

# Safety alert

Mines Inspectorate

Safety alert no. 251 (Version 1)  
23 November 2010

## Safe Operation of Light Vehicles

**Mine Type:** All Mine Types

**Incident:** This Safety alert results from an increase in reported unplanned movement / loss of control incidents involving light vehicles, rather than any one event. Of particular concern is how many of these incidents involved light vehicle drivers losing control on haul roads, and the vehicle overturning.

**Equipment:** Light vehicles

**Hazard:** Unplanned movement / loss of control

**Cause:** A review of these incidents reveals the singular primary cause is a slippery road surface due to watering or recent rain.

### Comments:

For some time now, reports of vehicles losing control often have the vehicle sliding uncontrolled but remaining upright, coming to rest with all aboard generally unharmed. Recently however, an alarming number of incidents have involved vehicles sliding on a wet road surface, hitting a dry section and rolling over as the tyres gripped the dry road with its greater frictional resistance.

This is often exacerbated by additional weight, exceeding the manufacture's specifications, placed on the vehicle. This raises the height of the centre of gravity, making the vehicle less stable.

Drivers have lost control of their vehicles for a number of reasons, including:

- Driving too fast for the conditions.
- Lack of experience driving four wheel drive vehicles in off-road conditions.
- Poor knowledge of how to recover control of the vehicle.
- Failure to engage four wheel drive while driving in mining areas.
- Incorrect tyre configurations on the vehicle.

### Recommendations:

1. Sites should ensure that tyres fitted to light vehicles operating in the mining area are suitable for off road driving, and are consistent across all four wheels.
2. Sites should consider implementing a policy requiring four wheel drive to be engaged while operating on haul roads and mining areas in general.
3. Relevant personnel should receive additional training in the safe operation of four wheel drive vehicles.
4. Sites should consider training personnel on response to losing control in wet or slippery conditions.

5. Sites need to reinforce with vehicle operators the need to drive to the prevailing conditions, and how to drive on recently watered roads.
6. All light vehicles should be checked to ensure that additional fitted equipment: bull bars, ROPS, tool boxes, and winches and loads such as oil drums, welding gear etc., have not exceeded the vehicle's weight specifications.

**Note-: These recommendations are directed at the vehicle and its safe operation. They are in addition to controls implemented to prevent unplanned movement / loss of control incidents detailed in procedures such as the Design and Construction of Mine Roads.**

**Gavin Taylor**

**Chief Inspector of Coal Mines**

Contact: Graham Callinan, Inspector of Mines, +61 7 4938 4008

**Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety alert. Any such advice supplied to site should reach those who require it, and it should also be placed on the mine notice boards.**

**See more Safety alerts and Safety bulletins at  
[www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/safety\\_information\\_\\_\\_bulletins.cfm](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/safety_information___bulletins.cfm)**