

RBCT helps 4.3m tons of coal leave SA

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Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT) - one of the world's largest leading coal export terminals - saw a 6% year-on-year (y/y) fall in tonnage shipped to 4.3m tons (Mt) after a 20.6% y/y surge to 6.2Mt in April.



Last year RBCT shipped a total of 68.3Mt, a 4.3% increase on 2011. The increase in the first five months of this year was also 4.3% y/y.

Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) closed the coal line from Mpumalanga to Richards Bay for its annual maintenance from 14 to 25 May and this meant that the number of trains carrying coal to RBCT fell to 405 in from 742 in April. Only 3.2Mt of coal was supplied to the port in May, the lowest volume of coal railed to RBCT since June 2011.

The 1.1Mt difference between coal shipped and received meant that the coal stocks at the port were drawn down to 2.5Mt at the end of May, the lowest end-of-month stock level since January 2011.

RBCT has a capacity to export 91Mt a year and it is due to decide in October this year whether to expand that capacity to 110Mt. The annualised rate of coal exports in March was 88.19Mt, but this slipped to 75.93Mt in April.

Coal exports from RBCT in October 2011 reached a record shipment of 7.381Mt in a month, which on an annualised basis is equivalent to 88.6Mt for the year.

State-owned freight and logistics group TFR is aiming to increase coal exports from 68Mt a year to 97.5Mt over the next few years as it invests in more rolling stock.