES / NO

Has a Supervisor been notified? _____ YES / NO Supervisor Signature: _____

Name: _____

Problem Report (Describe all problem areas circled above):

Date: _____ Drivers Signature: _____

Maintenance Work Order Issued? YES / NO Work Order No: _____ Date Opened: _____

Date Vehicle Returned to service : _____ Mechanic Signature: _____

Remarks: _____



Experts sharing much needed knowledge



◀ **Tyres** It's not just about identifying tyre faults and possible causes. Dries Venter of Bridgestone explains important sidewall markings such as maximum tyre loading as well as the positioning of tread wear indicators - and a lot more.

▲ **Drivers** of the trucks that are brought in also get attention by encouraging the cops to interact with them to find out how they feel about the roadworthiness of their rigs. The driver is an important source of information.



▲ **JOST** The Fifth wheel is an all too often ignored component. Here Johan Coetser from JOST explains its function and the vital safety components such as ensuring the locking pin - if it has one which many don't - is properly engaged to hold the pull handle in place.



▲ **ZF** Don't judge a book by its cover. In truck terms, that means don't just look at the outside of a rig. Get under the truck and trailer to inspect various vital components. Here Johan van der Merwe of ZF Aftermarket goes through braking systems.



▲ **BPW** In the pit with BPW's Ruan Renkin delegates get to see exactly what components - such as correctly set slack adjusters - are vital to effective and safe operation on the road.



▲ **ORAFOL** All round visual inspections are conducted by Clive Versfeld of Orafol who instructs delegates what to look for beyond just the driver's license. This includes conspicuity tape.



▲ An ABS cable disconnected leads to an automatic Discontinuation notice. Note that ABS and Automatic Slack Adjusters became a legal requirement on 14 February 2004.



▲ How can a workshop let this go on the road. No brake shoes in the brake drums. It's empty and useless. Gemors!



▲ Slack adjusters incorrectly set and, in this case, only one was being activated. No brakes on this axle.



▲ The license disc on a failed trailer is removed by a Traffic Official. Multiple faults were found on this rig.

Faults aplenty

Four out of the four trucks brought in for testing failed. A number of faults of varying degrees of intensity were found on the rigs, the worse being a trailer with absolutely no brakes. All braking was done using the truck tractor's brakes. Another trailer was found with an empty drum with no brake shoes fitted. On another, incorrect brake settings rendered the brakes inoperable. Then there were faults like no locking pin on a Fifth Wheel handle and of course, a number of tyre faults. And the inevitable expired licence on a trailer. Eieesh.



▶ Look at the gap between these brake shoes and the drake drums. You can float the Queen Mary through this open channel. It's wider than the Strait of Hormuz. No brakes at all.



▲ This rubber hose to the brake booster has been cut off and tied. There is now no service or emergency brake on that specific booster.



▲ Expired licence disk on a trailer - way beyond the grace period.

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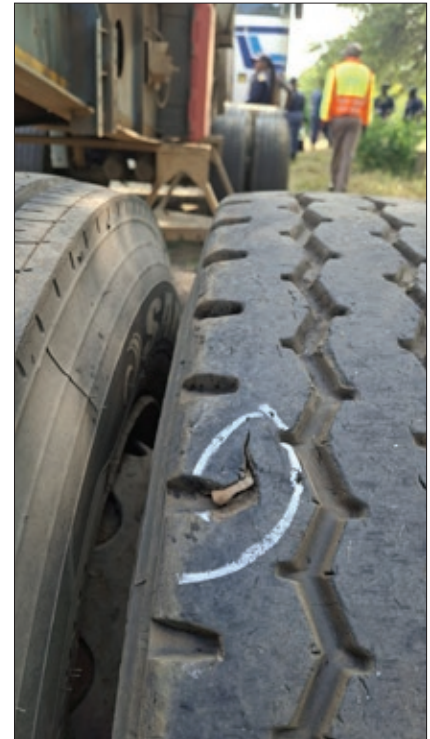


Tyre Faults

As with every *Brake & Tyre Watch* event, Bridgestone is there as our expert tyre partner to educate traffic officials on all things relating to tyres. While we obviously would prefer all tyres on the rigs brought in to be 100 percent OK, not one event goes by without our expert trainer, Dries Venter, Technical Manager Commercial of Bridgestone, picking up faults that need attention and in many instances, hold the potential to result in catastrophic consequences if not replaced. Most faults can easily be spotted by drivers conducting visual inspections and reporting the faults. The key question to ask here is: “Will the manager act on the driver’s defect report and fix/replace the tyre or tell him to continue on his way with a faulty tyre?” Here are some of the faults picked up at our Malalane project.



▲ **Obstruction damage** possibly caused by a rock or object stuck between the dual tyres. This tyre needs to be removed for safety reasons. This is an unsafe tyre.



▲ **Metal object** lodged in the tyre tread. With regular inspections the driver or tyre staff can easily spot this and make needed repairs before costly breakdowns occur.



▲ **These tyres** are badly worn with steel wires showing through the tread rubber. With regular inspections, the driver will be able to see this and report it. Action needs to be taken by the owner to change the tyre before it reaches this condition. Cash-flow and cost of tyres may also cause the owner to let the vehicle continue to drive with unsafe tyres like this.



▲ **Bead Ply** End Separation is caused by overloading, underinflation or aged tyre condition. This concern is hidden between two dual tyres on the trailer so that authorities will not see it. This is an unsafe tyre.



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The manufacturing sector is facing the 'perfect storm'

April 2026 marked 32 years since the end of apartheid and 30 years since the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which ushered in a new era of hope for millions. In this opinion piece, Jacques Rikhotso, Managing Director of Bridgestone Southern Africa and Chairperson of the South African Tyre Manufacturers Conference (SATMC), reflects on the role manufacturing will play in the country's evolving economic landscape in an age of Industrial Resilience.

Freedom without factories: The unfinished business of SA's economy

South Africa's manufacturing activity fell 2,8% year on year in February 2026, worse than the expected 0,3% decline. It marked the fourth consecutive month of contraction and the weakest performance since April 2025. Against a backdrop of suppressed domestic demand and rising imports of manufactured goods, the sector is now facing what is widely described as a "perfect storm".

Inflation pressures are expected

▲ By rebuilding industrial capacity and protecting local value creation, South Africa does more than pursue growth. It reasserts its ability to determine its own economic future.

to intensify further, driven in part by global oil price volatility, adding another layer of strain to already fragile industrial conditions.

The tyre sector as a warning signal

Within this broader industrial slowdown, the tyre manufacturing sector illustrates the structural pressures at play. Local production capacity has steadily declined, falling from 11,6 million units in 2015 to 9,8 million in 2024.

Actual production dropped more sharply, from 9,7 million to 6,7 million over the same period, coinciding with the exit of Goodyear Tyres manufacturing.

At the same time, imports have surged from 7,5 million units in

2016 to 10,1 million in 2025, placing sustained pressure on domestic producers and downstream manufacturing ecosystems.

Investment, competition and industrial resilience

Despite these headwinds, local tyre producers - including members of the South African Customs Union - continue to invest in manufacturing capability and distribution networks. The aim, they argue, is to safeguard road user safety and maintain a viable industrial base.

Industry players continue to engage with the International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC) on fair trade mechanisms intended to address dumping practices and restore more balanced competition in the domestic market.

The concern, however, is broader than any single sector.

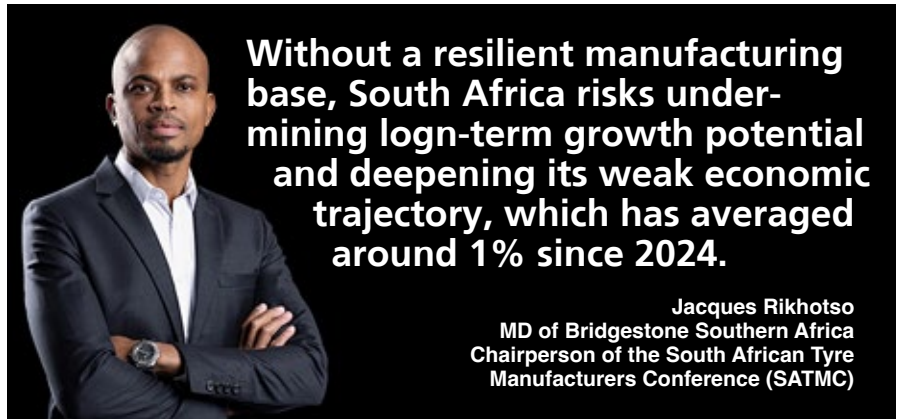
Without a resilient manufacturing base, South Africa risks undermining long-term growth potential and deepening its persistently weak economic trajectory, which has averaged around 1% since 2024.

Industrial policy and the limits of extraction

As President Cyril Ramaphosa's investment drive targets R2-trillion in pledged investment by 2028, attention is increasingly turning to the composition of that investment. The argument emerging from industry is that South Africa must shift decisively towards tech-driven manufacturing, advanced beneficiation and innovation-led industrialisation, rather than remaining anchored in extractive sectors alone.

With its established financial system, infrastructure base and academic capacity, South Africa retains the structural ingredients to reposition itself as a regional industrial hub and a gateway into the wider African market.

Sectors such as computing, electronics, defence and automotive manufacturing are identified as critical pillars in this transition, aligning economic development with the long-term vision articulated in



the Freedom Charter itself, that "all shall be equal before the law."

Economic sovereignty beyond political freedom

The central tension highlighted in the analysis is that political freedom has not yet translated into full economic inclusion. While constitutional democracy is firmly established, equality of economic opportunity and access remains uneven.

Industrial sovereignty, it is argued, is ultimately tied to domestic manufacturing capacity, technological capability and self-reliance. As manufacturing output contracts and import dependency rises, so too does vulnerability in the industrial system.

Manufacturing is also positioned as a multiplier sector, creating backward linkages into mining and agriculture and forward linkages into services, research and development, skills formation and innovation ecosystems. Each factory, in this framing, sustains far more than its direct workforce.

The policy choice ahead

The conclusion is clear: South Africa remains - and will remain - a consumer of global goods. However, the balance between consumption and production must be recalibrated if long-term sovereignty is to be protected.

