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Atlas Copco railway compressors are built to last

Atlas Copco Compressor Technique exhibited its world-class compressed air technology solutions for the railway industry at Rail Africa 2017. Atlas Copco oil-injected screw compressors as well as oil-free scroll, piston and pantograph compressors are used on railway vehicles throughout the world, reliably meeting compressed air requirements for critical functions including braking, opening and closing coach doors, tilting and levelling coaches, flushing toilets, operating wind screen wipers and even controlling pantographs to supply power to electrically operated trains.

“Reliability, low operating expenses, maximum uptime and optimised safety are vital to the rail industry and to meet these extremely stringent demands, it is simply not enough to be good, we must be so much better than good,” says Atlas Copco’s Global Business Development Manager Railway, André de Backer. “The better the quality of the compressor, the better the reliability, the higher the uptime and the bigger the savings. The Atlas Copco brand is long associated with quality. Not believing in outsourcing experience and expertise, we develop our own, often patented, compressed air technologies for the railway industry and Atlas Copco railway compressors and equipment are designed, built and tested at our IRIS-certified Railway Competence Centre near Paris.”

“Because maximum operational availability and efficiency for the sustainable productivity of our customers’ compressed air networks is extremely important to us we always endeavour to establish long-term partnerships with our customers. For us it is not about the purchase price, it is about the advantages delivered by our quality equipment - long life cycle, reliability, efficiency, low maintenance, maximum uptime and, equally important, safety backed by our wide range of after-market services.

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With a remarkable at least 30 years calculated lifetime Atlas Copco compressors can be a-once-in-a-lifetime purchase. When, after 12 000 running hours, the unit is pulled off for overhauling, maintenance often involves only minor work such as grease and filter replacement. A combination of low operating expenses, long service intervals and maximum uptime guarantee availability of more than 99% and offer a return on investment of between three to five years. “Once it is paid for the compressor does not start earning money but it does start saving money!” says De Backer. Atlas Copco compressors are specially designed and engineered for reliable continuous duty and optimum performance even in the most stringent of environments such as severe climatic conditions, extreme temperatures, high humidity, shocks and vibrations and feature:

- An absolute minimum amount of moving parts (all relevant ones corrosion resistant) which means less wear and tear and improved reliability and uptime.
- Corrosion-resistant materials such as stainless steel and aluminium used in manufacture reduce maintenance and extend service life.

“The innovative Full Feature compressor concept pioneered by Atlas Copco provides an all-in-one customised air compressor system for the railway industry including integrated dryers, filters and instant condensate treatment,” says Charl Ackerman, Atlas Copco Compressor Technique’s Business Line Manager, Industrial Air. The compressors have a small footprint due to space saving design and compact dimensions and fit easily into the narrow confines of railway vehicles. Additionally, the plug and play feature means that this compact package is quick to install and easy to maintain, on top, inside or underneath the railway vehicle.”

Free air delivery starts from 40 to 80 l/min with the smaller pantograph compressor and goes right up to 6000 l/min featured by the large GAR oil-injected units. Filling the gap are the LFR/LTR oil-lubricated and the LFR 3–10 oil-free compressors featuring 140 to 1100 l/min) and the oil-free SFR scroll compressors delivering from 200 to 1500 l/min.

In the railway industry brake failure is normally catastrophic; an excellent braking system is therefore crucial and reliability is simply non-negotiable. The Atlas Copco oil-injected, air-cooled GAR 11–37 compressor range is therefore a critical piece of equipment that supplies compressed air to the braking system to bring the train to a safe stop. The gear-driven GAR range is designed, built and tested to meet the toughest compressed air requirements of main line locomotives, heavy-duty diesel locomotives, shunters, Electric and Diesel Multiple Units (EMUs and DMUs), metros and Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs).

The compact GAR compressor package is used mainly inside a railway vehicle where space is limited and the unit's space saving design with integrated air dryer, filters, fan and control gives it a small footprint. The fan is mounted on the drive motor shaft which eliminates amongst others the need for a separate cooling system. Thanks to the use of light-weight aluminium, the compressor's approximate weight of 450Kg, including the full dryer package, is over 300Kg lighter than its closest rival.

Rated for 100% duty cycle and incorporating environmentally-friendly oil-free scroll technology, Atlas Copco's SFR orbiting scroll compressor is suited for harsh railway conditions, featuring low noise, low vibrations, and low lifecycle costs.

The battery-powered Atlas Copco LFpR/LFxR oil-free piston pantograph compressors are ideally suited for any electrically driven railway vehicle with a pneumatic controlled pantograph; the compressor is used to align and lower the pantograph to connect the train from the powerlines above when on duty and to disconnect the train when off-duty. As the compressor is mostly mounted on roof of the train it is exposed to the elements; a rugged and robust housing protects the unit against rain, snow, dust, wind and vandalism.

Completing the rail solutions range from Atlas Copco is the LFR/LTR oil-lubricated and LFR 3–10 oil-free aluminium piston compressors, a highly compact compressor package that provides exceptional reliability at an affordable cost. SDR membrane dryers with pre-filters are available for the complete Atlas Copco range of railway compressors.

The best way of driving down running costs to earn a rapid return on investment and achieve lowest cost of total overall ownership is to take good care of equipment. "Product monitoring through proactive maintenance and the use of only genuine parts fitted by qualified Atlas Copco technicians will reduce the risk of unexpected breakdowns and contribute to extended equipment life cycle, says Ackerman. "Atlas Copco genuine parts are built according to the same quality standards as our compressors, guaranteeing that equipment availability after servicing will remain at the same high level."

World-class quality training workshops on the correct use and maintenance of the GAR compressor range is offered at the company's Jet Park headquarters in Johannesburg and on-site customer training is also available.

Atlas Copco is a world-leading provider of sustainable productivity solutions. The Group serves customers with innovative compressors, vacuum solutions and air treatment systems, construction and mining equipment, power tools and assembly systems. Atlas Copco develops products and services focused on productivity, energy efficiency, safety and ergonomics. The company was founded in 1873, is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has a global reach spanning more than 180 countries. In 2016, Atlas Copco had revenues of BSEK 101 (BEUR 11) and about 45 000 employees.

Learn more at www.atlascopco.co.za.

***Industrial Air** is a division within Atlas Copco's Compressor Technique business area. It develops, manufactures and markets oil-injected and oil-free air compressors, on-site nitrogen and oxygen generators, air treatment solutions and compressor controls and monitoring under several brands. In addition to serving a wide variety of industries, dedicated solutions are also available for marine, railway and oil and gas customers. The division's focus and main drive is to further improve its customers' productivity. The divisional headquarters and main production center are located in Antwerp, Belgium.*