

GMSA achieves 100% landfill-free status

General Motors South Africa's (GMSA) has been declared a 100% landfill-free organisation, with its two manufacturing sites in Port Elizabeth recently joining its non-manufacturing facilities in achieving zero waste to landfill - four years ahead of GM's global deadline of 2020.



EC Wood Selections employee, Wellington Kelem, piles up wood at the Struandale plant waste yard. This wood is used by EC Wood Selections for the manufacture of furniture, pallets and crates.

GMSA's manufacturing plants in Struandale and in Kempston Road have followed its Parts Distribution Centre (PDC) in the Coega Industrial Development Zone, and its Vehicle Conversion and Distribution Centre (VCDC) situated in Markman Township, to make this environmental milestone a reality.

Alternative technology

Ncedisa Mzuzu, GM environmental group manager, Africa, said the landfill-free certification had been accomplished through highly strategic planning and persistent implementation, using the waste management hierarchy model, which outlines an effective order of preference for the reduction of waste, as the foundation for the GM model.

The non-manufacturing sites were able to achieve more than 95% recycling ratio on average with peak period reaching 99%, whilst the manufacturing operations achieved more than 90% recycling ratio. The waste that would have gone to landfill is diverted to alternative technology.

This option still ensures that waste is handled in environmentally-friendly manner. Through this technology, waste is put to beneficial use as it goes to energy recovery facilities for use as alternative fuel, minimising the use of natural resources.

"We were strategic in first targeting the 'low-hanging fruits', especially those at non-manufacturing sites, and then established a unique roadmap for our manufacturing operations," she said.

Educating suppliers

Since 2014, the company has assisted its suppliers to become increasingly compliant through a series of outreach programmes to provide necessary environmental and recycling knowledge. Mzuzu said that innovative in-house collaborations, such as those involving multiple reuses for packaging and other waste, as well as employee communication "that is real, relevant and has a far reaching influence", are amongst the other strategies contributing to the excellent recycling ratio at all four facilities.

"GMSA's environmental management system is certified to the ISO 14001:2004 standard. The environment is one of the company's key imperatives - while we are in the business of making vehicles, we strive actively to mitigate the impact of that business on the natural environment and local communities," said Mzuzu.

In addition to achieving landfill-free status in 2016, the company also received [Natural Habitat Conservation Certificates](#) from the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) for its Struandale plant and PDC.

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