

MinEx issues alluvial gold mining Code of Practice

Bernie Napp - Thu, 3 Sep 2020

Alluvial gold miners don't have to identify principal hazards under the Health and Safety at Work Act; nonetheless, fatalities could occur if risks aren't managed.

This reflection has spurred MinEx to develop an [Alluvial Gold Code of Practice](#), launched today at the Minerals West Coast forum in Reefton.

Chief executive Wayne Scott says MinEx's latest initiative recognises the "growing importance of alluvial gold mining and the need to keep its workers safe, and the different challenges it faces compared to quarrying and other forms of minerals extraction".

"Alluvial gold miners are often working in and around water and that presents a whole new set of risks compared to other forms of mining," Scott says.

To date, the alluvial gold industry has relied on general advice, eg WorkSafe's 2015 Good Practice Guidelines for Health and Safety at Opencast Mines, Alluvial Mines and Quarries.

For MinEx, this has not been enough, and the extractives industry health and safety council brought on board quarry professional and health and safety consultant Keri Harrison to help develop the 60-page document.

West Coast alluvial gold mining companies also had comprehensive input.



Alluvial gold mine

Examples of hazards

Drinking untreated water, working in dusty conditions, around heavy machinery, noise, and working long hours, are some of the types of hazards that alluvial miners can be confronted with, says a table provided in the CoP.

Other hazards are water in-rush during alluvial excavation, ground instability from historical workings, workers drowning, and working alone or remotely when help from others is not readily at hand in the event of an emergency.

Static electricity around machinery can cause explosions or fire during refuelling and is classed as a major hazard, as are accidents with vehicles and other mobile plant, and working with electricity at sites.

The CoP needs to be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and the Good Practice Guidelines.

"Because it's specific to alluvial gold mines, it will be helpful to those working in the field," Scott says.