

Tank container manufacturer wins SAIW gold medal

JACQUELINE HOLMAN | FEATURES REPORTER

At a Southern African Institute of Welding (SAIW) gala dinner in July 2008, SAIW executive director **Jim Guild** awarded road and inter-model tank container manufacturer GRW Engineering the institute's highest award, the gold medal for 2008.

The award is presented in recognition of an outstanding

contribution to the institute, or the application of welding technology.

"It was a great honour for GRW Engineering to receive this award, rewarding us for the ongoing investments in our welding processes and staff. GRW prides itself as a manufacturer using advanced welding techniques and continuously look-

ing at improvements," says GRW Group CEO **Gerhard Van der Merwe**.

A GRW Engineering employee also won the 2007 Young Welder of the Year competition, where the company's representatives have featured prominently in previous years.

The company supplies the South African market with a range of road tankers designed and manufactured primarily to transport chemicals, acids, liquefied petroleum gas, automotive fuels, aviation fuel, dry bulk and food-grade liquids, to name a few, which Van der Merwe says is a huge and diverse market.

A substantial amount of GRW production is exported. He says the demand for fuel tankers into Africa is increasing. The company supplies the UK and the European markets with inter-model tank containers and road tankers. GRW Engineering also supplies military vehicles to the UK Ministry of Defence and Royal Air Force.

Customer Service

Van der Merwe says that GRW Engineering offers different con-

figurations and specifications, which allow each tanker to be designed and manufactured to the client's specific needs.

He says that customer-focused manufacturing and service delivery are what differentiates the company from competitors. GRW Engineering combines innovative engineering and design with an understanding and experience of the transport industry to provide products with structural integrity, safety standards and satisfactory payload.

Van der Merwe says that GRW Engineering offers on-time delivery and continued product support.

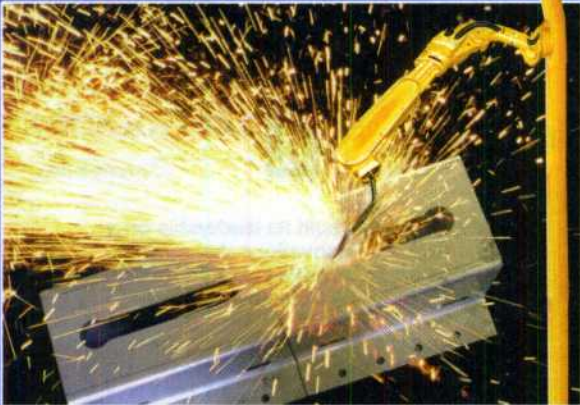
This includes door-to-door delivery in South Africa. Export trailers are also shipped to the designated destinations.

All company functions are executed in accordance with the company's quality assurance system of ISO 9001:2000, which includes standard operating procedures, change control, test and release procedures, audits and staff training.

Design and Testing


GRW Engineering's design process is realised through computer-aided design methods and input data is verified by correlating actual prototype dynamic data with theoretical data.

Van der Merwe explains that finite element analysis techniques then ensure a sound design solution.



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SAIW GOLD MEDAL AWARD

Professor Andy Koursaris, President of the SAIW presenting the gold medal award to Gerhard van der Merwe of GRW Engineering

He says that all new models are designed strictly in accordance with most recent national and international regulatory standards. GRW Engineering also invests a considerable amount of capital on research and development in order to maintain and expand its technological competence.

All new GRW Engineering products undergo extensive prototype testing using in-house facilities, as well as accredited test centres, including facilities at the University of Stellenbosch, the South African Bureau of Standards' Commercial Mechanical Testing Laboratory, and rail freight provider Transnet's Railway Technology Development Centre.

Quality assurance and control are prominent throughout the entire manufacturing process, from goods receiving to final inspection and sign-off. Van der Merwe says this is achieved by strict adherence to the company's ISO 9001:2000 system.

A nominated third-party inspection body ensures code compliance by witnessing, reviewing and signing off all quality control plans and test certificates.

He explains that all quality control and third-party documentation are scanned and copied onto a compact disc as part of the customer's final documentation.

Training Centre

Van der Merwe says that there is a skills shortage of engineers

and artisans in the welding industry. To address the shortage of trained welders and fitters, GRW Engineering has developed six accredited programmes focused on welding techniques at its training centre.

The company worked with the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education and Training Authority to achieve accreditation to undertake adult basic education and training and basic skills training for unskilled workers in its employment and those of other companies.

GRW Engineering also achieved further accreditation from the Transport Education Training Authority, to provide courses on operating forklifts and cranes.

The company's training officer is also currently receiving the necessary qualifications to be able to code welders.

GRW Engineering is committed to investing in its workforce to foster the development of highly skilled and competent technicians, supervisors and management.

The company also grants bursaries to engineering students in order to help combat the shortage of skills. Van der Merwe says the company still needs to invest more in the skills challenge.

New Technology and Future Plans

Van der Merwe says that GRW Engineering uses customised

robotic welding and machine welding in several applications, and the company is in the process of evaluating and introducing friction stir welding in the South African tanker industry.

Friction stir welding is a process developed at the University of Cambridge and involves the joining of metals without fusion or filler materials. The process is most suitable for welds such as flat plate, or component joints, but can be adapted for pipes, hollow sections and positional welding.

The welds are created by the combined action of frictional heating and mechanical deformation owing to a rotating tool.

GRW Engineering is also attempting to become involved in rail wagons, which Van der Merwe views as great potential for the company.

The company is constantly searching for new market opportunities and would like to grow its exports further.

Service outlets in Cape Town and Durban will be opened shortly, leading to improved after-sales service around South Africa.

He says that the company is continuously searching for new opportunities, which fit into its business model, in order to expand the company.

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