Consumer choice, in this context, is no longer neutral. It carries implications for employment, industrial strength and national economic resilience. Where necessary, trade instruments may

need to protect consumers from substandard or unsafe imports while preserving fair competition.

Ultimately, economic sovereignty is not only shaped in Parliament or at the ballot box, but also in industrial parks, factories and production lines across the country.

Strengthening manufacturing is presented not simply as an economic strategy but as a nation-building imperative rooted in the original intent of the Freedom Charter.

By rebuilding industrial capacity and protecting local value creation, South Africa does more than pursue growth. It reasserts its ability to determine its own economic future. □

Editor's Comment: Rikhotso's analysis here is a timely and uncomfortable reminder that deindustrialisation is not an abstract economic metric but a lived reality that negatively impacts jobs, logistics capacity and ultimately national competitiveness. The link between manufacturing decline and rising import dependency is particularly relevant to the transport and freight sector, which sits directly downstream of industrial activity.

At a time when global supply chains are increasingly volatile, South Africa's reliance on external production capacity introduces a strategic vulnerability that cannot be ignored. As such, the many calls for a shift towards advanced manufacturing in South Africa have never been more pressing.

Now in SA

It was on a Friday that *FleetWatch* was invited by Scania Southern Africa to hear about the launch of the new Scania Super model - a range launched in Europe some four years ago. It was on the following Tuesday that I was in the Netherlands where I spotted numerous Scania Super trucks driving the highways. So what has been working for Scania customers in Europe, is now in South Africa, rolling off the assembly line in Gauteng and publicly launched at the NAMPO show.



▲ “Improving efficiency within current fleets is one of the most immediate and scalable ways to reduce environmental impact and lower fuel costs.” – Mark Templeton, Sustainability Manager at Scania South Africa. That was one of the main messages around the new Scania Super that the Scania crew was getting across to NAMPO visitors.

Scania Super is unveiled

Spotlight on transport efficiency

From agriculture and mining to retail and manufacturing, the cost and reliability of moving goods by road directly affects the price and availability of products across the economy and by extension, the quality of life for all South Africans. With this in mind, Scania Southern Africa used its presence at NAMPO Harvest Day 2026 to position the new Scania Super powertrain as a practical answer to the operational realities facing modern truck fleet operators.

The public unveiling of the Scania Super formed the centerpiece of the company’s 2026 exhibition

strategy, with a strong focus on fuel efficiency, uptime and long-term operating economy for heavy-duty transport applications serving the agricultural and broader logistics sectors. NAMPO attracts farmers, agribusiness leaders, logistics stakeholders and fleet operators from across the country.

Fuel efficiency remains central to fleet profitability

Road freight continues to carry the majority of goods across South Africa, making transport efficiency a critical factor in the competitiveness of multiple industries. For many

operators, fuel remains the single largest operating expense, often accounting for between 30% and 50% of total fleet costs.

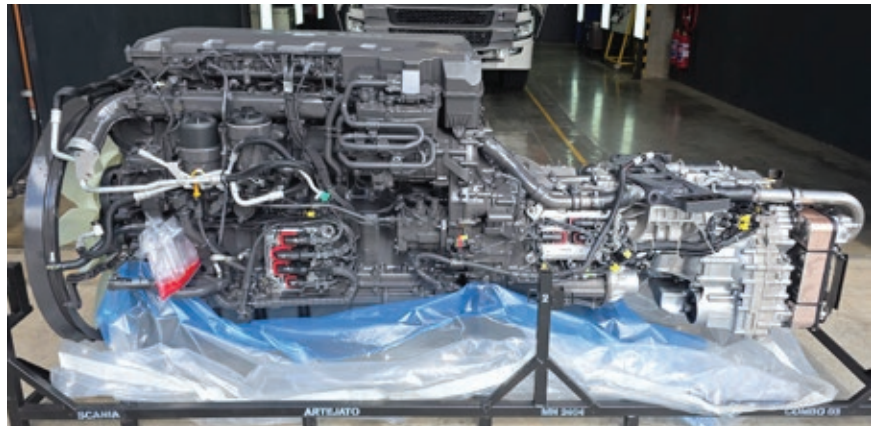
The new 13-litre Scania Super engine has been engineered to address precisely that challenge. According to Scania, the powertrain delivers fuel savings of up to 8% compared with the previous generation while achieving brake thermal efficiency figures of up to 50%.

The gains are supported by upgrades to the Scania Opticruise gearbox, rear axle and the company's modular chassis platform, all aimed at improving payload capability, durability and overall operating efficiency.

"We are operating in an environment where efficiency is no longer just a technical performance metric. It has become a key driver of both profitability and sustainability. Customers are increasingly focused on what efficiency delivers per kilometre, per load and across the full lifecycle of the vehicle," says Erik Bergvall, Managing Director of Scania Southern Africa.

Efficiency pressures extend beyond fuel consumption

While fuel costs remain a



dominant concern, fleet operators are also facing mounting pressure from operational inefficiencies such as excessive idling, poor route optimisation, load imbalances and unplanned downtime.

These factors continue to erode margins in an already difficult operating environment, particularly in sectors such as agriculture where timing, reliability and seasonal demand cycles are critical.

At the show, Scania said technologies that improve predictability, uptime and operational control are becoming increasingly important as operators seek to remain competitive while balancing cost pressures with customer expectations.

Sustainability is increasingly tied to operational performance

Although the long-term transition toward lower-emission

Efficiencies all round

▲ According to Scania, the new 13-litre Scania Super powertrain delivers fuel savings of up to 8% compared with the previous generation while achieving brake thermal efficiency figures of up to 50%. For many operators, fuel remains the single largest operating expense and the new 13-litre Scania Super engine has been engineered to address precisely that challenge.

transport technologies continues globally, Scania believes substantial sustainability gains can already be achieved through improvements in conventional internal combustion efficiency.

Lower fuel consumption, increased payload efficiency and higher uptime all contribute toward reducing emissions intensity while maintaining commercially viable transport operations.

"Sustainability in transport is determined by how efficiently goods are moved today, not only by future energy transitions," says Mark Templeton, Sustainability Manager at Scania South Africa. "Improving efficiency within current fleets is one of the most immediate and scalable ways to reduce environmental impact and lower fuel costs."

Scania South Africa said its participation at NAMPO 2026 reflects the company's long-term commitment to both the agricultural and transport sectors, particularly as operators seek practical solutions capable of lowering fuel consumption while improving reliability and operational performance. □



The unveiling

◀ There were smiles all round on the Scania stand at NAMPO where the public unveiling of the new Scania Super took place.



Ululations and celebrations as the 12 000th locally assembled commercial vehicle - a Tata Ultra T.14 - came off Tata Africa's Assembly facility in Rosslyn.

12 000th Tata truck is rolled out

By Patrick O'Leary

I still owe someone at Tata a plate of prawns. Why? Well, many years ago in the post-Van Riebeeck days, the Government embarked on the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme whereby taxi operators with shagged-out taxis could apply for a grant - I think it was

R50 000 at the time - for their old taxis to enable them to buy a new one.

There was a timeline laid out and over the next few years, expecting a huge rush of sales, a number of companies came into South Africa and put their names and products

forward to make the Government's list as a preferred - or chosen - supplier. Tata was one of these. Another one was the Russian marque GAZ which didn't make it past first base.

I recall having a meeting with some of the Tata management - can't



The 12 000th truck was presented to Clive Blechman, CEO East Vaal group (second from left) on behalf of his customer RAM Couriers. Seen with him from left to right are: Prashant Shukla, Business Head South Africa Distribution business, Tata Africa Holdings; Nizam Omar, Regional Head Distribution, Southern Africa, Tata Africa Holdings; and Jacques Taylor, MD Tata Africa.

remember who - and they told me that the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme would be their entry point into South Africa and even if they didn't make it, they would be staying to introduce their other truck products onto the market.

I scoffed at this and said that if they didn't get approved supplier status, they would leave. And I bet a plate of prawns on my guess. The bet was made to a delightful South African elderly gentleman who had been appointed by Tata as a consultant. As time went by Tata did, indeed, stick around and introduce some of their truck models into South Africa. Initially though, sales were very slow but started moving up a notch or two when they got into some KZN fleets - mainly municipal fleets.

It was during a catch-up meeting with Tata management - including some of the leaders from India - that I drew the ire of my consultant friend when I asked: "OK, I was wrong on my first guess and although your sales are picking up, the concentration seems to be in Kwa-Zulu Natal. So, what happens when you run out of Indians?" I asked. "If you want a real foothold in this market, you need to broaden your customer base into, for example, the farming community."

The consultant immediately shot back saying my question was offbeat but the man from India leapt to my defense saying: "Mr O'Leary is right. We need to move beyond KZN and then we will really be in the market," - or words to that effect. I still had my doubts. Remember, Tata was up against traditional players like Toyota Trucks (now Hino Trucks), Isuzu Trucks and other marques which had a long and strong presence in the sectors of the market which Tata was aiming at.

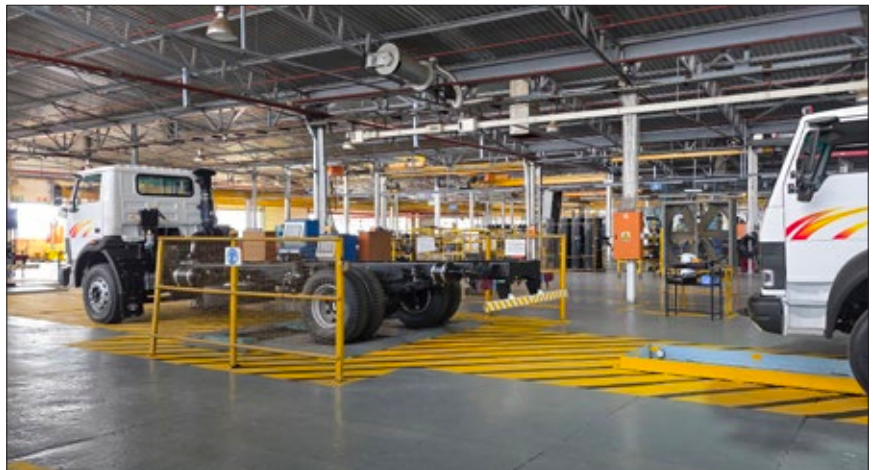
It seemed highly unlikely that Tata would make inroads against these players. But they did find a place in the market - and continue to do so. All this came back to me when I attended the celebration of the rollout of the 12 000th locally assembled commercial vehicle from the Tata Africa's Assembly Facility in Rosslyn, and I thought: "Ya Pat. You were wrong." And so I was.



