

Altron's Netstar invests in technology to make mine operations safer

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Johannesburg, 11 September 2018 – Ensuring safe working conditions for the mining sector is a challenge, particularly when it comes to complying with regulatory standards such as the Department of Mineral Resources' collision avoidance system requirements for mine vehicles.

Pierre Bruwer, Group MD of Altron subsidiary Netstar, explains how the company has stepped up to the plate and developed a unique and fully compliant solution that helps mitigate some of the potential for accidents for mine fleets.

"Our system for surface vehicles in mining operations was developed by us and is a first for South Africa. We are proud to be able to offer such a solution to the mining industry and be part of finding solutions to ensure safe conditions for people working on the mine site."

Netstar's fleet solution for mines, unveiled at Electra Mining Africa, the largest convention of its kind for the industry, benefits mines across South Africa and the globe, and speaks to Altron's vision of creating innovative technology solutions that aid in creating safe, compliant and secure working environments for all.

The solution was developed following the Department of Mineral Resources' 2015 legislation amendment of the Chapter 8 Act, which made it mandatory for all vehicles on mines to be fitted with collision avoidance proximity systems. This law was enacted to improve safety on mines, especially when vehicles as tall as 30 metres are in operation, such as in open-cast operations, as well as aiding in the reduction of injuries associated with pedestrian mining accidents.

Bruwer adds that the system provides drivers with a 360 degree view, via an in-vehicle display, of the proximity of other vehicles as well as pedestrians and is particularly effective in dusty conditions and at night, when visibility is significantly reduced.

"The system works by alerting drivers audibly and visually ahead of potential issues, which not only reduces accidents, but also improves operational efficiencies. Furthermore, the system provides real-time data and connects through a variety of options, including cell networks, WiFi, Bluetooth and radio," as additional fail safes.

As the Department of Mineral Resources' requirements ramp up, so will the system be upgraded to ensure compliance. By June 2019 the solution will have the added functionality to be able to take over control of a vehicle and slow it down if the operator does not acknowledge the presence of a vehicle, person or object, referred to as a level 8 intervention, and by June 2020, the solution will be able to automatically come to a stop without human intervention, a level 9 intervention.

In addition, when coupled with Netstar's other fleet functionality, the solution enables companies to optimise their fleets as it monitors driver behaviour, which aids in cutting down on excessive fuel usage, alerts managers as to when maintenance services are required, and provides valuable data that will aid in the event of an insurance claim.

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"By incorporating telematics and collision avoidance software into our current toolkit, we have created a fleet solution that makes mining – a core part of South Africa's economy – safer," adds Bruwer.

The real-time solution, however, is also relevant to other sectors, such as warehousing, distribution, manufacturing and logistics.

"No matter what vehicle you use, our solution will be fit for your purpose," Bruwer concludes.