

INTERVIEW WITH IRVINDRA NAIDOO, GENERAL MANAGER: CORPORATE STRATEGY TRANSNET SOC,
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Transnet identified the risk that CoVid-19 posed to the organisation relatively early and implemented the organisational business continuity response process in January 2020. Initially, Transnet's response focussed on education, protocol alignment to the emerging risk and risk monitoring; however in March 2020 a decision was taken to escalate the response.

Transnet devised an approach based on enhanced communication process, responsiveness and adaptability as the core features to augment and support normal business functions. This resulted in the Transnet CoVid-19 Command Centre (CCC) being established, primarily a coordination and communication focussed nexus of information related to the pandemic designed to support internal decision making. The CCC brought together critical functions within the organisation, tailored the focus areas to the key requirements of the specific circumstances (employee health and safety, operational continuity, legal and regulatory compliance, various business unusual enablement functions such as ICT, human resources etc.).

The CoVid-19 pandemic and associated national lockdown initiated in response to the pandemic posed serious disruptions to Transnet's operations. Transnet, as part of its normal course of business, must interact with and facilitate trade between international and interprovincial entities, customers and suppliers. In practical terms, Transnet employees in close proximity to each other and in environments not conducive to sterilisation were exposed to potential infection if no protection measures were put in place.

As a result of this, Transnet adopted all protocols and directives from the National health institutions, including World Health Organisation, to protect employees and ensure a safe operational environment through the use of the highest available quality of PPE (while not impacting on critical healthcare providers given the global shortage), the institution of home screening and issuing of tools to employees to conduct effective self-screening, the company wide sterilisation protocols instituted (general cleanliness and targeted post case clean-up) and the ongoing work from home instruction to all support staff and employees considered to be at high risk as a result of the virus.

Outside of the employee health and wellness focus, Transnet also introduced a high intensity operations workstream in the CCC as a coordination function, bringing together the various decision makers to enable safe operational activities depending on regulatory, legal/contractual, financial and operational factors (under the umbrella health and safety focus). A portion of the operations stream's role was to monitor and coordinate the impact on Transnet's infrastructure as a result of the pandemic.

Key challenges that have been noted to date largely revolve around:

- Disrupted planned maintenance activities in the initial stages of the national lockdown (rolling stock maintenance depots being disrupted due to CoVid-19 cases, planned infrastructure maintenance being delayed due to suppliers being shut etc.); and
- A significant increase in criminal activities causing operational disruptions (pipeline "hot taps", cable theft etc.).

These incidents caused significant day-to-day operational disruptions, however are largely part and parcel of ongoing challenges experienced by Transnet outside of the pandemic (albeit experienced at notably higher frequency during the national lockdown) and as such the organisation was equipped to resolve the challenges without lasting impact on infrastructure.

In order to mitigate the spike of incidents, multi-faceted approaches were adopted including the creation of reserve teams to supplement lost capacity, close engagements with law enforcement and private security firms, community engagement and advertisements placed to educate communities of the impact and risks of the theft and vandalism.

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Subject: Rail and port infrastructure affected by COVID-19