

JET FUEL STOCK IS STABLE AND MEETING CURRENT DEMAND

The supply of jet fuel to airlines flying in-and-out of OR Tambo International Airport is stable and continues to meet the demand of airlines, says Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) Chief Executive Officer, Mpumi Mpofu. This in spite of disruptions to the transportation of the jet fuel-value chain as a result of many factors initially starting with the railway infrastructure damage caused by recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), resulting in *force majeure* being declared by certain companies.

As a result of the floods, approximately 140 sections of Transnet freight rail lines were damaged on the route to Johannesburg. Of the 67 rail tanks en-route to OR Tambo International Airlines, only 11 arrived, with 56 remaining behind.

It is estimated that Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) will only be able to repair the damaged rail infrastructure by the 9th June, and this has necessitated ACSA, TFR and oil companies to develop an interim plan to have sufficient jet fuel at O.R Tambo International Airport. The new proposal in place involving stakeholders, is to transport the remaining 56 rail tanks to NATREF at Sasolburg and pipe it to OR Tambo.

The status quo at ACSA

ACSA has issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM- the usual manner of communicating with pilots), to formally notify international and domestic airlines across the globe, where necessary, to tanker in (refuel) from other ACSA airports because supply is not hampered. O.R. Tambo International Airports is currently operating on three to four days' worth of stock which will be sustained over the next six weeks. We have confirmation by National Petroleum Refiners of South Africa (NATREF) of an additional supply of 14 million litres of jet fuel. Additionally, we are expecting a shipment of 10 million litres on 5th May which will assist in stabilizing ACSA's fuel levels to approximately three to four days' worth of stock.

Mpofu has assured airlines that there will be sufficient fuel at O.R Tambo International Airport. "This situation has created uncertainty amongst international airlines, but I want to assure our airline partners and passengers that there is adequate fuel at OR Tambo International Airport and all our airports. We are in continued engagements with oil suppliers to share stock. Some international airlines are in the process of confirming the availability of stock directly with their suppliers", says Mpofu.

Mpofu emphasized the importance of the aviation industry as an enabler of economic development, facilitation of people and goods within the country, regions, and global markets, thus making it a strategic sector for the country. The airline industry is key in supporting the recovery and growth of our Southern African region still reeling from the devastating impact of Covid-19. Aviation is a key driver of trade and tourism, and ACSA together with relevant partners have developed mitigating plans are in place. Before airlines take drastic decisions to cancel flights, given the perceived uncertainty of jet fuel availability at OR Tambo International Airport, they are **encouraged to contact ACSA**".

Contact details: Group Executive: Operations Management, Terence Delomoney on 082 414 8815.

Tel +27 11 723 1400 Fax +27 11 453 9354

Western Precinct, Aviation Park, O.R. Tambo International Airport, 1 Jones Road, Kempton Park, Gauteng, South Africa, 1632

P O Box 75480, Gardenvue, Gauteng, South Africa, 2047

www.airports.co.za



AIRPORTS COMPANY
SOUTH AFRICA

ENDS

Media enquiries:

Gopolang Peme, Group Manager: Communications (Acting), Airports Company South Africa

E-mail: gopolang.peme@airports.co.za; Mobile: 067 422 9988

Tel +27 11 723 1400 Fax +27 11 453 9354

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