

Mercedes-Benz delivers Unimog to Kalagadi Manganese

Kalagadi Manganese is an R11 billion project and entails the construction of a manganese mine and a high-grade sinter plant with a capacity of 2.4 million tons a year. The three farms on which the company holds new order mining rights are believed to overly have 960 million tons of manganese ore. The recent exploration programme has reportedly identified 102 million tons of mineral resources.

When Kalagadi Manganese was looking for a rugged, robust and reliable vehicle to use as a fire fighter vehicle, their choice fell on the Mercedes-Benz Unimog 4000. "It offers top off-road performance and its extreme manoeuvrability makes it possible to go almost anywhere," says Christo Kleynhans, product manager of Mercedes-Benz Trucks at Mercedes-Benz South Africa (MBSA).

Ideally suited for conversions

"The Unimog's versatility gives it the edge and there are not many, if any, other vehicles that are more suited for fire fighting on hostile terrains. The Unimog is used extensively for rescue missions, fire fighting, flood rescue, recovery and disaster management incidents over the world and its numerous applications are legendary," he says.

The Unimog is a custom-made vehicle that can be adapted to best suit each individual customer's needs and requirements. The chassis concept is what makes the Unimog ideally suited for conversions - it provides extra dimensions to the Unimog allowing it to operate with strength, stability and superior traction.

Unimog chassis cab was secured through Mercedes-Benz and the fire fighting application was done by Rosenbauer in Spain, says Michael von der Heyde, sales manager at Rosenbauer South Africa. "Rosenbauer builds pumps with high or extra high-pressure systems that can deliver up to 10 000 litres per minute - almost half the volume of water in an average-size domestic swimming pool," says Von der Heyde.

Fitted with water and foam tanks

The Unimog 4000 to be used by Kalagadi is fitted with a 1 500 litre water tank and a 150 litre foam tank. An operator chooses a button to add the foam concentration in a three or six percent solution to the water.

"The Kalahari manganese basin is a very dry area with extreme temperatures that are prone to grass and veld fires," says Daphne Mashile-Nkosi, chairperson of Kalagadi Manganese. Unimogs have proven very effective at various other mining operations and the team at Kalagadi was suitably impressed when they first saw them in operation.

The Unimog fire engine will also be used to fight fires in the surrounding areas, thereby providing much-needed help to the community.