The 12 000th achievement certainly served to underscore Tata Motors' long-term commitment to South Africa's manufacturing sector and its growing commercial vehicle ecosystem.

The milestone event brought together senior leadership from Tata Africa and Tata Motors, key industry stakeholders, dealer partners and His Excellency, Mr Prabhat Kumar, High Commissioner of India to the Republic of South Africa, reflecting the strong bilateral ties and industrial collaboration between India and South Africa.

The ceremonial vehicle, a Tata Ultra T.14, was officially unveiled and handed over during the event to RAM Couriers. The delivery forms part of a broader fleet agreement and underscores Tata Motors' focus on enabling customer productivity through reliable, efficient vehicles that support uptime, performance and operational confidence.



High Commissioner of India to South Africa, Mr Prabhat Kumar, congratulated the team on the achievement seeing it as a significant milestone

Highlighting Tata Motors' commitment to local manufacturing, Asif Shamim, Head, International Business, Tata Motors Ltd., said: "Milestones are built on trust, customer confidence and strong partnerships. The rollout of the 12,000th vehicle reflects our long-standing commitment to South Africa - bringing our products closer to customers while creating jobs, building skills and strengthening the local automotive ecosystem. Guided by our 'Better Always' philosophy, we remain focused on delivering relevant, high-quality vehicles and on building for South Africa, in South Africa, together with our partners and stakeholders."

Established in 2011, the assembly facility in Rosslyn has played a key role in localising commercial vehicle production in South Africa. The facility spans approximately 35 000 square metres and has an installed ▶ 76

Established in 2011, the assembly facility in Rosslyn has played a key role in localising commercial vehicle production in South Africa. The facility has an installed annual capacity of over 2 200 vehicles, with flexibility to scale up in line with market demand.



► 75 annual capacity of over 2 200 vehicles, with flexibility to scale up in line with market demand.

It assembles a range of Tata Motors commercial vehicles, including the Ultra, Prima and LPT ranges, as well as Tata Daewoo models which, I was told, has been vastly improved over the introductory Maximus models which were lousy in many respects.

Built to modern manufacturing standards, the Rosslyn plant integrates structured quality processes, rigorous inspection systems and contemporary assembly practices to ensure consistent product excellence. The facility reflects Tata Motors' global focus on quality, durability and operational efficiency, while remaining responsive to the specific needs of the local market.

Speaking at the milestone event, Jacques Taylor, Managing Director of Tata Africa Holdings (Distribution), said: "Today's milestone reflects more than production scale. It represents the progress we have made together with our employees, partners and customers over many years. Facilities like these demonstrate how sustained investment in local capability, skills development and operational excellence can create meaningful impact within the

The occasion was also used to give a preview of the two new Tata models that will expand the range of Ultra offerings to the South African market. They are the Ultra T.7 (right) and the Ultra T.12 models. And good-looking units they are.

industries and communities we serve."

Tata Africa and Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles continues to expand and strengthen its dealer footprint across South Africa, improving accessibility to its portfolio and aftersales support. In parallel, Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles remains focused on enhancing parts availability and service capability, ensuring maximum vehicle uptime for customers operating in cost-sensitive and performance-driven logistics environments.

The celebration was a jovial affair where in-between speeches, a choir entertained guests with some lively songs and gum-boot dances. They were brilliant and what warmed my heart is that the choir was made up of members of staff from the production plant. It is obvious that there's a happy crew working here and that's another plus I missed in my initial scepticism of Tata's long-term plans. The company has provided locals with employment - much needed in today's high unemployment environment.



Harneet Luther, CEO Tata Motors South Africa and Head Manufacturing and Product Management Africa Tata Africa, was graceful in his thanks to all - past and present - who made this achievement possible.

Apart from the milestone production celebration, the occasion was also used to give a preview of the two new models that will expand the range of Ultra offerings to the South African market. They are the Ultra T.7 and the Ultra T.12 models. And good-looking units they are.

During the proceedings, I looked around for the elderly consultant gentleman who I bet that plate of prawns to all those years ago. He wasn't there. So, anyone from Tata who's up for a plate of prawns, give me a shout. It's on me. And a big congratulations on the production of your 12 000th truck. □

Advanced Fuel Management

With fluctuating diesel prices, fuel remains a critical factor impacting the profitability of running a fleet of vehicles. By working together and with some education, operators and drivers can achieve significant savings.

FOR THE DRIVER

Vehicle Maintenance

Perform regular pre- and post-trip inspections to ensure optimal fuel efficiency.

Speed

Driving at higher speeds consumes more fuel. Slow down and maintain moderate speeds to save fuel.

Tyre Management

Ensure tyres are correctly inflated. Under-inflated tyres increase rolling resistance, leading to higher fuel consumption.

Driving style

- Maintain engine revs at near peak torque.
- Drive in the correct gear and avoid frequent or abrupt gear changes.
- Avoid unnecessary idling – idling can consume up to 10% more fuel. Switch off the engine when stationary.
- Accelerate and brake gently; avoid aggressive driving.
- When starting a cold engine, ease into driving and avoid using full power immediately.

Wind resistance

Adjust air deflectors to match the cab and trailer setup, reducing drag and fuel consumption.

Security and Monitoring

- Secure fuel tanks to prevent fuel theft
- Regularly record and monitor fuel usage to identify and address inefficiencies.

FOR THE OPERATOR

Driver Training

Drivers are often the single biggest factor influencing fuel consumption. Conduct consistent and regular training sessions to refine driver skills, habits, and attitudes.

Incentivise Fuel Savings

Consider introducing an incentive programme to reward drivers for achieving fuel efficiency goals.

Consider a Fleet Management System

A comprehensive fleet management system offers numerous benefits, including:

- Vehicle and driver monitoring and performance insights
- Route optimisation and planning
- Maintenance scheduling and oversight
- Automated data collection for fuel regulation and usage monitoring

Prioritise Maintenance

Develop and enforce a consistent, sustainable maintenance policy. Make maintenance a management priority to prevent inefficiencies.

Vehicle Replacement Policy

Older vehicles typically consume more fuel and incur higher maintenance costs. Replace outdated vehicles as they become uneconomical.

Select the Right Vehicle

- Ensure vehicles are fit for purpose
- Verify that rear axle ratios align with operational needs to maximise fuel efficiency.

Manage Loading

- More fuel will be used
- Will cause damage to the vehicle and tyres

Optimise Routing and Scheduling

Route planning is critical to reducing trip time and fuel usage.

Fuel costs
can account
for up to 40%
of operational
overheads



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**A Call to
ACTION**

Essential CHECKLIST

A
**FleetWatch
INITIATIVE**

Don't drink and drive

Driving under the influence is a criminal offence. Alcohol and truck driving do not go together - don't do it!

Negatives effects of alcohol

- Slows reaction time
- Distorts vision
- Reduces concentration
- Increases risk taking
- Reduced or poor judgement
- Increases fatigue – many hours after consumption

If caught, a professional driver can have his licence suspended for:

- 6 months - first offence
- 5 years - second offence
- 10 years - third offence

★ New legislation proposed recommends that Blood Alcohol content be reduced to 0,02g per 100ml for general drivers and 0,00g per 100ml for professional drivers.



Sorghum beer	Spirit cooler	Beer	Cider	75ml Red or 90 ml White Wine	Tot / 25 ml Vodka or Cane, whiskey, brandy	Cocktail Various %	Tot / 25ml Tequila	Quart Beer
1.5 U	1.2 - 1.9 U	1.5 - 1.7 U	2 U	1 U	1 U	2 - 4 U	1 U	3.5 - 4 U

★ 1 Unit comes to 0.02g in your blood or 0.10mg in your breath

No. of Units	Blood Alcohol Content	Breath Alcohol Content
3	0.06g	0.3mg
4	0.08g	0.4mg
5	0.10g	0.5mg
6	0.12g	0.6mg
7	0.14g	0.7mg
8	0.16g	0.8mg
9	0.18g	0.9mg
10	0.20g	1.0mg
11	0.22g	1.1mg
12	0.24g	1.2mg

★ Calculations are based on adult male, 68kg. This is a rough guide as each individual is affected differently according to size and weight..

★ Alcohol has to pass through the bloodstream. It takes 1 hour (or more) to get rid of 1 unit.

Limits for Professional Drivers

Blood
0,02g per 100ml

Breath
0,10mg per 1000ml

Combination consumption over a 3 hour period

50 kg	70 kg	100 kg	50 kg	70 kg	100 kg
1 Beer Per hour = 0.05%	2 Beer Per hour = 0.06%	3 Beer Per hour = 0.07%	1 Beer 2 Wine 1 Double Tot = 0.12%	2 Beer 2 Wine 3 Double Tot = 0.13%	3 Beer 3 Wine 2 double Tot = 0.13%



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Isuzu reaches its highest ever annual production

Great pride ran through the good folk at the Isuzu Motors South Africa (IMSAf) manufacturing plant as they recently celebrated their highest ever annual production in a financial year.

This milestone first in the history of the company saw IMSAf recording a massive 21% year-on-year increase in production volumes for both the Isuzu D-MAX bakkie and Isuzu Trucks, with over 27 400 Isuzu D-MAX bakkies and more than 3 800 Isuzu trucks produced at the plant.

While hitting record production volumes, Isuzu has simultaneously retained its position as South Africa's No. 1 medium and heavy-commercial vehicle brand for the 13th year in a row. This achievement is not an isolated event but rather a reflection of sustained customer



trust built through consistency, reliability and lifecycle value.

This milestone reflects a multi-year trend of growth, a measured, deliberate response to sustained market demand that signals confidence in the Isuzu brand and in the future of automotive manufacturing in South Africa. By aligning production with actual market needs, IMSAf demonstrated its ability to scale while maintaining its reputation as a long-term manufacturing partner.

"Records are built on more than just machinery and equipment. They are built on the discipline of our people and the loyalty of our customers across the continent," said Dominic Rimmer, Executive

▲ Isuzu Motors South Africa employees, team leaders and manufacturing leadership on the Gqeberha production line celebrate the company's highest-ever annual production, marking a 21% year-on-year increase in Isuzu truck volumes and Isuzu D-MAX.

