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QUARRYNZ: MinEx flags fatalities, training as priorities

Eamon Rood - Fri, 21 Jul 2017

Preventing quarrying fatalities and improving worker training are priorities for new MinEx chief executive officer Wayne Scott.

"I think we need to focus on the things that kill people," Scott told delegates at the QuarryNZ conference in Auckland.



He said this will require a renewed focus on the fundamentals of risk management and critical controls.

"Risk management is poorly done, generally, in our industry."

Scott listed the four biggest causes of deaths at quarries in Australia and New Zealand as: falls, including workers falling off something or having something fall on them; vehicle collisions; workers becoming entangled in equipment; and hydraulic pressure and electricity releases.

He narrowed in on collisions and entanglement as needing particular attention.

"We do that very poorly," he said of traffic management plans. Things like Hi-Vis vests and flags on utes, he said, are not enough to keep people safe from the dangers posed by heavy vehicles.

"Just keep people away from the things and we won't kill them."

Critical controls

On entanglement, he said he is aware of incidents in Australia in the past 18 months where quarry workers were entangled in equipment.

"It astounds me that we still have people getting caught in conveyors in 2017. Entanglement is still a major issue."

Avoiding situations where workers are close enough to equipment to get caught, or be hit by a large dump truck or excavator, requires a renewed focus on critical controls, Scott said.

"Because the natural progression from that is we start looking at the precursors – the things that are happening in our businesses that lead up to a fatality," he says.

"We need to be down in the dust with our people, talking about hazards and the things that can potentially kill them in the jobs they're doing, and how we can manage it."

Training

Scott also flagged training workers to ensure they are competent as another area in need of improvement.

MinEx has already spoken to the Institute of Quarrying and the Aggregate and Quarrying Association, as well as WorkSafe and MITO, about issues surrounding Certificates of Competence and ensuring Unit Standards are appropriate.

But Scott says the quarry sector needs to take the initiative and use its expertise to get workers up to speed.

"This is not the realm of MITO or WorkSafe or high schools or anyone else. We as an industry need to do more to train our people and get them competent."

"We are the ones that operate machinery, we know how to do it safely. We are the ones that need to stand up and train our people and keep them competent."

"We're in the best position to provide input to MITO and WorkSafe about which competencies are needed. We know the game."

Scott says large firms are better resourced to conduct robust training while smaller ones are stretched thin. The sector needs to acknowledge this.

"It's not too bad if you work for Fulton Hogan or Winstones or some these large organisations who have plenty of support," he said.

"But in some parts of the country there are guys who are really struggling. They don't know what they don't know, and some of us need to stand up and try and help those guys."

On this front, MinEx will be rolling out a [mentor](#) programme from within industry to help those who are falling behind.

"Mentors are a big part of my strategy going forward. We need to help the people who can't help themselves."

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