

# SAFETY ALERT



## DANGERS OF LARGE UNSUPPORTED VOIDS IN UNDERGROUND MINES

### INCIDENT

This Safety Alert highlights the potential risks created by large unsupported voids in underground mines.

### CIRCUMSTANCES

Some mining methods used in underground mines can create large unsupported voids.

These voids may be present for the life of the mine, or they may be filled with waste from mining processes.

Geological and orebody conditions and production rates can result in a range of hazards that can cause instability and possibly an airblast.

These situations have the potential to cause significant injury or damage.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

Mines should consider the following:

- Large unsupported voids are included in a hazard management system
- The hazard management system should:
  - manage all hazards associated with large unsupported voids;
  - be consistent with Clause 20 of the Mines Inspection Act and General Rule 2000;
  - include a process of ongoing risk assessment;
  - take into account any changes to the size and shape of the void, as well as any ground movement or destressing;
  - include appropriate response procedures which are initiated by predetermined triggers should mining conditions change;
  - include monitoring procedures to regularly check for these changed conditions; and
  - satisfy the Department of Mineral Resources MDG 1010 – Risk Management Handbook for the Mining Industry, and MDG 1014 – Guideline for Reviewing a Risk Assessment of Mine Equipment and Operations.
- Record on an on-going basis the knowledge of key staff and specialists and include this information in the mine safety management plan

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Regan".

R Regan  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SAFETY OPERATIONS