

Investigation information release

Date: April 2025

Worker seriously injured after roof collapse engulfs drill rig at gold mine

Incident date: 9 March 2025

Event: Significant roof collapse onto a jumbo drill rig

Location: 40 km northeast of West Wyalong (off Condobolin Rd), West Wyalong NSW

Overview

The mine

Cowal Gold Mine is operated by Evolution Mining Pty Ltd. It is both an open cut and underground mine. The mine commenced operations in 2005. The mine operator engaged Barminco Limited to conduct mining operations in the underground workings. Barminco provides mining services to hard rock underground mining operations globally.

The incident

During ground support installation, drilling operations using a jumbo drill rig were conducted to create holes for friction-type bolts (split sets) to be installed. The larger diameter bolt was forced into smaller predrilled holes to generate friction and provide strata support. The split sets were arranged in specific patterns and spacings according to the type of strata. Initial 'stubbie' bolts, about one metre long, were first installed to secure the ground support mesh to the walls and roof. Longer bolts, about 2.4 metres, were then installed to provide strata support in accordance with the mine's ground support standard.

Two Barminco workers were undertaking ground support installation in ore drive north 15 on the 690 level, about 500 metres below the surface, at about 2:02 pm on 9 March 2025. One performed the role of jumbo operator and the other the role of offsider (nipper), with each having specific duties. Ordinarily, an offsider may be positioned alongside or in front of the jumbo, but at the time of the incident, he was momentarily absent from these areas.

During operations, a significant roof collapse occurred. The collapsed roof was estimated to be about 10.9 metres in length by 4.4 metres tapering in towards the rear of the drive, with a wedge shape extending to an apex of about 2.7 metres. The jumbo, including the operator's cabin, was engulfed and partially buried by the material. The operator suffered a laceration while extricating

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himself from the jumbo and material, but the offsider was not injured. Nearby workers promptly attended the scene and provided assistance.

Figure 1: The jumbo drill rig partially buried by the roof collapse



The investigation

Regulator inspectors and investigators responded to the incident. An investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident will explore, among other things, the:

- mechanism of the incident, including its foreseeability and the reasonably practicable steps available to guard against it
- operation of the plant and equipment involved in the incident
- adequacy of the following:
 - mine and contractors' safety management systems including risk assessments and procedures
 - the safety management systems in identifying and addressing changes in strata conditions before continuing with planned mining activities
 - contractor management plans, policies and procedures
 - instruction, training, work practices, experience and supervision of workers.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- [Resources Regulator fact sheet falling objects in metalliferous mines and small quarries](#)
- [How to manage work health and safety risks SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Rockfall injuries to workers increase in underground mines](#)

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- [Consolidated report ground or strata failure underground metalliferous mines](#)
- [Clause 215\(1\) to \(2\) WHS Regulation - Powered Mobile Plant Specific Control Measures](#)

About this information release

The Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious incident in the mining industry. Further information may be published as it becomes available.

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