Vice President for Manufacturing and Product Engineering at Isuzu Motors South Africa.

"Every record-breaking vehicle that leaves our production line represents a promise kept to our customers. We aren't just chasing volumes; we are expanding responsibly to move the world for those who keep our economies moving. This financial year success is rooted in the collective effort, skills and commitment of the IMSAf workforce - supported by strong systems and operational discipline."

This people-centred approach is anchored in the core Isuzu value of Mutual Growth, where long-term business success is built through shared progress with employees, partners and the communities the brand serves.

By maintaining this steady momentum and building on the solid performance of previous years, IMSAf continues to play a critical role in the broader African market. As the company looks ahead, this milestone stands as a factual marker of operational capability and its stated commitment of 'Moving The World - For You'.

Huge congratulations from all of us at **FleetWatch**. □



▲ Aerial view of the Isuzu Motors South Africa (IMSAf) manufacturing plant in Gqeberha - a true South African asset.



Namibia Rotomould

Hino 300 clocks 1-million kilometres

In the road freight industry, the real test of a truck is not what it promises on paper but what it quietly proves over time, where durability and reliability move beyond marketing claims into real-world proof. When a truck clocks up a million kilometres without major mechanical intervention, it tells a story that resonates far beyond the workshop floor. Such a case is a Hino 300 714 operated by Namibia Rotomould.

Purchased new in 2018 from Pupkewitz Hino, the Hino 300 has now surpassed one million kilometres while working across Namibia's remote rural routes and urban centres - and has done so without requiring overhauls of major components such as the engine, gearbox or rear axle.

Built for the long haul

Namibia Rotomould is a family-owned business based in Okahandja that has been operating in Namibia for more than two decades. The company specialises in the

rotational moulding of polyethylene water tanks and related products, serving agricultural, mining, industrial, chemical and domestic sectors across the country. To ensure dependable distribution to customers, it operates its own delivery fleet.

Over the past eight years the Namibia Rotomould Hino 300 714 has required only routine servicing and normal replacement of wear-and-tear items such as brake and clutch linings and the occasional fanbelt.

According to Heiko Meyer, Manager of Namibia Rotomould: "Durability and reliability are essential ingredients of our business, which is manufacturing large, rotationally moulded water tanks which are then distributed countrywide. These objectives mean we need the same attributes in our delivery trucks to ensure we keep our customers happy."

Meyer says the decision to adopt Hino trucks followed earlier experience with automated manual

Longevity in a truck

◀ A million kilos and counting - the Namibia Rotomould Hino 300 714 has required only routine servicing and normal replacement of wear-and-tear items such as brake and clutch linings and the occasional fanbelt. While the payload weight may be moderate, the aerodynamic drag created by large tanks adds a constant strain on drivetrain components and fuel consumption.

transmissions in other brands, which proved less suited to the company's operating environment.

"This is the reason we switched to Hino where we found their standard manual gearboxes to be virtually trouble-free in our type of operation after having had trucks with automated manual transmission previously," Meyer states.

Moving bulky loads across Namibia

"Our trucks are fitted with flat deck bodies and they usually tow two trailers, making for an overall rig length of 22 metres. The loads of water tanks are not very heavy but they are bulky, creating significant wind resistance," adds Meyer.

This type of application places unique demands on a truck, he explains: "While the payload weight may be moderate, the aerodynamic drag created by large tanks adds a constant strain on drivetrain components and fuel consumption."

Most of the distance travelled by this particular Hino has been under the stewardship of a single driver, Imael Joel. His consistent driving habits and sense of responsibility have played a significant role in achieving the million-kilometre milestone, says Meyer.

Fuel efficiency is closely monitored, and the company reports an average consumption of 18 litres per 100 kilometres - notable for a vehicle operating with trailers and governed to a maximum speed of 80 km/h.

Reliability that reshapes fleet strategy

According to Meyer, the most impressive attributes of the Hino 300 are its reliability, robust mechanical design and durability under demanding operating conditions.

The Rotomould fleet currently comprises five similar Hino 300 freight carriers, each operating with trailers across Namibia.

Interestingly, the company's original fleet strategy was to replace trucks every three years. That plan has evolved as the vehicles have proven far more durable than initially anticipated.

The result is that the trucks continue to remain in service well beyond the original replacement horizon - a development that directly reduces total cost of ownership.

Meyer adds that when the time eventually comes to renew the fleet, the choice of replacement brand is unlikely to change.

QDR at the core

For Hino, long-distance achievements such as this reinforce the brand's long-standing focus on what it describes as QDR - quality, durability and reliability.



Million-km man!

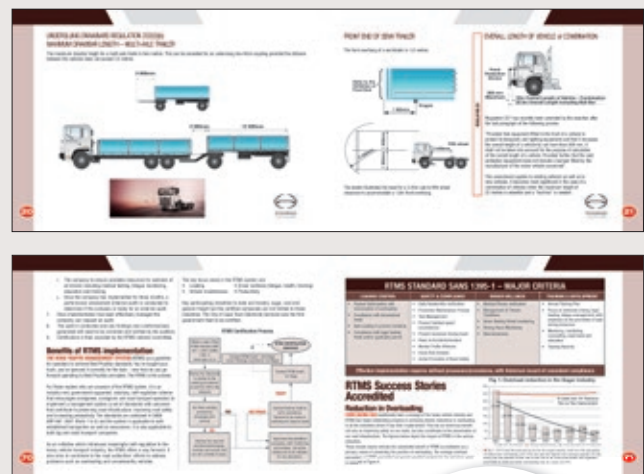
▲ The million-kilometre man - Ishmael Joel, whose consistent driving habits and sense of responsibility have played a significant role in achieving the impressive one million kilometres milestone.

Namibia Rotomould switched from automated manual transmission to the Hino 300 standard manual gearbox which has proved to be virtually trouble-free.

**Heiko Meyer
Namibia Rotomould**

“Hino trucks have been operating in Southern Africa for more than 50 years and have built up a proud reputation for QDR and impressive long distance achievements flow from these QDR objectives which are designed into the DNA of all our trucks,” says Anton Falck, Vice President of Hino South Africa.

“We aim to have customers who enjoy maximum uptime and overall lowest cost per kilometre in the working lives of their Hino trucks,” Falck concludes. □



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Euro 6 and FH Aero assembly begins at Volvo's Durban plant

South Africa's heavy commercial vehicle sector has taken a decisive step into the global emissions era, with Volvo Trucks becoming the first OEM to locally assemble Euro 6 trucks. The move signals a shift not only in South Africa's global regulatory alignment but also in the technological sophistication of the country's trucking landscape - bringing world-class standards into a domestic production environment.

Making a bold leap into diesel technology's frontier, Volvo Trucks South Africa has confirmed the start of assembly of Euro 6 and the new FH Aero range at its Durban facility.

Raising the sustainability bar

"Local assembly of Euro 6 and FH Aero trucks reinforces Volvo Trucks' leadership in sustainable

transport solutions, while continuing to support the development of the local manufacturing sector," says Stuart Potter, Managing Director of Volvo Trucks South Africa.

"As we assemble trucks on order, it is a clear indication that many of our South African customers are incorporating more sustainable and efficient transport solutions into their fleets," adds Potter.

The introduction of Euro 6 - widely regarded as one of the most stringent global emissions standards - marks a substantial leap from South Africa's prevailing Euro 2 baseline, underscoring a growing alignment by this OEM with international environmental benchmarks.

Skills uplift without disruption

While the addition of Euro 6

Choke for customers

▲ Vuyo Sabata, Director of Volvo Trucks SA Durban Plant: "Having these models on our production line reinforces our position as a plant that can meet advanced international requirements."

and FH Aero models does not fundamentally alter the plant's operational footprint, it has significant implications for workforce capability and technical depth.

"Our teams are gaining enhanced skills and deeper exposure to advanced technologies that position us for future innovations," says Vuyo Sabata, Director of Volvo Trucks South Africa Durban Plant.

"Quality is the foundation of everything we do - from the way we design and build our trucks, to the people, parts and services that support them," Sabata adds.

Importantly, the integration has been achieved without disrupting existing production lines. The Durban plant continues to assemble Volvo's established extra heavy range - including the FH, FM and FMX - with the new models

complementing, rather than complicating, operations.

A vote of confidence in local manufacturing

The allocation of Euro 6 and FH Aero assembly to Durban reflects growing confidence in the maturity and capability of South Africa’s truck manufacturing base.

Sabata notes: “Being entrusted with additional models is a strong acknowledgement of the capability and maturity of our local manufacturing operations. Euro 6 represents one of the highest global standards for emissions, safety and technical performance and having these models on our production line reinforces our position as a plant that can meet advanced international requirements.

“It is an honour for our team and it reflects the confidence Volvo Trucks has in the quality, discipline and expertise of our people.”

Beyond capability, localisation also brings a commercial advantage. By assembling units domestically, Volvo Trucks avoids import duties typically applied to fully built-up vehicles - enabling more competitive pricing in a cost-sensitive market.

“As always, we are driven by our customers’ needs,” states Sabata. “By assembling Euro 6 trucks and FH Aero locally, we’re not only responding to growing local demand for more sustainable and efficient technology but also doing so in a way that ensures competitiveness and accessibility for our customers.”

FH Aero - efficiency by design

The announcement also marks the South African introduction of the FH Aero, a next-generation long-haul platform first launched globally in 2024. Designed with aerodynamics at its core, the model aims to reduce energy consumption and operating costs while lowering carbon emissions.

Featuring an extended aerodynamic cab, Camera Monitor System and drag-reducing components, the FH Aero is engineered for high-speed efficiency and driver visibility.

Local customers will have access to both electric and diesel FH Aero variants, including models equipped with Volvo’s I-Save fuel optimisation technology.

“The new Volvo FH Aero is our most efficient truck ever as we continue to reduce CO2 from our entire product range,” concludes Potter. “The FH Aero will prove itself in the local market as a safe, aerodynamically designed and superior quality truck for tough long-haul tasks, designed for the success of our customers.” □



Enhanced skills

▲ Technicians at Volvo Trucks’ Durban Plant are gaining enhanced skills and deeper exposure to advanced technologies with the local assembly of the Euro 6 FH Aero and its electric stable mate.

