

**Press release from Epiroc Surface division  
June, 2023**

## **The autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII outperforms manually operated drill rigs**

**The comparison has been ongoing in the heart of Australia for just over a year – and now it's officially confirmed: The autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII surface drill rig outperforms manual rigs on both productivity and efficiency.**

Epiroc has partnered with Fortescue in Western Australia to test and evaluate the autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII. The surface drill rig has shown outstanding results during the testing phase, including increased productive utilization – in autonomous mode, the drill rig has zero idling time during transitions between tramming, positioning and drilling – which provides consistent efficiency in every hole cycle and reduces the total time spent to complete a drill pattern.

“We are very excited about the progress we have seen over the last year together with our partner Fortescue. The market has been eager to see what benefits this new technology can bring to mining operations, so this is an important milestone – both for autonomous drilling in general and for Epiroc as a company”, says Christopher Blignaut, Automation Manager, Surface division.

“Throughout testing, the autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII rig consistently achieved hole accuracy targets set beyond what was achievable with manual operations. The benefits of this can be seen through more efficient drilling and blasting results”, says Christopher Blignaut.

The autonomous journey for Epiroc goes back to 2014 when the first autonomous Pit Viper drill was released. Further advancement occurred in 2018 when Epiroc commenced a pilot project with an autonomous SmartROC D65 MKI surface crawler in Timmins, Canada. During this period, the team acquired extensive understanding and expertise in autonomous technology development for crawler drill rigs.

“During our previous projects we have gained extensive knowledge and experience which we have used throughout the development of the autonomous technology. The success that we accumulated from the project in Timmins was fundamental to the results that we see today with the autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII in Australia, says Christopher Blignaut.

The focus for the testing thus far has been targeting production drilling applications.

“Together with Fortescue we will progress to testing autonomous pre-split drilling and eventually focus on even more complex drilling scenarios, like contour”, says Christopher Blignaut.

“In our conversations with the mining houses globally we see increasing interest in autonomous operations thanks to the numerous benefits it provides, and we are dedicated to supporting these companies by introducing the Autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII into their drilling operations. Autonomous technology implementation capitalizes even further from adjustments to existing processes and a transition to new ways of working. At Epiroc, we are ready to support our business partners in accelerating this transformation.”, says Mayya Popova, Product Manager Automation at Epiroc.

*The autonomous SmartROC D65 MKII for production drilling applications is available commercially from June 2023. Please contact a local Customer Center for further information.*

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**Epiroc's Surface division** develops, manufactures and markets a wide range of rock drilling equipment and solutions for use in surface mining, construction, quarries, as well as water well applications worldwide. It also provides customers with exploration equipment, tooling and advanced orebody data analysis. The division has production in Sweden, the United States, Canada, China, India, Australia and South Africa. Please see [www.epiroc.com](http://www.epiroc.com) for product offerings.