

Goncalves notes that electronic initiating systems are efficient and time saving, especially on larger mines, where a reduced number of blasting days would be of benefit, allowing for production to be increased.

The efficiency of this technology will increase the productivity in the mining sectors. He adds that the company is currently involved in large platinum-, coal-, gold and diamond-mining operations.

One of the outstanding features of the electronic detonator is that it improves safety on mining sites, which is of primary concern to mine bosses when dealing with blasting operations.

"AEL believes that electronic detonators are used to optimise mining operations and environmental control during blasting operations. With this new technology comes a fundamental change in the way blasting operations are undertaken," Goncalves says.

Further, as is experienced with change in any industry, there will be some resistance to implementing the new technology. Although the new technology has benefits, a lot more training is required to operate it safely and successfully.

With the change from the traditional blasting systems to the more technologically advanced options, AEL provides extensive training with its electronic

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DIGISHOT PLUS

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detonators offering. "We follow an intensive training programme with the customer, and only after personnel have been certified competent, are they allowed to undertake blasting operations on their own," he says.

AEL's electronic detonators are already used in a number of regions, such as the US, Latin America, Australia, Indonesia, Southern Africa, Central Africa, West Africa and Europe. Application in diverse operations around the globe require the electronic detonators to work in all kinds of environments, with varying climate conditions. AEL's electronic detonators are able to operate in temperatures

ranging from 80 °C to -30 °C.

The detonators are also suitable for application in shaft sinking operations and deep-level underground mining, allowing mines to minimise danger while blasting continues.

AEL has an extensive range of products on the market, including the Digishot Plus electronic initiation system, introduced in 2009, for surface blasting applications, and the Quickshot centralised blasting system, which was also introduced in 2009. These products are designed by specialist electronic initiation systems developer DetNet, and are produced locally.