

How Maintenance Service Agreement maximizes your availability - servicing an Outotec Larox® filter in South Africa

In South Africa, near the town of Steelport, lies the Two Rivers Platinum Mine. Apart from platinum, the mine also produces palladium, rhodium, gold, ruthenium, iridium, PGMs, nickel and copper. The underground mine consists of the Main Decline, the North Decline and a concentrator plant. In 2006, when they built the refining plant, the designers installed an Outotec Larox® PF60 filter. "It's pretty much what everybody is using in the platinum industry," says **Thinus Breedt, the plant manager**.

Seven years and more than 200,000 cycles later, the Outotec Larox® filter of the South African concentrator plant is still meeting the plant's monthly production targets for platinum concentrate, steadily turning out cakes with the desired moisture. Part of that is due to the quality of the equipment. It takes a rugged machine to help reduce nearly 30,000 tons of raw ore into 141,000 ounces of platinum concentrate. The other part is due to the quality of the Maintenance Service Agreement. "Modular set-up of the Maintenance Service Agreement enables tailoring of the agreement to fully meet specific customer needs", states **Petri Naukkarinen, Head of Technical Services Product Management at Outotec**.

According to Naukkarinen, prevention of potential problems is at the core of Outotec Maintenance Service offering. Almost every week since the plant opened, an Outotec technician has visited the African Rainbow Minerals-operated plant to conduct eight hours of checks and regular maintenance. All those Tuesdays at the mine have truly paid off: Plant manager Breedt declares the Maintenance Service Agreement keeps unscheduled downtime for the crucial machinery to below 20 hours a year.

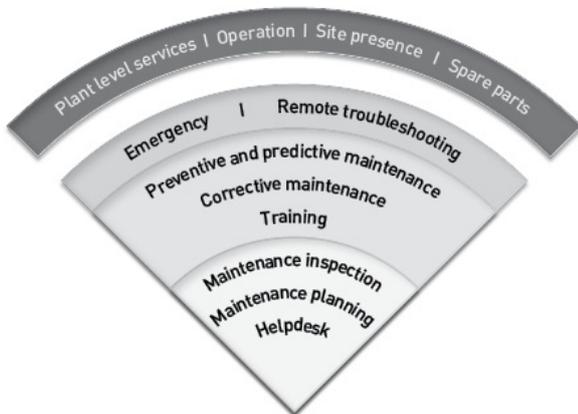
When something occasionally happened between those visits, Outotec has been there too, with 24/7 availability for service, guaranteed emergency response times and Outotec OEM spare parts. "They are always willing to help. If spares are not available locally, they will source from Europe and fly them in," Breedt states.



Outotec In Action

Even a major upgrade in 2008, when the filter capacity was further enhanced with a plate pack expansion, went off without a hitch. "It was a great success," Breedt says.

The Maintenance Service Agreement has been an essential element of the filter's successful operation, according to Breedt. "In order to deliver the platinum concentrate with set targets, maintenance is a key factor in maintaining production," he explains. This agreement has been designed with the customers' need in mind: "We at Outotec believe that the wide scope of our Maintenance Services offering, ranging from maintenance inspections to full blown service, supports the customers' day-to-day business and helps meet their system and process objectives for the entire lifetime of the solution", affirms Naukkarinen.



Maintenance portfolio for service agreements

But the credit isn't all Outotec's. Although a Maintenance Service Agreement can help add years of life to industrial equipment and lower maintenance costs, it can be even more effective when a close partnership exists between the maintenance team and the client, as is the case with African Rainbow Minerals. **Eckart Schulz from the local Outotec Service Center** says their joint target is that the client has a filter availability of 95%. "Team work is crucial to resolve problems quickly and create mutual trust amongst us. We communicate very well and keep all correspondence transparent. In a nut shell, we work together to achieve the required targets", states Schulz.



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The proactive attention ARM pays to the filter has also helped enhance performance, Outotec professionals say. The staff washes the filter in every shift, and makes sure the floor is neat and tidy. They also designed the system with proper tools: an overhead crane, a maintenance table for smaller parts, and tools and service beams on the same floor. "We have a maintenance check list in place, and we follow the maintenance plan religiously. We plan future activities, such as shutdowns, together and make sure all the spares are on site promptly", says Schulz.

But while he continues to watch the performance of the Two Rivers' filter carefully, Breedt's attention is focused more these days on a filter at another mine, Nkomati Nickel, a nickel plant where they already use an Outotec Larox® filter while Breedt and his team are negotiating a Maintenance Service Agreement with Outotec.

Breedt hasn't had any hesitation about signing on with Outotec again. "I would always recommend this filter," he underlines.

Besides being the industry standard for nickel extraction as well as platinum, Breedt also likes the quality of the service: Compared to most vendors, Outotec has delivered superior performance. "They are highly rated and one of the best," he says. Or as he puts it in Afrikaans, Outotec's Larox filter is altyd reg – always in good shape.

Outotec innovates, develops and delivers sustainable technology and service solutions to minerals, metals, chemical and energy industries. Outotec collaborates lifelong with its customers in order to optimize the utilization of raw materials and energy efficiency as well as to minimize the environmental impact and operating costs.

Contact us at

Outotec

services@outotec.com
www.outotec.com