

Pipe-joining systems: Reducing downtime in the mining industry

Multiple benefits of Victaulic Knife Gate Valve showcased at Electra Mining 2017

12 September 2017, Johannesburg, Although commodity prices have seen a slight recovery in 2017, investment in the mining industry in Sub-Saharan Africa remains cautious. Continued innovation in the industry is key to an environment where business expansion is very tentative and costs still need to be tightly controlled.

One such innovation is Victaulic mechanical pipe coupling systems, which have been used with great success in mining developments globally, including Sub-Saharan Africa. This technology provides a flexible yet permanent solution to joining pipes; installation and maintenance is also much quicker than other systems and requires less labour. Most importantly, downtime is considerably reduced when compared to other joining methods.

“As the industry is well aware, mines lose money every minute that production stands still,” says Dirk Joubert, Victaulic Sales Engineer for Africa. For example, a mining client recently told us that he loses R250,000 for every hour his plant is not in production. Maintenance and installation of key equipment and facilities therefore needs to be as quick and seamless as possible.”

Victaulic’s Knife Gate Valve is designed so that all the parts in the valve that are subject to wear are contained in a single cartridge kit, explains Joubert. Therefore, instead of having to replace the entire valve when it needs maintenance, just the cartridge can be swapped out. Maintenance time can then be cut from 2 or 3 hours per valve to a mere 15 minutes.

Joubert believes mines need to think about the cost of a project in a more holistic way.

“Mines should not only think about the cost of the fittings they are installing, but also consider the cost of labour, potential health and safety risks and the cost of transporting workers underground to install pipelines. It is also very important to take into account the opportunity cost of dragging out expansion projects longer than necessary. The sooner a plant can begin operating, the sooner it can start being profitable,” concludes Joubert.