

AWC widens distribution of Böhler Welding range

Head of AWC, Gerhard van Wyk, talks about advancing the availability of the Böhler Welding product range in South Africa and across the African continent.

While owned by Afrox, AWC is a totally separate entity that is solely responsible for the Böhler Welding product range in South Africa. Officially registered as the African Welding Company, AWC now operates as the principal distributor for Böhler Welding in South Africa and in selected sub-Saharan Africa countries, with direct links to Böhler's global networks and all of its manufacturing facilities around the world.

Böhler Welding has taken the strategic decision to invest in growing its presence on the African continent. This is evident from its investment in the joint venture with Afrox at the Brits consumable factory, in which Böhler now has the controlling share and full management responsibility. This shows strategic intent for the future of its consumable range into Africa.

The goodwill generated by this deal sparked the opportunity to form AWC as a new distribution vehicle exclusively dedicated to the Böhler Welding product range. A key advantage is that AWC has access to Afrox's warehousing and financial strengths and to its network of local distribution outlets.

AWC operates as a competitor to Afrox with respect to customers, pricing sales and marketing. "We go to market with a world-class Böhler product that can compete against all other quality brands of welding consumables and equipment, including Afrox," says the head of AWC, Gerhard van Wyk.

AWC has established formal commercial arrangements to use the facilities at 11 local Afrox outlets to house Böhler products, while two more will soon be finalised. These products will be made available for click-and-collect or direct delivery orders placed via AWC's national call centre or online platform. This gives AWC a nation-

wide network for delivery and collection services, a national footprint and a presence in all major centres.

In addition, there are several Afrox/Linde outlets across Africa that are being approached to become part of an extended AWC network.

With a current focus on Böhler- and UTP-branded consumables being used by existing Böhler customers across the region, AWC has a growth agenda and is systematically expanding the currently available range. Well-known for its premium electrodes and consumables, Böhler has recently moved into manufacturing more affordable general-purpose products, such as its Böhler AWS E6013 General Purpose MMA Electrodes and the low hydrogen Böhler AWS E7018 Electrodes. These are very competitively priced and ideal for routine every-day use.

Niche CrMo and stainless consumables for the oil and gas, power and nuclear industries are also readily available, along with the cost-effective ECOspark solid wires for GMAW welding and Böhler E71T1 flux cored wires. On the other end of the spectrum, AWC can also supply Böhler Welding's premium Diamondspark range of seamless cored wires for the most demanding robotic and mechanised applications.

"We have the advantage of being able to source products from factories around the world. The UTP high-end products and solutions tend to be manufactured in Germany, but we can also access more economical products from Asia, while



the Brits factory offers an increasingly important localisation opportunity for products manufactured in Africa," Van Wyk says.

Globally Böhler services key international construction and fabrication customers with know-how and holistic solutions that readily apply for similar needs anywhere in the world. "AWC can funnel this global expertise to our local clients, helping them to raise their quality and productivity," he adds.

"Locally, we are a small team of competent and dedicated people, supported by Böhler Welding, with access to some of the world's highest quality welding products and a wealth of technical support from all over the world. In addition, we have an extensive network to deliver directly to customers, without having to rely solely on third party distributors.

"With these relationships in place, we can compete with the best in the world," Van Wyk concludes.

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