

# Safety Alert

Mines Inspectorate

Safety Alert No. 268  
3 June 2011

## Unauthorised use of an auxiliary fan

**Mine type:** Underground coal | **Incident:** Unauthorised use of auxiliary fan | **Equipment:** Auxiliary fan

**Hazard:** Unauthorised restart of an auxiliary fan, which could have resulted in uncontrolled ventilation.

**Cause:** A contract electrician at an underground site who was unaware that he was contravening a statutory regulation and site rules reset the auxiliary fan power supply and then restarted the fan without:

- being authorised to do so by the ventilation officer
- consulting with the ERZ Controller for the district
- consulting with others who may have been affected.

### Comments:

1. The contractor breached fundamental rules which **every** underground coalminer must know. Section 358 of Coal Mining Safety and Health Regulation 2001, 'Dealing with underground auxiliary and booster fans' states:
  - (1) A person must not deal with a fan ventilating a place below ground at an underground mine unless the person—
    - (a) is the ERZ controller for the place; or
    - (b) is authorised by the ventilation officer to deal with the fan; or
    - (c) has been directed to deal with the fan by the ERZ controller for the place or a person authorised to deal with the fan under paragraph (b).
  - (2) Before a person starts or stops a fan ventilating a place below ground at an underground mine, the person must ensure the following persons are given notification of the proposed starting or stopping—
    - (a) the ERZ controller for the place;
    - (b) each person likely to be affected by the proposed starting or stopping.
  - (3) In this section—  
*deal*, with a fan, means start, stop, remove or alter the fan.
2. The action, taken without understanding these basic rules, poses the questions:
  - What induction training has the individual received?
  - Did that training refer to Section 358 of the Regulation?
  - What controls are there to ensure that the training received is understood?

### Recommendations:

That:

1. all mine workers, particularly contractors coming in to mine sites, understand the requirements of section 358 of the regulation
2. induction documentation make explicit reference to auxiliary fan controls
3. the delivery of induction training include the checking of trainees' comprehension.

### Mike Walker

**Acting Manager, Safety and Health — Central**

Contact: Richard Gouldstone, Inspector of Mines, +61 7 4938 6544

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