

SAFETY ALERT



SERIOUS ACCIDENT RESULTING FROM ROOF FALL

INCIDENT

An opal miner was seriously injured and required extensive hospital treatment as a result of a roof collapse in his claim.

CIRCUMSTANCES

An opal miner working his claim had removed a large area of ground and left a large span of roof unsupported. In opal mining, this practice is called "ballrooming". A one metre (three foot) wide hole had been created into this area using a Calweld drilling rig, and this area was also left unsupported.

INVESTIGATION

The ground looked reasonable to the naked eye, and the unsupported roof span was in the order of 6 to 8 metres.

The roof collapse was centred around the one metre (three foot) Calweld hole that had been completely ballroomed. The miner was struck by falling rock when the unsupported span collapsed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Spans of unsupported roof should be kept to a minimum.
- Propping and ground support should be carried out in areas of large extraction.
- Ballrooming under shafts creates 'loose ends' and introduces weaknesses in the roof strata.
- A systematic process of sounding and assessing the roof is required on a daily basis.

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