Meeting global requirements

◆ Vuyo Sabata, Director of Volvo Trucks South Africa Durban Plant, on the FH Aero: “Local customers are able to choose between electric and diesel models, with specialised I-Save technology for enhanced fuel economy.”

For growing fleet operators, sticking with a proven OEM is all about certainty - predictable performance, dependable support and a service network that keeps wheels turning. It is a formula that continues to pay dividends for Durban-based entrepreneur Namesh Govender of Style Towing, whose new custom Hino 700 tow truck signals both confidence in his supplier and ambition for his business.

Govender has added his first 65-ton 700 Series model to a fleet of Hino tow trucks operating across KwaZulu-Natal. The new 2845 freight carrier - equipped with a 40-ton winch and finished in distinctive Style Towing livery - represents a step up in capability for the business, which has been steadily expanding since 2005.

"I currently operate two other tow trucks - Hino 814 and 915 models - and over the years I have owned plenty of other Hino's, including 8-tonners, as well as a Toyota Dyna," he explains.

"I bought the 700 towards the end of 2025 and am most impressed with its performance so far, especially the fuel economy and power stakes. The comprehensive standard level of safety equipment is another plus for this model. I bought the current trucks in my fleet from Hino Shelly Beach, which is also responsible for servicing them."

The new unit is based on a 6x4 freight carrier platform, with bodywork completed by Durban-

Custom Hino 700 for Style Towing



▲ Pretty eye-catching - the Style Towing Hino 700 heavy duty tow truck in action.



▲ Style Towing's line up of customised Hino tow trucks - the 700 Series heavy duty model and the two Hino 300 Series rollbacks.

based Transpec and the eye-catching branding handled by Artistic Signs and Graphics.

The unit is operated by a dedicated driver, Keenan Govender, who has been with Style Towing for the past two years - reinforcing the business's focus on consistency not just in equipment, but in people, says Govender.

I am impressed with performance - noting fuel economy and power stakes

Keenan Govender
Style Towing

Total Support in action

For Hino South Africa, Govender's long-standing loyalty reflects the effectiveness of its global customer strategy.

"The degree of brand loyalty shown by Namesh Govender and his team at Style Towing is a great reward for Hino's global strategy of Total Support where the selling dealers and distributors worldwide build long-standing relationships with their customers and listen to their changing requirements as the logistical environment develops," says Anton Falck, Vice President of Hino South Africa.

Editor's comment: Fleet growth is all about procurement decisions built on trust. In Govender's case, that trust has translated into a consistent Hino fleet that scales with his business needs. The addition of a 700 Series unit is more than an upgrade in tonnage - it is a strategic move into heavier recovery capability, backed by a support ecosystem he already knows works. In a competitive towing environment, that kind of certainty is not just reassuring - it is commercially decisive.

Hyundai H100 changes its spots



The world is a cruel place at the moment. What's going on around the world is horrible but, while the Middle East war is on everyone's mind playing havoc with stress levels due to the multiple actual and potential disastrous impacts, South Africa is fortunate in that it has vast areas where one can take a break and switch off from the terrible things happening in the world today.

Helping to reduce the levels of anxiousness - albeit just for a temporary break - is a little 'fella' from the trucking industry, the Hyundai H100. In the trucking arena, versatility is generally spoken about in terms of load body scope, application ability and operational agility. Occasionally, however, a workhorse steps beyond its expected function and reveals a far broader capability. That is precisely the case with the Hyundai H100 - a compact, dependable carrier long associated with last-mile delivery - now impressing tourists in the bushveld of Limpopo.

In an innovative collaboration between Hyundai Tzaneen and Leopard Rock Guest Lodge in Hoedspruit, the H100 has been repurposed into a fully functional game drive vehicle. The concept, originally developed by Safari Hunting Frames, set out to showcase the vehicle's durability and adaptability in a completely different operating environment - one defined not by tar and traffic but by dust, heat and uneven terrain.

Reimagining a proven platform

What began as a creative exercise has evolved into a compelling real-world case study. Since entering service, the converted H100 has transported more than 10 000 tourists, covered over 40 000 kilometres and, notably, recorded zero mechanical breakdowns - a statistic that will not go unnoticed by fleet operators accustomed to the harsh realities of off-road duty cycles.

According to Nick Madzivandzira, Dealer Principal at Hyundai Tzaneen, the initiative was about challenging entrenched perceptions.

"The Hyundai H100 is already a favourite among entrepreneurs and small businesses because of its strength, frugality and value for money," says Madzivandzira. "We wanted to show that its reliability extends far beyond urban deliveries. If it can perform consistently in the rugged conditions of the bush without a breakdown, it proves just how capable this vehicle really is."

Built for business - anywhere

For Leopard Rock Guest Lodge, the appeal was immediate. Game drive vehicles are expected to balance reliability, passenger comfort and operating cost - a combination not easily achieved, particularly in remote environments where downtime carries real consequences.

Quintus Strauss, Owner of

Versatile H100

▲ The Leopard Rock Guest Lodge Hyundai H100 has transported more than 10 000 visitors to date without a single mechanical issue after 40 000km of service.

Leopard Rock Guest Lodge, says the H100 has delivered on all fronts: "When Hyundai and Safari Hunting Frames approached us with the idea, we immediately saw the potential," he says. "Game drive vehicles must be dependable, comfortable and cost-effective. The Hyundai H100 has exceeded expectations. Transporting more than 10 000 visitors to date without a single mechanical issue is a remarkable achievement."

Cross-sector innovation

Beyond the headline numbers, the project underscores a broader theme gaining traction across the mobility landscape - the value of cross-industry collaboration. By bridging automotive engineering with tourism operations, the partners have effectively unlocked a new use case for a well-established platform.

For fleet operators, the implications are clear. Vehicles traditionally confined to urban logistics roles may, with the right engineering input, find viable applications in sectors as diverse as tourism, agriculture and conservation - extending asset utilisation and enhancing return on investment. □



Reducing emissions

◀ Reducing emissions, optimising transport performance and improving overall environmental outcomes are core best-practice drivers at RTG.

Adopting responsible bulk logistics in sensitive environments

Across South Africa’s high-density freight corridors, where industrial activity intersects with residential and commercial communities, the margin for operational error in bulk logistics is effectively zero. For best-practice fleet operators in this sector, compliance is no longer simply about meeting regulatory requirements - it is about maintaining a social licence to operate.

Exemplifying this holistic understanding is leading bulk freight

fleet, Reinhardt Transport Group (RTG), which positions responsible bulk handling as a core operational discipline, embedded alongside safety, environmental stewardship and continuous improvement.

The Group, which fields over 1 000 trucks, notes that operating within a highly regulated environment requires more than procedural adherence. It demands a structured, transparent approach to managing impact, particularly where bulk commodities are transported,

handled and stored in proximity to established communities.

This includes formal application processes, environmental assessments and public participation frameworks that ensure oversight and accountability across all activities.

Managing operational impact

RTG outlines that bulk material handling introduces a range of environmental and operational risks that must be actively

Compliance

▲ Compliance at RTG is achieved through tightly controlled operational measures designed to limit dust, manage site activity and ensure safe materials handling practices.

Investment

▶ Ongoing investment in fleet modernisation and efficiency-focused technologies keeps RTG ahead of the pack.



Tech vigilance

▲ At RTG, tech-enabled vigilance and continuous improvement remain fundamental.

mitigated. The company emphasises that compliance is achieved through tightly controlled operational measures designed to limit dust, manage site activity and ensure safe materials handling practices.

From RTG’s perspective, this includes controlled loading and offloading procedures, continuous site monitoring and the maintenance of equipment and infrastructure to support safe, efficient operations.

The company adds that these controls are not static - they are continuously refined in line with evolving industry standards and operational learnings.

Alignment with industry standards

Beyond site-level controls, the Group highlights a broader commitment to aligning its operations with recognised safety, quality and environmental management standards. This extends to ongoing investment in fleet modernisation and efficiency-focused technologies.

RTG states that these initiatives are aimed at reducing emissions, optimising transport performance and improving overall environmental



Operational control

▶ Comprehensive operational controls at RTG are not static but continuously refined in line with evolving industry standards and operational learnings.



outcomes - a critical focus area as the logistics sector comes under increasing pressure to decarbonise and operate more sustainably.

Public engagement and transparency

A key pillar of RTG’s operating model is structured stakeholder engagement. The company notes that maintaining open, formalised communication channels with communities, neighbouring businesses and regulators is essential in sensitive operating environments.

This includes participation in public consultation processes and ensuring that relevant operational information is accessible for review.

RTG emphasises that transparency is central to building trust and addressing stakeholder concerns in a constructive, compliant manner.

Continuous improvement as a discipline

For RTG, responsible logistics is not a fixed benchmark but an evolving process. The company stresses that maintaining high operational standards requires ongoing evaluation, accountability and adaptation as regulatory frameworks and community expectations shift.

The Group concludes that vigilance and continuous improvement remain fundamental to its approach, with a commitment to engaging stakeholders and ensuring that all operations meet - and where possible exceed - regulatory requirements.

RTG has made application documentation available for public access and review as part of its transparency commitment – <https://reinhardt.co.za/public-notice-clairwood/>

**Farewell
Derick Reinhardt**

FleetWatch extends its sincere condolences to all at the Reinhardt Transport Group on the passing of the founder of the company, Derick Reinhardt. Derick, who passed away on June 1st, built the company up from a one-truck show to a giant in the trucking industry. He was a stunning transporter, an entrepreneur, a visionary. But more than that, he was a gentleman. Our sincere condolences are also extended to the family and friends. RIP you good man.



Comment from Tata MD

Logistics reform is now an economic survival issue

South Africa's freight and logistics system has long been recognised as one of the economy's biggest structural pressure points but as exporters, transport operators and fleet owners continue to absorb mounting costs from inefficiency, the debate is rapidly shifting from policy theory to economic urgency.

From congested ports and unreliable rail networks to constrained corridors and border delays, the cumulative effect is being

felt across virtually every supply chain linked to trade and industrial output. For the trucking industry in particular, the knock-on effects are immediate - increased road pressure, disrupted scheduling, higher operating costs and growing unpredictability across regional freight movements.

