

Worker deaths, injuries 'disturbing'

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Two worker deaths last month involving vehicles, two serious incidents involving dangerous gasses - including one at Taylorville -- and a serious injury incident the previous month are disturbing, says a health and safety organisation.

MinEx, the mining and quarrying sector's health and safety council, says the incidents show the need for much more training on proper procedures and having detailed risk assessment done by competent people.

At the start of the month a worker at the Taylorville landfill was hospitalised in a critical condition after becoming overcome by fumes at the bottom of an excavation at the fill site. In July, an Auckland construction site worker was crushed and severely injured by a reversing crane.

Chairman Joe Edwards, says his sector had to improve its training and procedures after the Pike River disaster.

"Two deaths, a serious injury and three high risk incidents in just over a month remind us of risks that workers in many workplaces continue to face.

"We sincerely hope there will never be another Pike River but these recent incidents show the risks are still there for many workers."

In late August a man died in an incident involving mobile plant at a Balclutha work site; the next day a person died at the scene after being hit by a vehicle in a logging yard in Palmerston North.

Earlier in the month, two workers at a North Shore factory which handles solvents were overcome by fumes in a tank.

Three firefighters came to their aid. All were taken to hospital and later discharged.

Joe Edwards is also chairman of New Zealand Mines Rescue Service. He says there is a likely common link in August/ July's incidents.

"Work is not being properly planned nor adequately risk-assessed to keep people safe and fully aware of hazards."

Mines Rescue has volunteer teams based at its headquarters near Greymouth as well as Auckland and Huntly.