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Rustenburg-based wear control specialist to supply potential \$10m market

By: Anine Vermeulen

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The sole African distributor of the US- manufactured Seal Saver hydraulic protective cylinder cover, wear control solutions provider Nkwe Mining Services, says the African market is expected to be worth millions of dollars.

"Seal Saver has been in existence for more than 20 years and is one of a kind in the US, which has a monopoly on the market. It is still new on the African continent and, given the current infrastructure developments, the market can be worth \$10-million," predicts Nkwe Mining Services director **Neo Rapetswa**.

The company plans to manufacture the product for the African market within the next two years, she states.

"The cylinder cover was developed by US automated valves and flow components provider Fluid & Control Services after the company had realised the need for cylinder protection and contamination control throughout various mining processes and control

applications," she says.

The product is currently used on opencast mines in South Africa and Namibia, as well as for ready-mix concrete equipment, steel mills, drill rigs and at quarries, and in the general plant hire industry.

"Given that the local mining industry is stagnant, owing to insufficient infrastructure and policy uncertainty, Nkwe believes that potential growth lies with the plant hire fraternity and new mining and oil explorations throughout Africa, simply because this is where the majority of yellow machines and drill rigs are," Repetswa states.

She says premature hydraulic system failure, owing to particulate and moisture contamination caused by worn cylinder seals, is a common problem in hydraulic equipment.

"Cylinders are constantly exposed to dirt, particulate matter and other elements, while the hydraulic cylinder seals used on heavy equipment are susceptible to frequent wear," says Rapetswa.

She states that contaminants can adhere to exposed cylinder rods, making the surface uneven and abrasive.

"Over time, the dirt continues to build up and eventually wears down the cylinder seals, allowing contaminants to enter the hydraulic system. Once in the system, these particulates act as a lapping compound, which wears down valves and pumps, leading to premature system failure."

Rapetswa points out that the industry uses other materials as covers; however, these are generally made from basic cotton, which offers little or no protection to the seal rods and the rest of the hydraulic system.

"The Seal Saver protector is a preventive maintenance tool that is manufactured from a wide range of materials and is custom-designed for each application to ensure each machine receives the best possible protection.

"Basic ballistic nylon models have proved effective in protecting cylinder rods from dirt, abrasion, dings and dents, and are the most practical choice for everyday applications. The product is durable and has a life expectancy of between 8 and 15 years," says Rapetswa.

The Seal Saver range also includes the Hose Saver, which is a cover for hydraulic and pneumatic hoses, and extends the life of equipment by protecting it against abrasive wear and dry rot.

"The Hose Saver is available in ballistic nylon and Kevlar, and is adjustable to fit various hose sizes," adds

Rapetswa, who says Nkwe Mining Services will continue to look beyond South Africa's borders for organic sales growth in the mining industry.

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