**National Assembly**

**Question No 40**

**Mr M S F de Freitas (DA) to ask the Minister of Transport:**

(a) What are the (i) reasons and (ii) causes for the shortage of fuel at each airport and (b) on what dates were there fuel shortages in each month (i) in the past three financial years and (ii) since 1 April 2022? NW40E

**3. REPLY**

**OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

1. Reasons (i) and Causes (ii):
   1. ORTIA receives the bulk (approximately 70%) of its fuel from the Natref (inland refinery) via a pipeline, and the remaining 30% from Durban via rail.
   2. The fuel from Durban, that is railed to ORTIA, is fully imported, as there is no longer any refining of jet fuel in Durban
   3. The fuel is supplied primarily by the oil majors that operate in S Africa.
   4. The fuel is stored in storage tanks at the bulk storage facility at the airport, and delivered to aircraft via a fuel hydrant system reticulated from the storage facility to the apron parking stands.
   5. The fuel storage facility, into plane fuel service, operation and maintenance is operated by a service provider appointed by ACSA, in this case a JV consortium of the oil majors.
   6. The main causes of fuel challenges are delays in crude imports, delays in refined jet fuel product, damage to rail infrastructure, and technical issues in the fuel storage facility and/or hydrant system.
   7. Over the last few years South Africa has also lost significant jet fuel refining capacity (from five refineries to one), which means there is more reliance on import fuel than was previously the case.
   8. There is neither strategic stock nor significant buffer stock of jet fuel held in the country, which means the supply of jet fuel operates largely on a just in time system (with only about five days buffer stock held at the airport storage tanks).
   9. The above situation also implies that airlines need to provide accurate forecasts of their activities so that suppliers are able to place orders on time.
2. Incidents and reasons of fuel issues
   1. There were no fuel issues or significant fuel challenges between 2019 and March 2022.
   2. During March 2022, there was a delay in the import of crude oil, which resulted in the Natref refinery not having sufficient raw product to refine jet fuel. This did not have any significant impact on operations as there was sufficient buffer stock of refined product. However, it did reduce the levels the buffer stock which is normally maintained at about five days, to below this level. This situation would have normalised itself once the full crude oil imports were re-instated.
   3. During the latter part of April 2022, the floods in KZN resulted in damage to rail infrastructure which meant the 30% supply of fuel to ORT was shut off. At the same time air traffic movements was starting to recover at a much faster rate (post COVID recovery), this increased demand, together with already lower stock holding levels resulted in the initial fuel shortage experienced. This situation was fully mitigated by the end of May 2022.
   4. The other significant fuel related disruption occurred on the 28th December 2022. This was due to a failure of a valve on the fuel hydrant system which locked in a closed position. This resulted in no fuel being supplied via the hydrant for two hours at the start of operations, resulting in 41 flights being delayed in the morning, and then a compounded impact of aircraft delays for the entire day until the backlog was cleared.

**CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (CTIA)**

1. Reasons (i) and Causes (ii)
   1. There is a single refinery in Cape Town which is not fully operational at the moment, meaning that almost 100% of jet fuel into CTIA is imported.
   2. This fuel is transported from the refinery to the airport storage tanks via road tankers, and then via the airport fuel hydrant system into plane.
   3. A similar operational and contracting arrangement exists in CTIA as in ORTIA.
   4. Most of the Oil majors supply fuel at CTIA but are mostly reliant on the single refinery for supply (which supply is currently being imported).
   5. Fuel challenges are mainly as a result of delayed shipments, reduced number of road trucks from the refinery, or fuel being contaminated or out of spec whilst in storage at the refinery. Incidents and reasons for fuel issues
2. Incidents
   1. There were no significant fuel issues between 2019 and September 2022 at CIA
   2. Between 30 September and 7th October 2022, a shipment of fuel to the refinery was delayed, and due to the limited buffer stock, this impacted on supply to airlines.

**Other Airports**

There were no significant incidents of fuel shortages at other airports.