

SERIOUS INJURY

Fall from elevated work platform

Incident date: 29 July 2018

Event: Fall from height

Location: Cowal Gold Mine, West Wyalong

Overview

A worker suffered spinal injuries when he fell from the platform of a scissor lift on 29 July 2018. The worker underwent surgery after the incident and was receiving ongoing medical treatment. The worker died on 14 September 2018. The NSW Resources Regulator is investigating the incident and will examine whether it was causally connected to the worker's death.

Photograph 1: The scissor lift adjacent to the work location taken following the incident, with guardrails refitted.
Photograph by Resources Regulator.



The mine

Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited, owned by Evolution Mining Pty Ltd, operates the Cowal Gold Mine, 40 kilometres northeast of West Wyalong, NSW. The open cut mine uses a conventional drill and blast, load and haul operation. It uses a sulphide flotation method to recover gold.

Mineral Process Engineering & Construction Pty Ltd (MPEC), a joint venture operation, was engaged to undertake a construction project at the mine. The project involved the design, installation and commissioning of additional leaching circuits for the processing of the gold ore.

The incident

About 11.30 am on 29 July 2018, a contract worker, 58, suffered spinal injuries when he fell from the platform of a scissor lift. The scissor lift's front and left side guard rails had been removed to move it under a steel structure.

While standing on the scissor lift platform using its control unit, the worker lost balance and fell off the platform from a height of about one metre. The worker's injuries required surgery.

The worker died on 14 September 2018. It is not known whether the incident and injuries contributed to the worker's death.

Photograph 2: The removed side guard rail. Photograph courtesy of the mine.



The investigation

The NSW Resources Regulator commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident. The investigation will also seek to determine whether the incident was causally connected to the worker's death.

The mine operator and contractor are cooperating with the investigation.

An investigation report will be prepared for the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment and the NSW Coroner.

Safety observations

A person falling from height from mobile plant is a foreseeable risk and adequate control measures should be put in place to manage the risk. The provision of guard rails on mobile plant is a critical control measure to reduce the risk of falling.

Mine operators and contractors must manage the risk of a person falling from one level to another that is reasonably likely to cause injury to that person or any other person.

There are several health and safety duties and requirements set out in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013*. These duties are applicable to persons conducting businesses or undertakings that operate mobile plant, and to suppliers and manufactures of mobile plant.

Mine operators and contractors must have effective safety management systems in place and identify risks associated with the operation of mobile plant. In managing these risks, mine operators and contractors must ensure that workers do not modify safety features or attempt to use equipment that they have not been verified competent to use.

Mine operators must ensure that workers are adequately trained and competent in the safe use of mobile plant, and that effective supervision and clear instructions are provided to workers. Only equipment which is fit for purpose of the task being undertaken should be used. Effective controls should be used to prevent falls from height occurring, which may include guard rails, barriers and fall restraint or fall arrest systems.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- [SafeWork NSW - Working at heights](#)
- [Code of practice - Managing the risk of falls at workplaces](#)

About this information release

The Resources Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious injury in the mining industry. Investigations are ongoing and further information may be published as it becomes available.

Go to www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au to:

- learn more about our work on major investigations and emergency response
- view our publications on other major investigations
- find your local mine safety office, where you can contact our team of mine safety inspectors.

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