Jacques Taylor, Managing Director of Tata Africa Holdings (Distribution), argues that South Africa can no longer afford to treat logistics inefficiency as a manageable inconvenience.

The challenges are not new.

Port congestion, unreliable rail and constrained corridors and fragmented co-ordination.

What has changed is the cost of delays.

"The challenges themselves are not new. Port congestion, unreliable rail, constrained corridors and fragmented coordination have been discussed for years. What has changed is the cost of delays. Logistics inefficiency is no longer something businesses can work around indefinitely. It has become a material economic risk," he says.

Execution matters more than ideology

Taylor says businesses operating close to trade routes and distribution networks experience the consequences of inefficiency daily, with delays affecting inventory cycles, working capital and production schedules across entire value chains. "These are not abstract issues - they affect day-to-day decision-making across entire value chains," he notes.

According to Taylor, one of the clearest lessons from an operator perspective is that "structure alone does not deliver performance. Ownership models, mandates and frameworks matter but they do not move goods. Execution does."

He adds that businesses ultimately prioritise outcomes over ideology. "Without predictability, reliability, throughput and cost-to-serve, competitiveness is impossible, particularly for exporters operating into global markets where margins

are thin and alternatives are readily available.”

Taylor argues that logistics reform therefore needs to be viewed as an economic imperative rather than a narrow sectoral discussion.

Private sector participation must be practical

Taylor positions private-sector participation not as a replacement for the state but as a necessary operational partner capable of strengthening performance across the logistics system.

“This is not a philosophical argument; it is an operational one,” he says, adding that private operators bring discipline, capital, technical capability and a strong focus on outcomes. The public sector brings scale, mandate and stewardship of strategic infrastructure. When these strengths are aligned, systems perform better. When they are not, inefficiency becomes entrenched.”

Taylor warns that supply chain failures rarely remain isolated. Pressure in one part of the logistics network inevitably shifts elsewhere. “An unreliable rail service shifts pressure onto roads. Congested ports disrupt fleet scheduling. Border delays ripple across regional corridors. Each point of friction adds cost across the value chain and weakens South Africa’s export competitiveness,” he says.

Predictability is becoming a strategic advantage

One of the strongest themes running through Taylor’s views is the importance of predictability within freight systems. “Businesses can plan around many constraints but they struggle to plan around uncertainty. Predictable transit times, reliable infrastructure availability and transparent operating processes allow for better planning, lower risk and more efficient capital allocation.”

He adds that predictable operating conditions often deliver greater value than marginal cost reductions. “Predictability does not emerge by chance. It is built through consistent standards, data-



Logistics inefficiency is no longer something businesses can work around indefinitely. It has become a material economic risk

Jacques Taylor
MD Tata Africa Holdings Distribution

driven decision-making and clear accountability across the system.”

He argues that structured private-sector participation can play an important role in improving long-term reliability and accountability rather than merely providing short-term interventions.

SA’s logistics system cannot be treated in silos

Taylor also cautions against oversimplifying the debate into

ideological binaries such as public versus private ownership. “The more useful question is a practical one: what combination of capability delivers the best outcome for the economy?” he asks.

He points to the significant operational expertise already present across South Africa’s logistics and freight industries, including operators, infrastructure specialists, financiers and fleet owners.

He adds that ports, rail, roads and border systems function as an interconnected network rather than isolated entities. “The challenge is not capability; it is creating frameworks that allow this capability to be deployed effectively, transparently and at scale.”

Taylor further stresses that infrastructure investment alone will not solve the crisis without equal focus on skills, leadership and operational discipline. “Logistics systems are ultimately run by people,” he concludes. □

Editor’s comment: Taylor’s argument lands at a time when South Africa’s logistics underperformance is no longer merely frustrating business - it is steadily reshaping freight economics. Every rail shortfall pushes additional tonnage onto trucks. Every port delay stretches fleet utilisation cycles. Every border bottleneck inflates costs that ultimately filter through the wider economy. For the commercial road freight sector, this means trucking continues carrying the burden of systemic inefficiency elsewhere in the logistics chain. The result is rising operating pressure on fleets already battling fuel volatility, infrastructure deterioration and tightening margins.

The larger point is increasingly difficult to ignore: logistics is no longer just a transport issue. It is becoming a competitiveness issue. And unless execution begins matching the scale of the problem, South Africa risks losing far more than operational efficiency - it risks losing trade relevance.

Pioneering vehicle-to-grid charging using e-trucks

The global trucking industry is generally defined by incremental gains but Scania overseas is currently pushing into genuinely pioneering territory with a demonstration that blends advanced engineering with lateral systems thinking. The result is a glimpse of a transport future where heavy-duty trucks are not just energy consumers but actively supplying electricity to the grid. It is the kind of innovation that carries both social and environmental weight, redefining how fleets, infrastructure and energy systems may converge in the years ahead.

Heavy transport meets the energy system

Scania has successfully demonstrated one of the world's first vehicle-to-grid (V2G) implementations for heavy commercial vehicles using the

Megawatt Charging System (MCS), marking a significant step towards integrating battery-electric freight into broader energy networks.

The demonstration shows that electric trucks can do more than move goods between depots and destinations. Through bi-directional charging, vehicles can also support the power grid by providing flexibility services including peak shaving, grid balancing and energy storage.

As electrification accelerates across heavy transport, electricity networks face new structural pressures. Large-scale depot charging introduces concentrated demand peaks that challenge local infrastructure. Yet the same vehicles that create this demand also represent a distributed, mobile energy reserve when parked.

Scania's approach reframes this tension as an opportunity. By enabling energy to flow both into and out of truck batteries, fleet operations

Now e-trucks can be an active resource

Scania has successfully demonstrated one of the world's first vehicle-to-grid (V2G) implementations for heavy commercial vehicles using the Megawatt Charging System (MCS).

begin to sit directly within the logic of energy system optimisation rather than simply drawing from it.

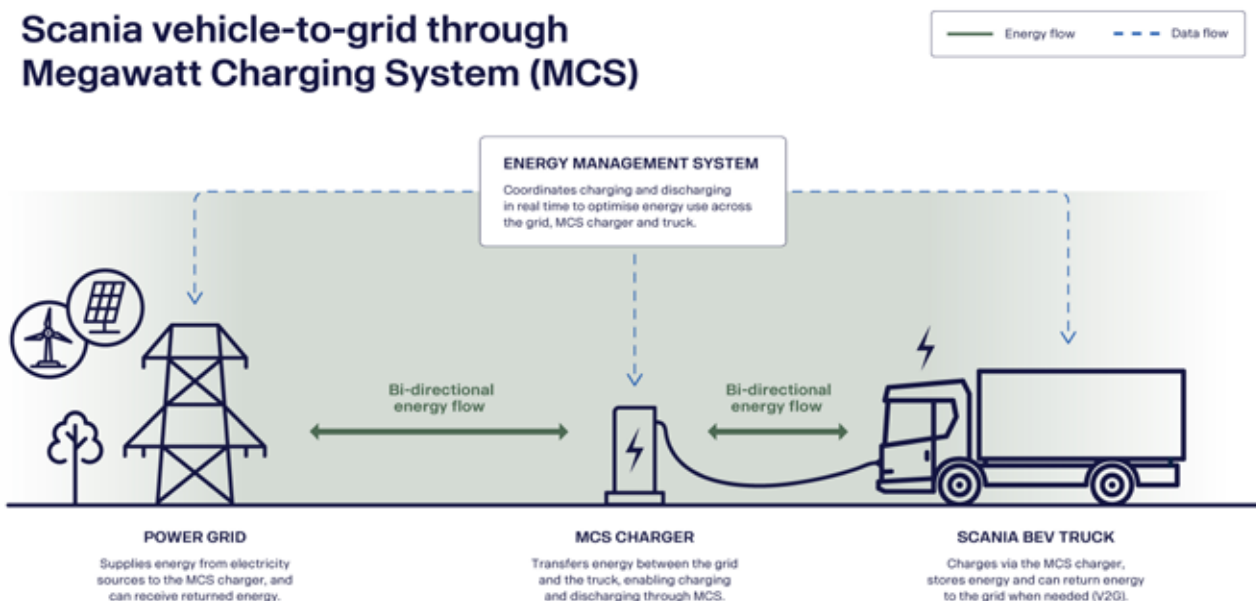
Megawatt charging as the enabling layer

At the centre of the demonstration is the Megawatt Charging System, a next-generation standard designed for ultra-fast charging of heavy electric vehicles. Its role extends beyond speed. It provides the technical foundation for controlled, high-power energy exchange between vehicle and grid.

The system enables secure real-time communication between truck, charger and energy management platforms. This allows charging and discharging to be dynamically controlled according to transport schedules and grid conditions, rather than operating as a one-way process dictated solely by vehicle needs.

“What makes this significant is

Scania vehicle-to-grid through Megawatt Charging System (MCS)



not only the bi-directional energy flow itself, but the ability to combine megawatt charging with intelligent energy management,” says Yorben Muller, Product Manager Charging, TRATON.

“To our knowledge, this is one of the world’s first demonstrations of vehicle-to-grid functionality using MCS for heavy commercial vehicles. The truck, charger and energy system can communicate with each other in real time, creating the foundation for heavy electric vehicles to become active and controllable assets in the energy system.”

The demonstration reached up to 1000 A and 750 kW, underscoring the scale at which heavy transport is now being integrated into advanced charging architectures.

Trucks as distributed energy assets

The implications extend well beyond depot efficiency. Bi-directional charging opens the door for trucks to operate as decentralised energy assets, particularly when parked for extended periods.

Depot environments become not only logistics hubs but also managed energy nodes capable of interacting with local generation and grid demand.

By enabling controlled energy flow, operators can better align charging with renewable availability, including on-site solar generation. This improves the utilisation of clean energy while reducing strain on

constrained grid connections.

“Electric trucks will not only consume electricity, they can also become an active resource in the energy system,” says Tobias Ejderhamn, Global Manager, Transformation & New Business, Scania. “This shift transforms the fleet operator’s role from solely providing transport services to also offering energy flexibility.”

Ejderhamn adds that the combination of high-power charging and intelligent energy management may also strengthen the business case for battery-electric trucks by introducing new operational optimisation and cost-reduction pathways.

