

QUARRYNZ: No escape for quarries - WorkSafe

Bernie Napp - Fri, 19 Jul 2019

WorkSafe will inspect every quarry in New Zealand for compliance with health and safety requirements. It's a question of time, the agency says, with prioritisation on mobile plant.

Of 1,844 recorded quarries, 1,083 are active, meaning it will take seven years to visit every site, chief inspector extractives Paul Hunt told 2019 QuarryNZ conference delegates yesterday in Invercargill.

"It's fair to say, this segment here, we are going to all of them this month. We will work our way around until we are finished," Hunt told *Inside Resources* of a new approach to inspections.

A further 100 sites are being checked for whether they exist, to be then added to the database.

The implication is that illegal quarries will be no longer beyond the reach of WorkSafe. *Inside Resources* knows of one such river gravel operation in Hawke's Bay, and of a site in the Wairarapa.

Already, WorkSafe is inspecting more frequently the mines and quarries deemed to be high risk, now once a year, and the low-risk mines and quarries less frequently, to prioritise its efforts.

Narrowing down to the chief causes of harm

Hunt said he is on a mission to transform New Zealand's health and safety performance, within more focus on worker health, and noting "we need to be fair and proportionate".

WorkSafe is currently finding out from a range of information sources what's causing the most harm in the mining and quarrying industries.

The current state of knowledge is that most notified events to WorkSafe from quarries are "plant collapse, overturning, failure, malfunction" and collisions involving mobile plant.

Within this category, almost half of notified incidents are overturning of mobile plant, followed by brake failure and vehicle and/or plant collisions being around 20 per cent each.

"What this is telling you is that you should be looking at mobile plant, from what is being reported," Hunt told *Inside Resources*.

Stepped up inspections

Operators can expect in future dual inspections, "with other people assisting inspectors who have more knowledge".

Hunt envisaged that being the case for inspections of, for example, electrical matters, and airborne dust where inspectors would ordinarily not have the expertise.

Hunt said he wants his inspectors to be transparent, fair, open to questions, and that operators have the right to object if they don't agree with the inspector's view, and he would respond to that.

