

Hunt demands more from extractives

Cameron Massey - Wed, 25 Jul 2018

The quarry industry must do more to keep its workers safe and improve its health and safety record, WorkSafe's extractives chief inspector Paul Hunt says.

Thirteen weeks into the role, Hunt told the delegates at the QuarryNZ conference at Claudelands in Hamilton last week the industry is not doing enough to keep its workers safe.

"The extractives industry, not just the quarry industry, has basically killed someone every year for a long time. It isn't good enough."

New Zealand generally has a workplace fatality rate of 2.7 for every 100,000 workers. The quarry and mining sectors are killing people at four times that rate, Hunt says.

"We're just bad; we need to improve."

Although society at one time used to accept a workplace death, putting it down to bad luck, Hunt says the public now demands justice. "A workplace death is not an acceptable event - that's the bottom line."



Long road

The total recordable injury frequency rate for New Zealand across all extractives industries is 7.58 per million hours worked, compared with 1-2 in other countries, and less than 1 in Europe.

"My expectation for an extractives site is that it is running at below two or one," Hunt says. "That's what good practice is, not best practice but good practice. We're still hurting too many people, by a long way."

Hunt wants the extractives industry to be exemplary and take increased responsibility in light of the daunting challenge for WorkSafe of inspecting all quarries in New Zealand.

With 1,200 quarries now registered with WorkSafe, it will take the current four inspectors 10 years to inspect all of them.

Hunt is seeking to double his quarry inspectorate, which would reduce the average time of an inspection of the same quarry to once every five years.

Busy is good

The extractives industry must be committed to improving its health and safety record, Hunt says.

"Commitment is commitment - if you want to improve safety, you actually have to do everything that that you should do. There is only one type of commitment, and that is total."

"When the economy is good, it is a good time to fix things."

"Stop moaning and groaning, just get on and get people trained."