System value beyond transport

The demonstration highlights several functional capabilities that position vehicle-to-grid integration as a broader infrastructure innovation rather than a niche application:

- Bi-directional charging and discharging through MCS
- Real-time communication between vehicle, charger and energy systems
- Backend-controlled energy management
- Integration with external charging and energy platforms
- Controlled energy flow through the EV charging interface (EVSE)

Taken together, these functions

point towards a future in which electric truck fleets are actively scheduled not only for logistics efficiency but also for energy market participation.

For charge point operators and energy providers, the model introduces additional value streams. Higher utilisation of charging assets and improved local grid efficiency could help justify infrastructure investment at scale, while supporting wider electrification goals.

Early-stage deployment with long-term implications

While the technology is still in its early stages, its most immediate application is expected in depot-based operations. These environments provide the dwell time necessary for controlled charging and discharging cycles, as well as predictable fleet scheduling that can align with grid demand patterns.

Over time, the concept could extend into broader flexibility markets, where aggregated vehicle fleets contribute to balancing services and system stability.

The significance of the Scania demonstration lies not only in technical achievement but in conceptual shift.

Heavy transport is no longer positioned solely as a grid challenge but increasingly as part of the solution.

Fact summary

- Vehicle-to-grid enables electricity to flow both to and from the vehicle battery.
- MCS is designed for megawatt-level charging of heavy commercial vehicles.
- The demonstration reached up to 1000 A / 750 kW.
- This is among the world’s first demonstrations of bi-directional power transfer using MCS in heavy-duty trucks.
- The system enables secure communication between vehicle and charging infrastructure.
- The setup supports both charging and discharging through a single interface.
- Designed to support future services including peak shaving and frequency balancing. □



▲ Not only consuming electricity, but become an active resource.



Pothole costs

▲ “The public sees a pothole as an inconvenience. A transport operator sees thousands of rands in damage.”
- Cassela Jorge, Founding Director of CK and IJ.

SA's transport sector is running on failing wheels – and the economy will pay the price

South Africa is not approaching a transport crisis. It is living inside one - and the longer it refuses to name it plainly, the deeper the damage runs. Behind every delayed delivery, rising food prices and missed export window lies the same rot: a freight system held together by deferred decisions, stretched budgets and a collective refusal to treat infrastructure as the economic lifeline it actually is.

The rail betrayal and its invoice

The collapse of South Africa's freight rail was slow, documented and largely preventable. What followed was predictable: the entire burden shifted onto road transport. Trucks became the country's de facto logistics backbone, absorbing freight volumes they were never designed or funded to carry alone.

Roads built for mixed traffic are now being hammered by heavy combination vehicles around the clock. Pavements are failing years ahead of schedule. And operators absorbing costs that should never have been theirs to carry are being quietly broken by them. The rail collapse was a policy failure. The road crisis it created is the invoice.

The survival trap

Truck prices are punishing. Finance costs have climbed. Freight rates remain compressed. Fleet renewal has become financially impossible for many operators - not through mismanagement but because the economics are structurally broken.

The result is a dangerous cycle: older vehicles stay on the road too long. Maintenance becomes reactive. Cash flow tightens with every breakdown. And tighter cash flow delays the maintenance that would have prevented the next one. This is survival mode, and it is a slow bleed that

weakens the entire transport chain while presenting the illusion of continued operation.

SA's freight system is still moving – but it is bending.

The hidden tyre crisis

A full tyre set for a heavy combination vehicle costs close to R100,000. Those tyres are being destroyed by potholes, overloading, heat and road surfaces that should have been rehabilitated years ago. As tyre life shortens, costs rise immediately, fuel consumption climbs, downtime multiplies, safety risks escalate.

Those costs do not stay in



**By Cassela Jorge,
Founding Director
CK and IJ**

OPINION PIECE

logistics. They move through the supply chain and land - invisibly but inevitably - in terms of the price of food, medicine and every product that travels by road. The public sees a pothole as an inconvenience. A transport operator sees thousands of rands in damage. That gap in understanding is precisely why the crisis is not being treated with the urgency it demands.

Technology is no longer optional

A parallel crisis is unfolding inside the industry itself. Too many fleets still run on paper logs, WhatsApp updates and reactive maintenance cultures. In an environment where margins have all but disappeared, operational blindness is not a weakness, it is a liability.

The divide is already visible. Operators using telematics, AI fleet analytics, tyre pressure monitoring and predictive maintenance tools will dominate the next decade. Those flying blind are already under threat, not from competition alone but from costs they cannot see coming and cannot afford when they arrive.

Transport is the economy

Transport is not a sector. It is the bloodstream through which mining, agriculture, retail, manufacturing and exports function. When fleets become unreliable, production falters, ports slow, shelves thin, and inflation worsens, not as a side effect but as a direct consequence.

The greatest danger is not a single collapse. It is the slow accumulation of ageing fleets, deteriorating roads, deferred maintenance and delayed investment, each individually manageable, collectively catastrophic.

South Africa's freight system is still moving. But it is bending. And mistaking "still moving" for "fine" is exactly how a crisis becomes a collapse. The warning signs are there. The question is whether anyone who is in a position to act is actually reading them. □



This is survival mode and is a slow bleed that weakens the entire transport chain.

Cassela Jorge
Founding Director of CK and IJ

This is a road?

◀ The R36 on which trucks haul export commodities to the Maputu harbour. This was a tarred road - and this is how it looks today. As Cassela Jorge says: "A full tyre set for a heavy combination vehicle costs close to R100 000. Those tyres are being destroyed by potholes, overloading, heat and road surfaces that should have been rehabilitated years ago." This road should have been rehabilitated years ago. It is a vital route for commodity exports and it's a gemers which only adds costs.

R36... now a dirt track

▼ Queuing up for higher maintenance costs - the key R36 commodities route which used to be a tarred road but has deteriorated into a horrible dirt track through total neglect.



Editor's Comment. Wow! You are saying publicly what many are saying behind closed doors. "South Africa's freight system is still moving. But it is bending." It certainly is bending. The transport operators know it but those in government ranks do not. They have no idea of the serious situation the industry is facing - as you have so plainly outlined. I have incorporated a few pictures of the horrible infrastructure which trucks have to contend with so as to add muscle to what you are saying. And just as a matter of interest, a major OEM told me recently that their dealers were noticing some of their clients skipping their regular maintenance intervals on their trucks. This lends weight to your statement that "Cash flow tightens with every breakdown and tighter cash flow delays the maintenance that would have prevented the next one."

For those who are not aware of CK and IJ Trading & Projects, it is a South African, family-owned logistics support company established in 2014 that provides maintenance and breakdown support to commercial fleets. The company's services span on-site tyre maintenance, fleet tyre management, emergency roadside breakdown assistance, rim repairs, and suspension and brake services. The company states that every solution it offers is designed to reduce vehicle off-road time, protect delivery schedules and lower the total cost of fleet ownership.

Driver fatigue remains one of the most uncomfortable truths in South Africa's road freight environment. In a sector built on tight schedules, long-haul corridors and relentless delivery pressure, the greatest risk is often not mechanical failure or criminality but human exhaustion. Optix Group Executive for Product and Culture, Inge-Marie Hilligan, argues that fatigue is the hidden threat quietly undermining road safety performance.

“The unfortunate truth is that human error is still to blame for a high proportion of fatal crashes and fatigue is one of the most serious and underestimated contributors. This is particularly acute in South Africa, where truck drivers can legally work up to 90 hours a week.

Human error is still to blame for most fatal crashes with fatigue topping the list.

The hidden risk undermining road safety

“The country reports one of the world's highest road-traffic fatality rates at approximately 24 to 25 deaths per 100 000 people - four to five times higher than the European Union average,” she says.

A crisis that starts with a phone call

“Every fleet manager dreads the call that tells them of an accident,” says Hilligan. “They know that in seconds, a routine journey can become a crisis, resulting in injured drivers, damaged vehicles, halted operations and in the most tragic scenarios, a driver who never arrives safely home.”

In South Africa's context, that risk is amplified by extended legal driving hours and high baseline crash statistics. Beyond the human toll, the commercial implications are profound. Medical costs, repairs, higher insurance premiums, operational disruption and workforce shortages all compound the damage.

The broader economic burden is equally stark, with annual crash costs estimated at around R200 billion - close to 3% of GDP. Fatigue, in other words, is not just a safety issue. It is a boardroom issue.

** Image below is AI generated*



Fatigue does not offer any obvious warning signals. Even a brief lapse can have catastrophic consequences.

Inge-Marie Hilligan
Optix Group

The invisible warning sign

Unlike speeding or harsh braking, fatigue leaves no obvious digital footprint. “Fatigue doesn’t offer any obvious warning signal. Even a brief lapse can have catastrophic consequences,” Hilligan notes.

She offers a sobering illustration: “A five-second microsleep at 100km/h means a vehicle can travel more than 130 metres completely uncontrolled - roughly the length of a rugby field.”

Historically, this has made fatigue notoriously difficult to police or even quantify. However, Hilligan believes technology is shifting that balance.

AI in the cab - and humans behind the screens

“Early detection is the first line of defence,” she says. Advances in AI-powered video telematics are now capable of identifying multiple fatigue indicators, including subtle eye and head movements.

Crucially, she explains, “it can distinguish between a driver momentarily looking down to change gear and one whose head is dipping from drowsiness.”

Real-time alerts - via seat vibration or audio-visual prompts - give drivers the opportunity to act before a lapse becomes a tragedy. “The improved accuracy and lower level of false positives means that drivers take these alerts seriously,” Hilligan adds. Yet technology alone is not enough. “If a driver falls into a microsleep, rapid human intervention is crucial.”

Hilligan describes how early-warning control tower services add a second layer of defence. Specialist agents review AI-flagged mini-clips and escalate high-risk cases within minutes.

“At Optix, our team of highly trained people reviews up to two million video events a month. In 2025 alone, this helped to prevent tens of thousands of incidents globally.”

For fleets, this represents a fusion of artificial intelligence and human judgement - an increasingly necessary combination in high-risk environments.



The most sophisticated fleets are using technology to understand why fatigue is occurring.



Inge-Marie Hilligan
Optix Group

From reaction to prediction

The most advanced operators, Hilligan argues, are now moving beyond incident response towards predictive risk management: “Prevention does not end here. The most sophisticated fleets are

using technology to understand why fatigue is occurring.”

