



MAN Truck & Bus SRM (Sales Region Middle East & Africa)

Johannesburg, 24.03.11

Panther is MAN's Top Fire Fighter

Friend or foe, fire is an everyday reality and whether it is used for productive purposes or ignited unwittingly, fire extinguishing equipment should always be close-at-hand to prevent human injury and costly damage to property. For all large organisations around the world, fire management is a top priority and as such, teams of highly-trained fire fighters are on standby around the clock, armed to the teeth with state-of-the-art fire engines and fire-fighting gear, ready to put their lives on the line to save the lives of others.

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One such entity is Airports Company South Africa (ACSA), managing 10 South African international airports, including OR Tambo International, Cape Town International and King Shaka International (Durban). As a member of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), ACSA is governed by several safety regulations to ensure safety for passengers and airliners at all its airports.

OR Tambo International is a Category 9 airport (according to ICAO grading, capable of accommodating the world's largest passenger airliner, the Airbus 380) and therefore, must be equipped with at least three fire tenders (fire trucks), with a combined water-carrying capacity of 24 300 litres and a dry chemical powder capacity of 450kg with a water/foam discharge rate of 11 900 litres-per-minute.

To comply with ICAO regulations, ACSA has deployed the world's best fire tenders at all its airports, the Rosenbauer Panther fire body, built on an MAN SX 43.1000 chassis-cab. The 8x8 Panther is a 1000Hp all-terrain vehicle with a top speed of 135km/h. It has a water-carrying capacity of 12 000 litres and a foam-concentrate carrying capacity of 1 500 litres. The Panther can discharge its payload in under two minutes and is fitted with both a hydraulic and electric power-take-off (PTO) to ensure zero-failure of the hydrant-pump system.

According to ACSA's Clive Naidoo (manager, fire and rescue service at OR Tambo International), "the Panther is 3.5 metres wide and 13.5 metres long and complies with all local bridge height restrictions. It has two steering axles up front and the cab is fitted to comfortably accommodate three emergency response personnel. The Rosenbauer body is equipped with all the necessary rescue equipment, including 'jaws of life', extra lighting gear, cutting equipment, ladders and breathing apparatus."

Weighing in at a fully-laden 42 tons, the Panther is swift on its rubber, reaching a speed of 80km/h in less than 40 seconds, safely satisfying a stringent ICAO 'rapid speed/response' criterion.

"The Panther has a host of other features that set it apart from other fire trucks and for this reason, ACSA only runs MAN-Rosenbauer fire tenders at its airports, with its Panther fleet now numbering 25 nationwide," adds Naidoo. "With all-wheel drive, differential locks on all axles, inter-axle locks and single tyres, together with the NATO-approved coil spring suspension system, the 8x8 MAN Panther is very well suited for on and off-runway operations. A roof turret can discharge water at a rate of 6 000 litres-per-minute with a range of 70 metres, while a bumper turret discharges 1 000 litres-per-minute with a range of 40 metres. A 500kg dry chemical system on the MAN Panther discharges 2.5kg per second with a throwing range of 8 metres."

Additional safety systems include seven under-body water nozzles that discharge 75 litres of water per minute to protect the Panther's tyres and chassis from fire. 'First-Aid' or 'Rapid Intervention' 40-metre long hose reels capable of discharging 400 litres-per-minute are fitted to both sides of the Panther.

"Contrary to popular belief, it is not fire but smoke that is the number-one killer in an inferno," explains Naidoo. "The Panther has several hi-tech features to prevent asphyxiation including a high-reach extendable turret fitted with a thermal imaging camera that searches for hotspots inside the plane's fuselage, obviating the need for personnel to enter the aircraft. The

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turret can pierce the fuselage and discharge water and foam to extinguish the blaze and release heat and smoke.”

Since its take-over of the management of SA's major airports in 1994, ACSA has followed a consistent fleet replacement programme with MAN and Rosenbauer.

According to Bruce Dickson, management board member: marketing communications, MAN Truck & Bus SRM: “MAN is a key supplier to emergency response fleets across southern Africa and as such, has highly-skilled technicians and a comprehensive parts inventory to ensure the vehicles it supplies to these fleets are consistently at the ready. Integral to MAN's mandate from ACSA is the reduction of repair and maintenance costs of its fire tenders. This is achieved via a service level agreement (SLA) with ACSA where repairs to the ACSA MAN Panther are conducted onsite within a 24-hour turnaround period, coupled with scheduled maintenance procedures every six months at MAN workshops situated close to ACSA's respective airports.”

In conclusion, Naidoo states: “The MAN Panther is an extremely reliable truck and the semi-automatic transmission and engine-clutch retarder ensure there's very little wear on the driveline and ABS brake system, which helps significantly reduce our maintenance and general operating expenses.”

They cost a cool R16 million or so, but the Panther is worth every cent. From the MAN chassis-cab plant in Germany, to the Rosenbauer body-building factory in Austria, down the Atlantic coast to Durban and into the heartland of SA, the Panther can go anywhere, making its home wherever the threat of fire lurks.

CONSISTENTLY EFFICIENT 

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Word Count: 5,329 characters (incl. spaces) 750 words

For further information

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MAN Truck & Bus AG, headquartered in Munich, Germany, is the largest company of the MAN Group and a leading international supplier of efficient commercial vehicles and innovative transport solutions. In fiscal 2010 the enterprise, with around 31,000 employees, posted sales of more than 55,000 trucks and over 5,400 buses and bus chassis of the MAN and NEOPLAN brands worth 7.4 billion euros.