

East London Airport

www.airports.co.za



On the runway to the nation's future

If South Africa has been through enormous change over the past twenty years, much the same is true of the aviation industry. Michael Kernekamp, Airport Manager at East London Airport, on the Eastern Cape, has witnessed the transformation of both and the impact this has on a growing airport.

Welcome to East London Airport ACSA



Business continues as usual at East London despite its R180 million runway upgrades

Kernekamp joined East London Airport as a junior fireman and has worked his way up the ladder to his current role, overseeing all operational aspects at this busy location: “We are the gateway to this area and today, with globalisation an important factor in the new South Africa, we play a critical role for the economy of the Eastern Cape,” he affirms.

He says that his experience over the last two decades has taught him valuable lessons as he plans operations today; “I have been in my current position for coming up to four years and working my way up the chain gave me a good foundation for what is required on the operational side of aviation. Today we train our staff to multi-skill (something Kernekamp had learnt to do) and this gives our people good exposure to various elements of the airport operation.

“Since I first came here there have been many changes in the airport infrastructure and we’ve seen significant changes in capacity for the new terminal building which is certainly a lot more aesthetically pleasing for passengers,” he adds.



East London flies to four main destinations: Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth

Today East London Airport is a thriving hive of industry and plays host to around 700,000 passengers each year, who fly on four airlines: SA Airways, SA Express, 1Time and Airlink. Kernekamp says that the airline has four main destinations, flying to Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth – and that the majority of passengers are businessmen and women – a fairly unique demographic and one that is growing, given the development around the hinterland of the airport:

“The Mercedes Benz plant located in East London is the backbone to the local economy; we derive a significant spin-off of customer as a result; also a number of politicians use the airport as the main administrative headquarters is based in the region,” says Kernekamp.

“We have an industrial development zone situated close to the airport and with significant international interest in investment which is attracting passengers to the area. The industrial zone is being marketed on its proximity to us

and we hope that this will in turn grow business further,” he explains.

East London Airport is one of nine airports owned by Airports Company South Africa, an organisation established back in 1993 and is a state-owned entity. Whilst the airport operates closely with sister locations, Kernekamp says that it has a fair degree of autonomy.

There are approximately 400 employees working at the airport of which 63 are Airports Company South Africa employees who cover a variety of key tasks including security, fire, maintenance, and of course safety services. Kernekamp places great importance on training staff and says that retention of skilled workers is critical: “Employees are our most important asset and we want our competent people to deliver good services but also to develop their own skills. There is a lot of regulatory training but we also encourage development on a one-to-one basis to improve employment options and each department puts together its own programme.”



Freight business is likely to increase at East London with the development of a nearby industrial zone

ADB South African business model embraces consulting, design, manufacturing, supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance, all of which are designed to offer our clients an exceptional return on their investments.

ADB South Africa comprises multiple business units, each with their own area of expertise and an ability to focus on the clients' needs.

ADB South Africa prides itself in being a company that has been built using specific building blocks – passion, ethics, spirit, commitment and sincerity – and we are committed to promoting these ideals amongst our staff and sub-contractors, and in our approach to business in general.

www.adb-airfieldsolutions.com

ADB

Airfield Solutions



ADB Airfield Solutions (Pty) Ltd

Second Floor, Rivonia Village | Cnr Mutual Road & Rivonia Boulevard South | Rivonia 2128, Johannesburg

Tel: +27 (0)11 525 9343 | Fax: +27 (0)11 525 9348

Whilst training remains ongoing, the lifespan of an asphalt runway is less durable. At present East London Airport is going through a major runway rehabilitation project at a cost of R180 million; it is the biggest project that the airport has ever undertaken and is a necessary evil, as Kernekamp describes:

“In the past we have worked to the short or medium term on asphalt but every 30–odd years an airport should go through a major runway rehabilitation programme. The work entails the removal of a surface layer on the two runways and taxi areas and replacing these along with paint markings and upgrading our runway flight strips and runway end safety areas.”

Such a comprehensive programme is not without its challenges and Kernekamp is conscious of the risks that have to be mitigated: “We are running a business and simply cannot afford to disrupt passengers, so when the airport closes at 9pm the contractors

start to work. There is always an element of the unknown and we can never be sure that a piece of equipment won't breakdown – my nightmare scenario is getting to work in the morning to learn that we have had to close down a runway due to a breakage overnight.

“We also have to guarantee the asphalt supply before any runway can be ripped up and we are currently holding meetings with the contractors on a weekly basis. So far they have been practicing on the taxi ways to understand the risks involved and we want to be sure of equipment, procedures and supplies before they are let loose on the runways,” Kernekamp continues.

Work commenced on 9th January this year and is set to continue until March 2013 – although Kernekamp is pleased to report that the project is running ahead of schedule. The upgraded runways will help to prepare East London Airport for a much-hoped for leap in passenger numbers:



Integrated Design Consultants (IDC) is made up of principals and professional staff with a wide range of local and international experience. In addition to projects undertaken during the past twenty years, the principals and senior staff have a wide range of previous experience gained both locally and internationally.

IDC Architects

IDC Architects c.c Eastern Cape REG NO. CK96 08483/23
Members: B. Ilori (Principal), P. Thompson (Associate),
R. Kriel (Associate), C. Louw (Associate)

- Architecture
- Research & Development
- Computer Aided Design
- Community Project Management & Facilitation Services
- Heritage

15 Belgrave Road, Belgravia, East London 5201

Tel : +27 43 743 0522 / +27 87 150 5726

Fax : +27 43 743 0534

E-mail : idcarc@mweb.co.za

www.idcarchitects.co.za



Retail is an important revenue stream at East London which has a high percentage of business travellers

“We have the terminal capacity to increase our passenger capacity to 1.2 million a year,” he states, “we have seen a particular pattern and business travel accounts for roughly 80 per cent of our passengers, however in December their numbers reduce but are replaced by holiday makers, so there is never a real drop off in numbers. Tourism is a market we are putting lots of focus on as this area has potential.

“Our tourist number only accounts for about four per cent of our annual figures which is very low compared to our sister airports and we are working hard now to market the area. We had hoped that the FIFA World Cup™ would showcase the area globally but undoubtedly the recession hasn't helped.”

Meanwhile freight business offers an exciting prospect and Kernekamp says that the new industrial zone includes businesses producing perishable goods like flowers and fresh fish which the airport is likely to transport. At the

moment most freight involves shipping motor vehicle components for Mercedes Benz and the growing hinterland will help East London Airport to continue to thrive.

The completion of the runway project is likely to be the main change for the foreseeable future, although Kernekamp has had a glimpse into the longer-term:

“Our bottom line remains healthy – which gives us the opportunity to concentrate our efforts on improving the customer experience here at East London.

“We want the experience to be seamless for our customers, the future is very much down to innovation, new technology and how this will improve efficiency and in South Africa there are great opportunities for growth. We recently attended a conference which suggested that by 2050 passenger numbers will have doubled – and we should prepare accordingly, after all we're living in a global village.”

East London Airport

www.airports.co.za

+27 (0)43 706-0304

customercare@airports.co.za