

Industry still not compliant - MinEx

Bernie Napp - Fri, 01 Jun 2018

Not a single mine or quarry in New Zealand is fully compliant with the workplace health and safety regime, MinEx says.

MinEx CEO Wayne Scott told delegates at the NZ Minerals Forum yesterday one cause of the non-compliance is that not all duty holders at sites have up-to-date Certificates of Competence.

Of 1076 registered quarry sites, 763 have CoCs, and 284 are part-way through gaining their CoCs. Scott thought the 1076 figure is less than half the real number of quarries in New Zealand.



In terms of incident reporting to MinEx over the last nine months, a peculiarity of New Zealand is the high rate of breaches of procedure, 12 per cent, compared to other countries, e.g. Australia.

Scott said WorkSafe CEO Nicole Rosie could be correct when she once commented: "New Zealanders are the most non-compliant race of people in the world."

"If you are relying on people and procedures, you are going to fail," Scott said. The focus should be on controls that prevent people from being able to breach procedures.

Large increase in reporting of incidents

Nine months into its [new data collection programme](#) of workplace health and safety incidents, including near hits, MinEx has fielded a significant increase in reporting rates.

Between Q4 of last year and Q1 this year, the number of operators contributing data increased by 32 per cent, and there was a four-fold increase in the supply of safety alerts to MinEx.

Scott ascribed the improvement to more people in the industry gaining comfort with MinEx's respect of data confidentiality, and being willing to share information.

As matters stand, there are four main things killing or harming mine and quarry workers, Scott said, in order, falls, collisions, entanglement, and pressure release.

"They are the same four things all over the world."

In New Zealand overall, there have been 153 workplace fatalities since Pike River, in particular, in manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and construction.

"We have had eight fatalities; we are not squeaky clean either," Scott said.

Part of the problem is New Zealand still catching up with the very significant changes in workplace health and safety regulation since the Pike River disaster, Scott said.

At that time "contractor management was quite poor, the regulator was a bit ordinary", among other deficiencies.

On a positive note, Scott said the improvement in the last five years across mines and quarries has been "exceptional".

WorkSafe's focus

WorkSafe was stepping up its focus on company leadership on health and safety, risk management at sites, and employee engagement, Scott said.

The broader area of worker health will be an increasing focus for WorkSafe, he said. For every workplace fatality, a further 10 deaths occur as a result of work-related illnesses.

"We are going to get a lot of attention on the things that are impacting on the health of our workers."

The workplace health and safety regulator is also stepping up enforcement on deliberate breaches of the HSWA, and offenders could expect heavy penalties.

Regulations review update

Scott reminded delegates consultation on the review of the mining health and safety regulations is due to start on June 7.

MinEx was keen to see the inclusion of quarries, and, possibly, ironsands in the coverage of the regulations, as fields of work presenting high hazards.

Other matters of concern include the regulation of escapeways in underground metalliferous mines.

The reforms would include changes to definitions, and to the training requirements, and other steps needed to gain CoCs.