

Increased H&S obligations for operators

Simon Hartley - Fri, 29 Oct 2021



Exemptions from health and safety regulations for alluvial mines and quarries are expected to end by February – meaning operators must be prepared to review their documented health and safety management systems.

MinEx chief executive Wayne Scott tells *Inside Resources* all quarries and alluvial mines will be required to prepare a documented health and safety management system, and also undertake baseline staff health monitoring of permanent employees.

There is also a requirement for the reporting of incidents and the supply of a quarterly report, Scott says.

“Smaller scale operations have until now operated under exemptions to avoid imposition of disproportionate requirements on lower risk mining operations,” Scott says.

However, the changes afoot are to reflect the original intent of the Health and Safety at Work (Mining operations and Quarrying Operations) Regulations, he says.

Scott made a presentation on the pending changes while attending Minerals West Coast’s annual general meeting in Reef ton yesterday.

Cabinet approved the changes in December 2019; which were subsequently delayed by Covid-19. Implementation is expected by 1 February, albeit with a 1-2 year transition period for some of the changes.

Certificates of Competence (CoCs)

Scott says B grade CoC holders will only be able to manage a site of four workers or fewer.

There will be a transition period to allow those currently managing a site of more than four workers to transition to an A grade CoC.

The changes will also create A and B Grade alluvial gold Certificates of Competence; however existing quarry CoCs may still be used.

Other CoC changes include the appointment of a ticketed gas monitor for coal exploration activities, while electrical and mechanical superintendents are now only required for underground operations.

All sites must have a documented health and safety management system, while only underground operations need to have mechanical and electrical control plans in place.

Assessing principal hazards

Scott says the new regulations clarify a principal hazard to be where an activity “could create a risk of multiple fatalities in a single accident”.

Sites requiring an A Grade CoC must risk assess whether they have principal hazards; including roads and traffic, ground or strata instability and explosives.

Where high-risk faces are present, it is possible that geotechnical advice will have to be sought and documented.

Other changes for underground operations include clarification over the requirements for escapeways, and also having different choices for the type of seals which can be used.

Where a mine or quarry is in care and maintenance (suspended), the mine operator can take over the responsibilities of the SSE and general maintenance of plant and equipment is allowed.

Scott says once the regulations are enacted, Worksafe will be conducting workshops around the country. MinEx will also have templates, examples and guidance available for operators on the new requirements.