

# Making the right connection

Water shedding looms over South Africa and other parts of the African continent – this fact has led canny business owners, facility managers, and private water users to ensure their water security in order to prevent unsanitary conditions, illness, and business losses.

**H**AVING AN EMERGENCY water tank for potable supply, as well as grey and black water on a property, is the water industry's parallel to generators and inverters used to shore up electrical supply during loadshedding.

As a result, experienced local tank manufacturers are investing in ways to extend their offerings and services to meet growing demand for bigger, more versatile storage options. For example, South African tank specialist Abeco has secured an exclusive agreement with global leader Tank Connections to distribute bolted and hybrid storage tanks for both dry bulk and liquid tank applications. "Abeco has, historically, stuck to its own locally made water tanks over the years. What is interesting now is that our

partnership with Tank Connections has allowed us to expand in the tank market for different types of liquid, as well as dry bulk, storage," explains vice-president of sales Mannie Ramos Jr. "This allows us to enter new markets such as the digester market and bulk storage applications, like ash, coal, and sand. In spite of growing our range, we're sticking to our knitting in that we are still providing water tanks – and these tanks are installed using the same method.

The biggest benefit of the Tank Connections range is that we are now able to supply much larger tanks, as well as tall tanks for small installation footprints," says Ramos. Abeco continues to supply its trusted circular, square, and elevated tanks but, now, industrial and mining clients needing water security have access to a whole new range of high-volume storage options, while achieving greater logistical economies of scale.

## When bigger is better

Traditional moulded tanks are usually available only in smaller sizes – about 5 000, 10 000, or 20 000 litres, and Abeco galvanised tanks are available from 1 800 litres to 10 million litres. However, precision-rolled, tapered-panel (RTP) tanks can be installed to hold millions of litres and they can be transported in kit form, cutting down on transportation costs. "Tank Connections' RTPs are the number one bolted tank design selected worldwide – panel tanks are easily transportable because they can be stacked and put on the back of a truck and sent wherever they need to be.

This is particularly useful for remote mining and construction sites, as well as rural areas where there are accessibility issues," says Ramos. Also, because of the nature of panel tanks, they can be expanded easily as the need arises. "This makes the size range virtually limitless. Our biggest tank is 30 million litres," adds Ramos. Abeco has already gained experience installing the new products at a number of sites in Southern Africa. "We've installed five in Boksburg and three in Midrand. At the moment,

Geodesic tank domes are not only functional, they look beautiful too



we're also shipping a large six million litre and a three million litre tank – those are going out to the Free State towns of Bethlehem and Harrismith, respectively. We've also installed one in Uganda and a couple in Mozambique," says Ramos. The new tanks are all destined for liquid storage. The majority are specified for storing potable supply, except for the five tanks in Boksburg, which are being used for wastewater.

### Concrete facts

Because Tank Connections' products can be used for much larger applications, it offers a far cheaper, less risky alternative to concrete storage tanks. "Tank Connections' large, powder-coated options have lifespans as long as or even longer than concrete reservoirs, and they're far less likely to leak," says Ramos. Concrete tanks were historically the only choice for those wanting to store tens of millions of litres of liquid. Bringing Tank Connections' RTP range to Africa means that the local market is now provided with a second, more affordable option. "Additionally, concrete storage tanks are often designed knowing there will be leakages and they provide a substrate for algae growth. Added to that, the curing time for concrete, as well as the logistics of such projects, can cause costly delays. RTPs go up in a fraction of the time, dependent on size," Ramos points out.



### Choosing the right tank

Abeco offers accurate, reliable consulting, ensuring that each client gets the correct container for their specific needs. "These tanks are relatively easy to erect, so we give clients the option to install the product themselves, which has cost benefits. We also offer an installation service for those who would rather we handle the process," says Ramos. Another important factor to take into account is location, because even the minor seismic activity occurring in South Africa, as a result of tremors, can have an effect on the specifications of larger tanks.

Abeco's engineers are trained to provide the best advice for prospective tank buyers, taking into account all relevant parameters. Knowing the characteristics

of the medium being stored is also important. "We look at the pH levels of the liquids – whether or not water is from a borehole or if it is more acidic will also play a role in the type of inner coating or coatings recommended," explains Ramos. "Even in the most unusual cases, our engineers are able to find the right solution for the job," he adds.

### Partnership that works

What makes Tank Connections unique is the fact that it is the industry leader in bolted, field-weld, shop-weld, and hybrid storage tanks. The company also boasts dedicated service departments for each tank type, as well as over 2 100 years' worth of combined experience in the design, manufacturing, and field installation of dry bulk and liquid storage systems. "The synergies between Abeco and Tank Connections are great in that we are also a dedicated tank company. There are other companies out there who sell tanks only as a part of their business.

Tank Connections was looking for a local supplier who knew the tank business well, as opposed to suppliers that aren't as focused on tanks and who might struggle to provide the high standards of service required for this type of product," explains Ramos.

Although Abeco continues to supply its own, locally manufactured tanks, there is no conflict of interest and the arrangement is mutually beneficial for both parties. Up to a certain size, Abeco recommends its own products, because components sourced in South Africa translate to lower end-user costs. On the other hand, Tank Connections' products are recommended for larger applications, due to design specifications, which ensure advanced pressure-handling capabilities.

"Worth considering is that Abeco uses galvanised steel to reduce corrosion, whereas Tank Connections' products are available with special powder coatings – therefore, we are also more likely to recommend its products for storing aggressive materials and corrosive liquids such as sea water," says Ramos. Tank Connections' powder coatings are available in a wide variety of colours, providing clients with the opportunity to apply

their own corporate branding. Another factor in favour of Tank Connections is the company's aesthetically pleasing geodesic covers, engineered for functionality as well as good looks. "These covers assist to distribute pressure more evenly throughout tanks, and prevent contamination. We've had mining clients ask specifically for this design to ensure minimal negative visual impact from water storage," says Ramos. In conclusion, when it comes to storing high volumes at the right price, Tank Connections' range – now available in Africa through Abeco Tanks – is hard to beat.

Utility, flexibility, affordability, and aesthetic appeal put these products ahead of the rest. However, for those wanting to store smaller quantities of liquids in locally made tanks, Abeco continues to offer its own distinctive, widely used, and reliable products. **35**

**BELOW** Abeco vice-president of sales Mannie Ramos Jr



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