

THE POST - TUESDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2006

RSZ saving K1bn through curbing fuel pilferage

By Florence Bupe

RAILWAY Systems of Zambia Limited (RSZ) is saving an average of K1 billion through strict measures to curb fuel pilferage, general manager Babe Botana has disclosed.

And RSZ chief technical manager Alon Wayn has said that RSZ will rehabilitate an estimated 2,000 wagons before the end of this year in a bid to enhance operations.

In an interview, Botana said previously, the company was losing substantial amounts of money through fuel siphoned from locomotives in transit.

"Previously, we would spend between K2.5 billion and K3 billion per month on fuel purchases due to rampant pilferages from trains that were in transit", Botana said. "But after the introduction of measures to contain the scourge we have been able to save at least K1 billion every month.

He said RSZ has introduced fuel tank seals with unique colours at various stations to address the problem.

"With the use of seals, we are able to know whether anyone had attempted to pilfer fuel from the tank because once it is broken, one cannot replace it with a similar seal as we have unique kinds at every station," Botana said. "This may seem to be simple technology but we've been able to save huge amounts of money this way."

Botana further said RSZ would soon embark on technological projects that would allow the company to detect any operational interruptions digitally and that using computer chips, train traffic controllers would be alerted the moment anyone tampered with routine operations.

In addition, Botana said that plans to monitor train movements electronically as opposed to the current Paper Order System, were advanced and would be implemented as soon as government granted approval.

"We are already testing the Track Warrant System (TWS) and we have submitted our project to government for approval. This system will allow us to monitor traffic via electronic means and do away with the current use of phones and radios," he said.

And Wayn said the company would rehabilitate 2,000 wagons by the end of this year.

He said 1,000 wagons have been repaired so far that at the rate of handling 25 wagons per week, the company would meet the target.

"We have the expertise that we need locally, there is no need to bring in foreign labour," Wayn said. "Our workshops have equipment that is in good working order and it is important that we utilize the facilities that we have."

He said RSZ now has the capacity to lease out wagons to other countries in the region besides ensuring adequate fleet availability locally.