

COAL MINER FACES COURT OVER MINE INTERSECTION CRASH

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Maximum penalty over failures leading to truck accident put at \$1.5 million



Damage to the service truck after the accident

Maules Creek Coal (MCC) is in the New South Wales Resources Regulator's legal sights following a truck collision at its Narrabri mine.

The mining company faces compliance failure charges under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 over the April 2018 crash, in which a service truck operator suffered serious injuries when his vehicle and with a haul truck collided at a four-way intersection there.

The alleged Category 2 offence has a maximum penalty of \$1.5 million.

The matter is set for mention in the NSW District Court in Sydney on February 10.

According to the regulator's investigation report, the service truck driver suffered back, shoulder and wrist injuries and was transported by helicopter to hospital.

It finds MCC failed to risk-assess the change to the intersection signs, to consult with workers about the proposed changes, and to clearly communicate the intersection change to all road users.

The crash occurred after intersection road signs were changed during the day shift the day before the incident, to allow haul trucks to drive straight through the intersection from the mine's production area.

To give effect to this change, the intersection's stop signs were relocated to the eastern haul road requiring traffic travelling east and west to stop and give way to other traffic. At the time of the incident, the service truck was travelling east.

The haul truck was fully loaded and travelling north.

The service truck driver was unaware that the stop signs at the intersection had been changed the previous day. So, he believed he had the right of way.

As he neared the intersection, he saw an ultraclass haul truck approaching the intersection on his right. He assumed the haul truck would stop at the intersection.

He did not see a relocated stop sign on his left, as he approached the intersection but noticed that the haul truck appeared to be speeding up rather than slowing down.

The haul truck driver was aware of the change to the intersection signs as he had driven through the intersection earlier that morning. He understood that he had right of way. As the two vehicles entered the intersection, both drivers realised a collision was imminent and attempted to take evasive action.

The 100-tonne service truck collided with the side of the 500-tonne haul truck, resulting in catastrophic damage to the service truck. The haul truck stopped about 100 metres past the impact point. An emergency response was activated.

Subsequently, MCC improved its pre-start presentation pack to include intersection changes and risk assessment process for intersection changes and implemented a process which requires an engineering review to be conducted when changes to intersections are proposed.

The regulator's report recommends that mine operators:

- conduct detailed risk assessments when major changes are made to mine roads
- consult with workers about changes to mine roads
- communicate all road changes to all workers and ensure traffic control signs are adequate, sufficiently visible and appropriately placed
- install appropriate warning signs or barriers to inform road users of changes.