

ESAB expands South African presence

ESAB South Africa has moved into an upgraded facility, in Tunney Ridge near OR Tambo Airport, which will include the South African head office and distribution centre (DC); a showroom and demonstration area; training and conference facilities; a repair centre and a walk-in welding shop. *African Fusion* talks to Keith Saunders about the move and some of ESAB's hopes and successes.

Since 2016, when ESAB re-established its formal presence in South Africa, the company's head office and central warehouse have been hosted out of Howden Africa's Booyens premises just south of the Johannesburg CBD. "We remain a sister company to Howden and our ESAB business won't be changing in terms of ownership or operations, but we are moving out of the Booyens site, because Howden needs to meet growing production and repair needs, while our ESAB operations there have become constrained by the shared space," Keith Saunders tells *African Fusion*.

"So we are moving into newly refurbished facilities in the Tunney Ridge area, not far from OR Tambo Airport, east of Johannesburg," he says.

ESAB's new South African head office and central distribution warehouse comprises 5 000 m² of modern office, ware-

housing and demonstration space that has been carefully designed to meet the future needs of the global

Tier 1 welding and cutting equipment and service provider. "Everything is now getting upgraded with new racking, shelving and signage currently being finalised. The facility will have a large demonstration room with all of ESAB's newest and latest welding machines to enable customers to come for a proper welding experience before deciding to invest. Our gas and plasma cutting equipment will be on display, along with all the available consumables. We are also installing a CNC cutting machine and a robot installation that will couple our ESAB power packs with a Yaskawa robot.

"We will have a big conference and training room, where we intend to train our distributors and customers. Also, we are



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establishing a walk-in retail centre where customers will be able to come in, browse the items on display and purchase what they need: there and then," says Saunders.

Modern warehouse and logistics functions take up the majority of the space. "All the stock for South Africa, for bulk and retail, will be housed here from now on, so everything we offer will be delivered and distributed from this central facility," he says, adding that the new facility will also house ESAB's national equipment repair and service centre.

ESAB's Johannesburg-based staff, many of whom have been working from home since the Covid pandemic, are also moving into the new premises, starting from November 28. "Nobody is going to be working from home anymore and, while a lot of the office space is open plan, each employee has been allocated their own workstation.

"There are also seven or eight modern offices for the senior managers, and we have boardrooms for meetings and in-house presentations, and such," Sanders informs us.

"It's going to be a big change, but we are all looking forward to it. I think the break from the Booyens area is going to be refreshing. Everybody is pretty excited about the move, which we all see as a good thing," he adds.

"Our MD, Chris Eibl, who initiated the move, has long wanted ESAB to be seen as a free-standing entity in its own right. Physically moving away from Howden does exactly that. From now, anyone who comes to our site is coming to visit ESAB, and this is sure to further strengthen our presence in the local welding market," Saunders concludes.

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