

Bandag's quality obsession spreads

Founded in 1957 as a commercial franchisor, Bandag has over 1100 franchised dealers in more than 100 countries worldwide and replaces almost 9-million truck and bus tyres a year via a revolutionary precured retreading process.

In SA, Bandag has been operating through a network of independent franchisees since the late sixties. In SA, Bandag now has more than 35 independently franchised retreading factories and a growing number of BTS (Bandag Truck Service) outlets to provide end-users with the "best-in-class products, services and lowest cost per kilometre."

From the outset, consistent quality for Bandag and its network has been a condition of business and their shared promise to fleets. As proof of this quality commitment, Bandag SA, a globally compliant Bandag manufacturing facility, became the first company within the Bandag group to achieve ISO9001:2000 certification to complement its ISO18001 and ISO14001 certification.

Product-wise, the quality control concerns appearance, moulded quality, edge trimming, buffed quality, packaging and

labelling.

In fact, goods are inspected to ensure they are free of a variety of possible defects. Inspection records are kept and analysed daily. Each month, the results are collated and reported on, both internally and to Bandag headquarters, USA, so that comparisons with other Bandag plants can be made.

Bandag's laboratory is ultimately responsible for monitoring, controlling and maintaining the high standard of rubber compounds mixed and processed at the plant. Once a batch of rubber compound is mixed, it is isolated at a holding area. A sample is then taken to the laboratory and tested to ensure that it conforms to the required specifications. Batches that comply are released for further processing.

During the production process, some samples such as cushion and repair gum are tested in the laboratory to ensure they comply with the prescribed specifications. The laboratory also duplicates the bonding process being performed by Bandag dealers. Samples of tread rubber are buffed, cemented and cured using cushion gum. These samples are then pulled apart in order

The world's leading tyre retreader, Bandag, is well-known for its commitment to quality products, but with value added services now also being offered through its dealers and truck service centres, it seems to catch on there as well.

to check the strength of the bond.

Biannually, all dealers go through a quality certification programme. The Bandag Manufacturing Excellence Programme (MEP) is used to ensure that Bandag Retreads are manufactured to Bandag's global quality specifications on a consistent basis.

But product quality is one thing. Quality service is another. BTS is a new franchise concept from Bandag which complements the existing Bandag dealer network. Only Bandag retreads and approved Bandag services are offered at a BTS centre to ensure a consistent, reliable and quality product/service nationwide. The BTS services are focused on controlling the "five tyre mileage thieves" which are:

- incorrect wheel and axle alignment
- improper wheel balancing
- inappropriate tyre pressures
- improper tyre/tread selection for applications; and
- truck mechanical problems.

Five of Bandag's local franchisees are now striving to get ISO 90001 accreditation as well, with Tonway Tyres being the first to have achieved it recently.

In addition to its huge selection of retreads, Bandag is also in the position to offer fleets an industry-leading tyre management software package, Profleet, which will manage a fleet's tyres "from cradle to grave" and other tyre monitoring tools. It also runs a 24/7 breakdown service through a dedicated call centre through nearly 180 service providers.



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