By analysing verified data, fleets can pinpoint problematic shift structures, specific corridors or high-risk time windows.

“Our own data highlights, for example, that fatigue on South African roads is worst in the early morning. Between 4am and 6am, drivers on certain highways in Mpumalanga face the highest risk, followed by stretches of road in Gauteng province and Limpopo,” Hilligan adds.

Armed with these insights, fleets can review scheduling, adjust break structures and strengthen coaching interventions. “Managing fatigue effectively goes way beyond installing hardware in a vehicle. It requires a coordinated approach: technology to detect risk, human expertise to act decisively and data analytics to anticipate and prevent escalation,” Hilligan concludes.

Editor’s Comment: Driver fatigue management has moved beyond simply being a compliance exercise or a driver wellness and safety intervention. It is now an explicit strategic fleet and road safety pillar. And in a country where every uncontrolled metre can have life-altering consequences, proactive intervention may be the most important investment a fleet can make. The integration of AI detection, real-time human oversight and predictive analytics signals a maturing approach to driver safety. The fleets that treat fatigue as a measurable, manageable operational variable - rather than an unfortunate inevitability - will not only protect lives but strengthen resilience in an increasingly unforgiving operating environment.



How fake licences affect a claim

In South Africa's transport and logistics sector, the aftermath of an accident is usually framed by the visible impact - damaged vehicles, disrupted schedules and immediate operational disruption. Inside a claims office, however, the focus moves away from the incident itself to something far more decisive: the integrity of the information submitted.

So says Leigh Johannsen, Managing Director of Check Your Driver who adds that once a claim is lodged, it enters a structured verification process where documents are reviewed, timelines reconstructed and every detail cross-checked against supporting records and official databases.

Within this process, the driver's licence remains one of the most important verification tools. It is the primary proof that the individual behind the wheel was legally permitted to operate the vehicle at the time of the incident.

"At face value, most licences appear legitimate. But in a claims environment, appearances are never enough," she says. The point here is: verification is based on validation against issuing authorities and official records, not visual inspection.

When verification fails

Even minor inconsistencies can trigger escalation. A licence number that does not align with issuing records, formatting that deviates from recognised standards or information that cannot be reconciled with official databases is often enough to move a claim into investigation.

"Even minor inconsistencies can prompt further scrutiny," says Johannsen. "A number that does not align, a format that differs from official standards, or information that cannot be reconciled with supporting records is often enough to shift the direction of a claim."

When a licence cannot be validated, or is confirmed as fraudulent, the consequences are immediate. Claims may be delayed or repudiated, liability may be reassessed and investigations may be expanded.

The operational impact beyond the claim

For operators, the implications rarely end with a single incident. Johannsen explains. "It can raise questions around internal processes, compliance measures and the steps taken to ensure that drivers are

properly verified before being placed on the road."

What is increasingly evident is that irregularities are not isolated incidents," says Johannsen. "Verification processes continue to reveal a concerning frequency of discrepancies, particularly with foreign-issued licences."

In many cases, documents that appear credible on inspection do not withstand formal validation against issuing authorities or recognised databases.

Why timing matters

By the time a claim reaches assessment, the opportunity to prevent that risk has already passed.

The claims process does not create exposure - it reveals it.

"By the time the claim is under review, the opportunity to prevent risk has already passed," says Johannsen. "Decisions

are made based on the information available, and in that moment, there is little room to correct what should have been addressed earlier."

At that point, outcomes are driven entirely by evidence. If documentation does not hold up under scrutiny, the consequences extend well beyond the incident itself – affecting cost, liability and operational continuity. □

Editor's Comment: What this ultimately underscores is how much of fleet risk sits upstream of the claims process. Licence verification is often treated as administrative, yet it is increasingly a frontline control point with direct financial consequences. As scrutiny intensifies, particularly around cross-border documentation, the quality of onboarding and verification processes will be reflected more clearly in claims outcomes. The claims office is not creating the risk - it is revealing whether it was ever properly controlled in the first place.



It's official: DHL Supply Chain acquires Vital Group

It's been in the air but is now official. DHL Supply Chain, the world's leading contract logistics provider, has received unconditional approval from South Africa's Competition Tribunal for its acquisition of three Vital Group companies: Vital Distribution Solutions (Pty) Ltd, Staffing Logistics (Pty) Ltd and Vital Fleet (Pty) Ltd. The businesses will operate as subsidiaries of DHL Supply Chain in South Africa, preserving their established operations, customer relationships and regional networks.

The acquisition strengthens DHL Supply Chain's platform in South Africa by adding immediate scale in distribution, fleet management and workforce solutions. It also brings route density, fleet capability and local market agility that would

take significantly longer to build organically.

A stronger national distribution network is one of the clearest ways the combined business will support customer growth. South Africa's retail environment spans formal retail, wholesale, independent trade and township channels, each with different service requirements and route-to-market demands.

A well-invested network enables customers to reach more outlets, improve product availability and serve fragmented channels with greater consistency and precision. That translates into stronger on-shelf presence, a wider range of products reaching more stores across different retail channels and more reliable access to market.

"This acquisition gives our customers - and Vital's customers - a stronger platform from which to grow," says Bremer Pauw, Chief Commercial Officer, Middle East and Africa, and Managing Director, Africa, DHL Supply Chain.

"Vital has built a highly capable business with strong customer relationships, entrepreneurial energy and real market reach. By bringing that together with DHL's scale, systems and broader supply

◀ Three Vital Group companies have been bought by DHL Supply Chain. They are: Vital Distribution Solutions (Pty) Ltd, Staffing Logistics (Pty) Ltd and Vital Fleet (Pty) Ltd. The businesses will operate as subsidiaries of DHL Supply Chain in South Africa.

chain capabilities, we are creating a platform that helps customers get their products into more outlets, more consistently, across every relevant retail tier."

The acquisition also supports DHL Supply Chain's transport decarbonisation agenda. Greater route density and improved network design can reduce empty running, improve vehicle utilisation and strengthen the business case for lower-emission fleet investment. Combined with stronger operational control, this creates clearer and more measurable decarbonisation pathways for customers over time.

The transaction also forms part of DHL Group's longer term investment commitment to Sub Saharan Africa, announced in 2025, which includes planned investment of approximately €300-million (R5,8-billion) over five years. South Africa is central to that commitment and is a Geographic Tailwind market for DHL Group, given its role as a key logistics hub and gateway for regional trade and as an important platform for long term customer growth. The investment will help strengthen logistics capability, support jobs and reinforce South Africa's role in regional supply chain development.

The acquisition of the three Vital Group companies follows *FleetWatch's* recent report on DHL Supply Chain's R220-million investment in a new multi-user distribution centre in Johannesburg. Construction is scheduled to commence in July 2026, with operations expected to begin in July 2027.

Commenting on that investment, Pauw stated that it reflects "DHL's long-term confidence in South Africa as a strategic logistics hub and our commitment to expanding capacity in line with customer growth." □

KANU expands specialised body-building investment

As transport operators, municipalities and essential service providers place growing pressure on vehicle uptime, application-specific engineering and faster turnaround times, South Africa's commercial vehicle body-building sector is becoming increasingly important to the broader economy. Driven by these market demands, KANU Commercial Body Construction has opened a new manufacturing facility in Gqeberha following a R25-million investment aimed at strengthening its fabrication capability and improving operational efficiency.

The access-friendly new facility is located adjacent to the Isuzu Motors South Africa (IMSAf) Vehicle Conversion and Distribution Centre in the Aloes Industrial Complex in Wells Estate.

KANU, a wholly owned subsidiary of Isuzu Motors South Africa since 2015, has become a key player in the development of specialised vehicle applications for both South African and African markets.

Its product portfolio includes mobile clinics, water tankers and mobile government service units designed to improve service delivery in remote and underserved communities.

Investment targets efficiency and product quality

The investment includes the relocation of the business into a new purpose-designed facility



featuring upgraded fabrication technologies and expanded infrastructure.

According to KANU, the upgrades are intended to improve product quality, reduce delivery turnaround times and align manufacturing processes with global body-building standards.

New additions to the facility include two paint booths, a laser-cleaning system for improved surface preparation with lower environmental impact, additional gantry systems and new tooling and fixtures.

The project also incorporates upgraded employee facilities including a medical centre, improved ablution facilities and a canteen.

"This investment represents an important milestone for KANU as we continue building a stronger and more competitive fabrication business capable of supporting customer demand across South Africa and the broader African market," says Ingo Epler-Brandenburg, CEO of KANU Commercial Body Construction.

"The new facility enhances our body application capabilities, provides a considerably improved working environment for our employees and improves operational efficiencies. This positions us well for long-term growth while contributing to local economic development and job creation."

Local manufacturing focus remains strategic

The location of the facility

Ribbon Cutting

▲ Takashi Nishida (IMSAf Chairman) and Billy Tom (IMSAf President and KANU Chairman) unveil the plaque at the new KANU facility.

alongside Isuzu's Vehicle Conversion and Distribution Centre is expected to streamline operational processes while supporting future expansion into African export markets.

"KANU has been an important part of the Isuzu business in South Africa for many years and this investment reflects our confidence in the region's manufacturing potential and future growth opportunities across Africa," says Billy Tom, President of Isuzu Motors South Africa and Chairman of KANU.

"Strengthening local manufacturing capability remains critical to building a more resilient automotive industry, deepening localisation and supporting broader industrial development in South Africa."

The facility has been designed to accommodate higher production volumes while maintaining the technical precision required for diverse market applications and complex cross-border operating conditions.

Tom adds that the investment will also strengthen KANU's ability to support new opportunities emerging across the continent.

"The opening of this new facility marks an important milestone in KANU's growth journey and reflects the strong partnership between KANU and Isuzu Motors South Africa," Tom notes. □

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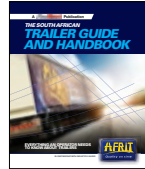
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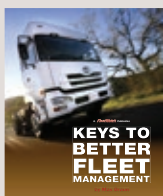
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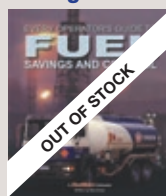
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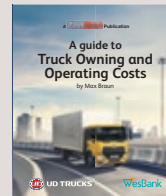
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