

FFS wins major Eskom contract



Tutuka Power Station, one of the nine Eskom stations being supplied with FFS industrial heating fuel for start-up purposes.

Deva Reddy, a steady hand on the tiller.

ESKOM is pulling out the stops to meet power demand for the country's surging economy.

Dormant power stations are being de-mothballed, and FFS has been contracted to supply industrial heating fuel for start-up purposes at nine of Eskom's 13 coal-powered units. The power utility is already the single biggest user of industrial heating fuel in the country.

Don Hunter, chief executive officer of FFS Refiners, says, "Eskom's requirements have changed significantly from the time the tender was put out in late September, and current consumption is more than double the expected figure. During November, FFS delivered just under 10 000 tons of fuel oil to the various power stations. This was supplied from the inland refineries and from Durban.

"Deliveries involved rail and road transport directly from source to station, and from source to depots and then to the stations, depending on transport availability and individual station requirements. The various movements required 435 different

load movements for the month – surely a phenomenal feat taking into consideration that this is new FFS business," he says.

"The involvement of all our branches and dedication from our personnel has made this remarkable achievement not only possible, but we're taking it in our stride."

Eskom's coal-fired power stations, using fuel oil for start-up purposes, are spread around most of the Eastern Highveld and as far north as Ellisras. These stations use up to 30 000 litres an hour of fuel oil during a cold start. Frequent light-ups are required to sort out all the problems when a new unit is being brought out of mothballs, requiring huge volumes over short periods. Unit trips use less fuel per incident, but timing and frequency is totally unpredictable and can result in consumption increasing drastically and unexpectedly over short periods.

Even though consignment stock is kept in Eskom's tanks by the fuel oil supplier, the operation still calls for excellent logistical control to ensure each station is continuously supplied to



cater for all eventualities.

FFS was awarded the contract to supply fuel oil to the nine power stations from October 2006. All nine power stations were visited within the first week to meet the various role players and to clarify requirements and expectations.

"Deva Reddy is the FFS key account manager for Eskom and," says Mr Hunter, "he has done an excellent job setting up all systems and getting transport contractors on board. Daily station contact has been established to monitor tank levels while the new telemetry level indication systems are being installed. Transport contractors are managed so that all the stations' demands are met continuously." ■