Targeted assessment program

NSW RESOURCES REGULATOR

Improving the safety and health performance of the NSW mining and petroleum industries is a priority for the NSW Resources Regulator.

This involves ensuring compliance with work health and safety legislation.

In line with a better regulatory approach, the following 'pillars' form the basis of the Resources Regulator's Incident Prevention Strategy:

→ the development of a framework for risk-based intervention incorporating risk control measures

→ consideration of the impacts of human and organisational factors

→ the collection, analysis and use of quality data.

Targeted assessment program (TAP)

A crucial part of the Regulator's strategy involves implementing a scheduled and 'targeted' assessment program for mines and petroleum sites. This is a focused approach to assessing an operation's control of critical risks, through an evaluation of the effectiveness of control measures implemented, in an organisation's safety management system (SMS). It involves sampling specific elements of the safety management system, rather than a holistic, audit-based approach.

Targeted assessment is an effective tool in exposing 'fatal risks' in an organisation's safety management system. It will initially focus on principal hazards and the hazards that are managed under principal control plans, as these hazards have the greatest potential for causing fatalities if not effectively controlled.

This program involves both documentary and on-site assessment, to draw conclusions and make recommendations for compliance and sustained improvement.

Assessment arrangements

Targeted assessments are managed in three stages:

Stage 1: pre-arrival arrangements, review and information exchange

Several weeks prior to our arrival, participant sites will receive a request for specified components of the principal hazard management plan (PHMP) and principal control plan (PCP), along with any other relevant supporting documentation.

The operator of a site will also be notified of:

→ assessment visit schedules

→ assessment team composition

→ focus areas for the assessment

→ resources required by the assessment team

→ tools to be used in the assessment.

Stage 2: on-site assessment

This site visit will be looking for a demonstration that:

→ systems and procedures described in the PHMP/PCP are functional in practice

→ high-risk hazards are controlled

→ the workforce is competent and confident about the SMS and risk controls relevant to their area and level of responsibility.

Stage 3: Findings, recommendations, follow-up

The assessment team will conclude whether, and to what extent, the operator has demonstrated:

→ relevant components of the safety management system comply with the minimum legislative requirements

→ how well the plans are being implemented

→ satisfactory performance in managing the principal hazards and risk

→ The assessment team will debrief site management on their findings and issue any improvement advice or recommendations required to ensure legislative compliance

A report of findings will be prepared and provided to the mine. Findings and recommendations will be published as a learning resource to industry

→ A follow-up visit to verify the progress made by the operator on actioning the recommendations outlined at the initial debriefing and assessment report may also be conducted.

What should you do?

Industry is encouraged to pre-emptively begin a review of their capacity to manage principal hazards as per the requirements under the legislation and according to good practice. Sites should ensure their approach to the management of these principal hazards is in line with the available guidance material and reflects accepted, effective control practice.

While some sites may not be included in the 'first round' of targeted assessments, if your site has risks associated with a principal hazard, Mine Safety will (at some point in time) make an assessment of your management of these risks.

More information

Advice and guidance exists to assist mines and petroleum sites meet their obligations to manage hazards and risks. Key sources of information on mining and petroleum hazards include:

→ Riskgate an interactive online risk management tool designed to assist in the analysis of priority unwanted events unique to the Australian coal mining industry. Although prepared for the coal industry, much of the information is also relevant to metalliferous and extractives operations.

→ Western Australia Department of Mines and Petroleum website

→ Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines website

→ Work Safe New Zealand High Hazards Unit website

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