

For further information please contact :
Zandra van der Westhuizen - Business Line Manager: Industrial Air Division
zandra.vdw@atlascopco.com
Tel: +27 (0) 11 821 9800

Atlas Copco's advanced GA55VSD+ FF compressor significantly improves efficiencies for leading South African face mask manufacturer

The recent installation of a new Atlas Copco GA55VSD+ FF air compressor at GreenLine Distributors' manufacturing plant has significantly improved efficiencies, created a more comfortable working environment and has future-proofed compressed air supply for this leading South African manufacturer of superior quality respiratory products.

GreenLine Distributors cc was established by Tom Price and Ben Smith in 2001 who identified a distinct need for high quality locally produced disposable respiratory products. Having invested twelve months in researching local industry requirements, the founders designed a disposable mask that today compares favourably with the best products available internationally. This proudly South African company believes in supporting the local economy by backing local companies and suppliers where ever possible.

The Springs-based company supplies a wide range of face masks offering varying levels of filtering capabilities to meet the different requirements by industries including mines, laboratories, and food & beverage to protect employees against the inhalation of dust, solid and liquid aerosols, smoke, and even more aggressive substances.

“All our masks are regulated and are subjected to rigorous testing in a laboratory under local conditions where they must exceed all required ratings,” notes Deon Erasmus, Factory Engineer at GreenLine Distributors. “We comply with numerous stringent safety standards: Our factory is operated under an ISO 9001 system audited by the prestigious TÜV Rheinland and holds the SABS mark scheme certification. Furthermore, all our products are approved by the NRCS (National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications) and we are a member of SAPEMA (Southern African Protective Equipment Marketing Association).” GreenLine also holds a Homologation Certificate for a type of respiratory protective device pursuant to SANS 10338:2009: '*Homologation of respiratory equipment*' as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993), and the Mine Health and Safety Act, 1996 (Act No. 29 of 1996).

Atlas Copco Group Center

Atlas Copco AB	Visitors address:	Telephone: +46 8 743 8000	A Public Company (publ)
SE-105 23 Stockholm	Sickla Industriväg 19	Reg. No: 556014-2720	
Sweden	Nacka	Web site www.atlascopcogroup.com	Reg. Office Nacka

GreenLine's large industrial pneumatic machines require clean dry air to perform various manufacturing processes such as compressing and cutting to produce in excess of 200 000 face masks per month. "However, our existing constant speed air compressor which has served us well over the years, was simply not efficient; it was generating a lot of heat and was also extremely noisy," states Operations Manager, Marko Rangiah. "It was time to replace old technology with a new state-of-the-art air compressor system in synergy with our drive to become more energy efficient and decrease our carbon footprint."

Having done their air compressor homework, Erasmus and Rangiah knew exactly what they wanted. While energy efficiency topped their list, they also needed a quiet machine with sufficient capacity to accommodate future expansion. "We decided to turn to Atlas Copco for an air compressor solution because this leading global company offers a brand renowned for quality across its product, technology and service portfolio," continue Erasmus and Rangiah. "This is the type of company we want to partner with over the long-term."

Atlas Copco's GA55VSD+ FF (Full Feature) ticked all the boxes for Erasmus and Rangiah. Part of the ground-breaking new range of GA oil-injected rotary screw compressors, this highly efficient and robust direct drive compressor reduces energy costs by up to 50% on average. This unmatched performance is driven by Atlas Copco's cutting-edge technologies including VSD (Variable Speed Drive), a powerful interior Permanent Magnet oil-cooled motor (iPM) and an in-house developed Neos inverter.

"Quality compressed air is the life blood of any manufacturing industry but the generation of compressed air is one of the highest energy consumers, accounting for over 40% of a plant's total electricity bill," notes Atlas Copco Compressor Technique Business Line Manager, Zandra van der Westhuizen. "Energy is thus the most expensive component in the total cost of compressed air, often costing more than the compressor's purchase price over its lifespan. Subsequently efficiency is integral to the design of our compressor technology."

"VSD presents the best solution for applications with fluctuating air demand and where the compressor regularly runs at below maximum capacity as is the case at GreenLine," continues Van Der Westhuizen. "While a traditional fixed speed compressor is either on or off, a VSD unit automatically adjusts its motor and element speed to the air demand. As it only runs at the required speed, it consumes less energy."

Atlas Copco delivered the GA55VSD+ FF only one day after receiving the order from GreenLine Distributors. “The fact that Atlas Copco had a machine in stock speaks volumes about the company and gives us confidence in what we can expect going forward,” says Erasmus. Following a site inspection by Atlas Copco, GreenLine’s technicians installed the compressor, including all air and electrical connections. Atlas Copco conducted a final check of all specifications before signing off. “In short, we were up and running with our new compressor within less than a month of placing our order. Atlas Copco service is as efficient as their product giving us peace of mind that we have selected the best air compressor partner.”

“The efficiency benefits of the GA55VSD+ FF’s advanced technology are clearly evident, especially if one draws a comparison between the old and the new compressor,” confirms Erasmus. “The old machine used between 25 and 40 Amps and drew an average of 25kW while the new compressor, which is compact with a much smaller footprint, uses 21 Amps and draws only 15kW with plenty in reserve; we have future-proofed our compressed air supply!”

Equally impressive for Erasmus and his team is the GA’s new soft-start capability as well as the surprisingly large amount of water that comes from this self-draining compressor with an integrated dryer. “This tells us that the machine is doing its job; delivering clean dry air to our plant 24/7, five to six days a week!” He adds that quiet operation at a low 67 dB(A) also means a comfortable and safe working environment for GreenLine employees.

Erasmus confirms that Atlas Copco supplied quick but more than adequate training as the machine is extremely user-friendly. Atlas Copco will take care of all maintenance and service. As the compressor is Smartlink enabled, Erasmus and his team will conveniently receive maintenance notifications and information on machine status via email or text messages.

GreenLine was classified as an essential services provider throughout COVID-19 lockdown, providing face masks to other essential services companies such as food & beverage. Owing to the capability and flexibility of the factory, GreenLine was able to meet a request by Government to produce FFP2 masks for first responders and front line workers in South Africa’s health care facilities, laboratories, etc. Erasmus explains that FFP2 is the minimum face mask specification by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, offering 94% filtration or better.

“As the FFP2 is in fact our standard middle range of masks, we did not have to produce a new product; we simply had to produce more of our existing FFP2 masks so it was easy for us to adapt.

Most importantly, we were able to extend our production of FFP2 masks without affecting our regular manufacturing, ensuring that we continue to meet our customers' requirements.”

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Great ideas accelerate innovation. At Atlas Copco Compressor Technique we team up with our customers to turn industrial ideas into smart connected air and gas solutions and leading edge compressed air technology. Our passionate people, expertise and service bring sustainable value to industries everywhere.

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Issued by: Laverick Media Communications T: +27(0) 79 949 1090 sonia@laverickmedia.co.za / www.laverickmedia.co.za