

Small quarries to thrive under new extractives regs - MinEx

Bernie Napp - Thu, 20 Feb 2020

The inclusion of quarries and alluvials within revamped mining health and safety regulations will strengthen the smaller players, MinEx says, earlier fears of their demise being greatly exaggerated.

“The Government has got it right,” CEO Wayne Scott says of the [to be gazetted](#) Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment review, which will make regulation proportional to the scale of operations and related hazards.

He is hopeful of a three-year transition period – “that will allow time for the smaller sites to get up to speed” – and MinEx will help them develop their health and safety management systems.

“They can be quite simple, it can be a few pages, not hundreds of pages. It’s getting back to the true risk management approach”, Scott says of the new regime.

“What’s appropriate for one man and a digger in a river is not appropriate for the larger mines.”

The changes concern the Health and Safety at Work (Mining Operations and Quarrying Operations) Regulations 2016, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

What else is new

Surface mining and quarrying operations will not need to develop Principal Control Plans, or appoint electrical or mechanical superintendents, unless there are principal hazards exist with controls of this nature. Operators can adopt these practices if they wish.

Principal Hazard Management Plans are only required for surface operations and quarries where the manager is required to hold an A-grade ticket, where there is deemed to be the potential risk of multiple fatalities or serious health risk.

Even where PHMPs are required, they will be proportionate to the level of hazard and risk, Scott says.

Quarry operators and alluvial gold miners will now report workplace health and safety statistics and will be required to report incidents covered in schedule 5 of the regulations, providing more clarity for reporting.

MinEx has developed with the alluvial gold miners a workplace health and safety code of practice for their operations, which is currently being peer-reviewed, and which is due for release next month.

Nature of NZ’s smaller quarries

Scott says 95 per cent of New Zealand’s estimated 1,200 quarries employ four or fewer workers on site, and present lower risk to workplace health and safety than underground mines.

Most are riverbed operations, typically run with an excavator, a truck, potentially a loader, and mobile crushing plant.

These small operators were facing the full force of mining regulation originally developed to improve the safety of underground coal mines following the 2010 Pike River tragedy.

Hence a great deal of concern earlier voiced among people who are essential to aggregates production in New Zealand.

