

SEW-EURODRIVE's expanding gearbox repair and refurbishment services



“ OEMs in South Africa are becoming overfocused on sales. Very few can service their gearboxes anymore. We are getting more and more inquiries, and on our current repair-shop floor, 50% to 60% of the work we are doing is for non-SEW-EURODRIVE gearboxes,” begins Raymond Obermeyer, MD of SEW-EURODRIVE, South Africa.

“Many don’t even stock parts,” he continues. “This is why we are expanding our after-sales service offering, not only to offer comprehensive support for our SEW-EURODRIVE solutions, but also to support the other equipment brands being used on our customers’ mines, factories and industrial sites,” he tells MCA.

SEW-EURODRIVE has been repairing gearboxes from its South African assembly facilities for many years. “We are already using reverse engineering techniques to repair and refurbish gearboxes from several OEMs. Our process is now very well established, and we have gathered an excellent team of specialists with considerable combined experience,” he says.

The process starts at the wash bay, where client gearboxes, “which tend to be filthy when they arrive”, are cleaned. Non-SEW-EURODRIVE gearboxes are then scanned using one of SEW-EURODRIVE’s handheld laser scanners to produce a point cloud mapping of the unit’s dimensions. “The gearbox is then carefully stripped, and after shot blasting, every component is scanned to build up a complete picture of the repairs needed. A detailed assessment of each component’s condition follows, repair needs are identified, and a quotation is prepared for the client to help them decide whether to purchase a new unit or have the existing unit repaired.

“If the repair quote is accepted and an order comes in, then we begin the process of getting gears manufactured, sourcing the bearings and replacing or remanufacturing worn or damaged shafts, housings and any other compromised

By offering comprehensive gearbox repair and refurbishment services, including reverse-engineered and remanufactured gearboxes for reputable brands, SEW-EURODRIVE is addressing the lack of OEM support in the South African market. MD Raymond Obermeyer takes MCA on a tour of the existing capabilities and highlights what is to come after the 2026 move to the new 17 000 m² service and repair facility.

components,” Obermeyer explains.

From a dimensional perspective, laser scanners enable SEW-EURODRIVE to determine the original surface form and dimensions of any worn part, enabling drawings to be generated. “We currently send these drawings to Germany for use to manufacture new gear sets to OEM specifications,” he says. “We will never try to replace one or two gear wheels in a set, though, as

many local repair shops will try to do. We replace the complete matching set of gears, so they all start in the same condition with the same OEM quality,” he assures.

Citing a current repair on the shop floor, he says that, in some cases, SEW-EURODRIVE service engineers can make design changes to gearboxes to improve their reliability. One large gearbox for a mine in Limpopo had experienced



Laser scanning technology enables SEW-EURODRIVE to accurately map worn components and reverse-engineer complete gearsets to OEM specifications.



SEW-EURODRIVE's advanced gearbox repair and refurbishment service provides OEM-quality support for both its own units and those from other leading global brands.

repeated breakdowns. An experienced SEW-EURODRIVE engineer pinpointed the problem. In cold weather, the oil thickened and, at startup, could not flow through the OEM-designed channels. “By redesigning these oil flow channels, the problem was overcome, making our repaired gearboxes even better than the OEM units. As a result, we are now busy re-engineering the whole fleet of these units,” Obermeyer tells MCA.

In the New Year, a new 17 000 m² service and repair facility, across the road from the assembly facility and head office in Aeroton, will become the new home for all SEW-EURODRIVE’s OEM-quality gearbox servicing and refurbishing activities. The facility will have new wash, shot-blasting, and stripping bays, along with a new 3D-scanning station mounted on a robotic arm to complement the two handheld scanners already in operation. “When we move over to the new service facility, we will have a scanning station in a room of its own, with a robot to manipulate the laser head and rotators to move the parts, similar to the ones that the automotive industry uses to scan chassis to look for imperfections,” he says.

Gear-set replacement and assembly

“While most of the gear-set manufacturing, particularly for the SEW-EURODRIVE gearboxes, will still be done in Germany, we are also investing in two small gear-grinding machines to enable us to start doing some of the gear grinding, as an alternative to the five-axis CNC machines that we can use for cutting standard helical and bevel helical gear wheels,” Obermeyer continues.

“All gearsets for non-SEW-EURODRIVE OEMs are manufactured according to SEW-EURODRIVE’s rigorous standards, using the same quality steel, heat treatment and shot peening processes. This ensures that our aftermarket offering is underpinned by the same quality standards as our new product ranges,” he assures.

Currently, SEW-EURODRIVE is using its SEW Assembly Plant lines to reassemble remanufactured gearboxes. These assembly facilities are being replicated at the Service Centre to do this work. “We use the same procedures and processes for assembling repaired gearboxes as we do for new product assembly to ensure that refurbished or remanufactured units are delivered in a genuinely as-new condition,” Obermeyer tells MCA.

Housing repair and fabrication

While used gearbox housings can often be cleaned up and machined, they can also pose problems. “Every time a housing is machined, the tolerances get larger, a bush or a sleeve may have been welded in, affecting the meshing precision of the gears. Additionally, we have brought in two sand blasting machines



Dedicated assembly lines at the new Service Centre will enable SEW-EURODRIVE to deliver fully remanufactured gearboxes in as-new condition, with improved turnaround times.

of different sizes to handle housing up to 10×10 m or 90 t.

“After sandblasting, we can perform a more accurate scan of the housing. Then, if necessary, we can have a new one manufactured, initially from one of our local foundries, or in some cases, we can fabricate a new housing,” he tells MCA. The new facility will include a fabrication workshop, primarily for custom base plates and frames, and potentially for housing fabrication as well.

“We have already had replacement housings manufactured for big underground conveyors in the coal mining industry, purely as a favour to our client. These were cast locally, and we then did the machining before rebuilding the gearboxes,” he says, adding that the OEM for these gearbox housings no longer had stock anywhere in the world.

Delivery times and capacity

In terms of delivery times for refurbishments involving gearsets, he says that, as soon as the scanning is done and uploaded, it gets sent to the machine shop in Germany, which can produce a set of gears within three to four weeks.

“Meanwhile, we will get everything else ready for assembly, which we can complete within a

few days of receiving the new components from Germany,” he says.

With all repair and refurbishment activity moving to the new SEW-EURODRIVE Service Centre, capacity for new assembly will be freed up. “New assembly will be faster and easier to schedule, and in the space currently being used for repairs, we also intend to start assembling our large SEW-EURODRIVE P-series planetary gearboxes. This will help improve lead times for imports to between two and three weeks and, in doing so, offer customers in the sugar and pulp & paper sectors a better all-round service.”

While the supply of new equipment is still the core business of SEW-EURODRIVE’s business, the service side is becoming increasingly important. “With the dedicated service facility and the extended service offering, which includes field services, training and a new range of service level agreements (SLAs), we expect servicing to contribute up to 40% to our turnover when we are fully up and running.

“This is another new state-of-the-art facility designed to address the real needs we already know exist, both locally and across Africa. We are sure it is going to make 2026 a very successful year for us,” Raymond Obermeyer concludes.

<https://www.sew-eurodrive.co.za/home.html>



In the workshop, specialist technicians strip, assess, and rebuild gearboxes using high-precision processes identical to those used to assemble new SEW-EURODRIVE units.