Compliance priority report

Hazard reporting of safety-related issues – Tier 1 quarries and metalliferous mines

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Executive summary

A crucial part of the NSW Resources Regulator's *Incident prevention strategy* involves compliance priority programs for mines and petroleum sites. This involves proactively assessing a topic which is an emerging risk across the industry, predominantly determined from incident data or other evolving industry trends. Although these topics may also be contained within the Resources Regulator planned inspection programs, the aim of compliance priority programs is to gather further information and knowledge about how the industry is managing and controlling an issue which may not be related to a specific principal hazard.

This particular program was initiated in response to a survey undertaken on behalf of the Mine Safety Advisory Council on safety reporting. Worker responses to this survey indicated that while knowledge of incident and hazard reporting systems was high across both permanent and non-permanent worker groups, there were some feedback that safety concerns at their workplace were not always appropriately addressed; that it was not always easy to report a safety concern or that there was no feedback regarding the issue being addressed.

The intent of this program was to verify the survey feedback regarding worker knowledge of incident and hazard reporting systems, and whether these systems effectively facilitated feedback to people who raised safety concerns.

This report summarises the assessment findings from the compliance priority program which targeted reporting of safety related issues and covered 37 large quarries and metalliferous mines during the period from July 2022 to December 2022. Several key elements were assessed as part of this program and included:

- systems to report safety hazards and identify safety improvements
- level of encouragement for workers to use the system
- how actions arising from reported issues are recorded and monitored through to completion
- feedback processes to persons who initially raise hazards or improvements
- knowledge and use of these systems by workers

Legislative requirements and published guidance relating to reporting of safety related issues are listed in Appendix A.

Findings

Overall, the findings were positive. All mines assessed during the program had systems implemented to report and record hazards and incidents, and workers in general had a good understanding of these systems,

Assessed element: *Systems to report safety hazards and suggest safety improvements.*

All mines assessed had developed and implemented a documented system for reporting on incidents and hazards. Some mines are using the innovation of utilising a phone app.

Assessed element: *Level of encouragement for workers to use the system.*

All mines assessed had an induction which included the details on the hazard and incident reporting systems. Toolbox or pre-start meetings were commonly used to encourage the reporting of hazards and incidents, however, not all mines record incidents or hazards raised during these meetings and rely upon job task or work orders for corrective actions.

Several mines have a safety share program where employees take turns in the meeting to share a safety concern. Some concerns raised by workers can relate to incidents which may have occurred off-site, however, are still work related. Driving to road conditions in wet conditions is a typical example.

Specific training for supervisors on how to encourage workers to report incidents or hazards was generally not provided. Many mines utilised on the job training for new supervisors. Several mines with mature safety systems had formal supervisor development programs.

Assessed element: *How actions arising from reported issues are recorded and monitored through to completion*

All mines were using a systematic approach, typically utilising a database application, to record and track incidents and hazards.

Assessed element: *Feedback processes to persons who initially raise hazards or improvements*

Feedback to workers were not always systematic and relied upon communication between supervisors and workers. Several mines maintained a weekly report from the incident data-base and displayed the information on the notice boards. Best practice also included weekly, or shift change review of open reports and updates on the actions taken to close the incident or hazard.

Assessed element: *knowledge and use of these systems by workers*

Feedback from workers through interviews, review of report books and incident databases indicate widespread awareness, and positive use of the systems.

One common issue identified was the reporting of a hazard by a worker to supervisor who fixes it immediately without it then being recorded in the hazard reporting system. Common examples of being applied included addressing poor windrow/bunding standards on open edges or fixing poor road conditions.

In several underground mines other conditions such as torn and poor ventilation or dusty roads were not reported and accepted as part of the working environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined, mine operators should consider the following recommendations:

- Mines must have a system in place to provide feedback and monitor actions recorded to correct the hazard or incident reported by workers.

- This system should also consider the provision of feedback directly to the person who raised the incident or hazard report.

- Review training and information activities related to the development of supervisor skills and knowledge with a focus on organisational behaviours and culture.

- Ensure that workers and supervisors understand the importance of recording hazards, regardless of whether they are immediately rectified, to allow for proper analysis of the prevalence and nature of hazards. This will in turn will facilitate the ability to systematically eliminate hazards, rather than continuously taking remedial action to address the same hazard.

Notices issued

Of the 27 sites assessed under the inspection program, 2 separate mines were issued notices relating to hazard reporting of safety related issues, while some mines were given notices in relation to other matters. For the purposes of this report, contraventions related to other matters were removed from the analysis. The relevant notices issued for this program plan were examined in detail and Table 2 below lists the notices issued by type and details.

Table 2: Notices issued for the compliance priority program – hazard reporting of safety related issues – tier 1 quarries and metalliferous mines

NOTICE TYPE	TOTAL ISSUED	NUMBER OF MINES
s.195 prohibition notice	-	-
s.191 improvement notice	-	-
s.23 notice of concerns	2	2
Total	2	2

Further information

For more information on safety assessment programs, the findings outlined in this report, or other mine safety information, please contact the NSW Resources Regulator:

Contact type	Contact details
Email	cau@regional.nsw.gov.au
Incident reporting	To report an incident or injury call 1300 814 609 or log in to the Regulator Portal
Website	www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/
Address	NSW Resources Regulator 516 High Street Maitland NSW 2320

Appendix A. Legislative requirements and published guidance relating to reporting of safety related issues

The following is a list of certain legislative requirements for the reporting of safety related issues referred to in this report, as provided by the Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2022 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

- Review December 2019 of all fatal accidents in Queensland mines and quarries from 2000 to 2019 https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2020/5620T197.pdf

- Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2022 [NSW] Section124 Duty to notify regulator of certain incidents