

COMPLIANCE PRIORITIES OUTCOMES

Positive communication - Metalliferous mines and Tier 1 quarries

Positive Communication

The Resources Regulator has noted a recent increase of vehicle related incidents across the industry including collisions. A contributing factor has been identified as inadequate positive communication systems and processes. The assessment tool was designed to assess basic positive communication processes in place at a mine and ensure that identified controls are being implemented effectively.

What we did

Assessments were undertaken at 33 mines between July 2021 and December 2021. The following criteria was assessed at each site:

- confirm vehicle operators can explain the correct use of positive communication
- two-way radios are used appropriately
- traffic rules describe the communication requirements identified in the risk assessment
- right of way rules are observed
- required traffic management tools are available such as:
 - traffic control equipment and signs
 - separation and demarcating bunding materials and equipment
 - artificial lighting
 - positive communication indicators
- confirm vehicle operators can explain who has right of way in a given set of circumstances.

What we found

- Workers interviewed were able to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the requirement for the use of positive communication, although it was not observed being used in all cases when required.
- Traffic rules have been defined in most of the mines assessed. There is a small percentage of mines that need to review or produce traffic rules and ensure the surface and underground rules control the hazards identified in the risk assessment.
- Some of the mines assessed had limited roadway signage for operators to observe and understand the traffic rules.
- Call up points in the underground mines assessed were not used in all cases during the inspections.
- Workers on foot were not observed carrying hand-held radios where it was identified as a control.
- Documentation reviewed at some of the mines was either in draft or had not been reviewed within the identified time frames.

Outcomes

The assessments resulted in the following notices being issued:

- eight Section 191 improvement notices
- sixteen Section 23 notices of concern.

Recommendations

- Review training and information activities related to positive communication to ensure that the controls identified in supporting risk assessments are included.
- Retrain workers on identified controls required to be implemented.
- Supervisors should conduct task observations to ensure identified controls are understood, implemented and are adequate.

Next steps

We will continue to assess positive communication management in metalliferous mines and Tier 1 quarries through planned inspections and targeted interventions. Results of these inspections will be monitored to determine whether a more detailed assessment of industry practice is required.

Mine operators are also encouraged to review the outcomes of this report and determine potential areas of improvement that may be applicable to their own operations.

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