

Fatality

Incident date: 1 June 2017

Event: Fatality on surface of underground coal mine

Location: WCL Wongawilli Colliery, Wongawilli NSW

Overview

A worker was undertaking environmental work at a disused ventilation shaft on the surface of a coal mine. While he was working, he told his co-workers he was feeling unwell. The worker left the site alone in a light vehicle to seek medical attention. The worker was later found deceased by his co-workers near the light vehicle on an access road. The NSW Resources Regulator has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.



Photograph 1: Disused Wongawilli no. 1 ventilation shaft, where the works were being undertaken.

The mine

Wollongong Coal Limited owns the Russell Vale Colliery and Wongawilli Colliery in the southern coalfields region of NSW. Wongawilli Colliery is located approximately 14 km south-west of Wollongong.

Wongawilli Colliery is operated by a contract mining company, DeltaSBD Limited. The mine extracts coal by the traditional bord and pillar method using continuous mining in the Wongawilli coal seam.

The Wongawilli no. 1 ventilation shaft was completed in 1971 and is located in the catchment area of the Avon Dam. The ventilation shaft is no longer used by the mine and is subject to remediation and rehabilitation work.

The incident

The worker, aged 48, and contractors were conducting soil sampling and clean-up works around the ventilation shaft as part of the rehabilitation of the disused mine surface infrastructure.

The worker told contractors he felt unwell and left the work site alone in a light vehicle to seek medical attention. The worker was later found by the contractors lying on the ground near the light vehicle on the access road that leads to the ventilation shaft.

The worker and his vehicle were found in the middle of the access road about 1.5 kilometres from the shaft.

The NSW Ambulance Service responded to the emergency call and determined that the worker was deceased.

The investigation

NSW Police and the NSW Ambulance Service responded to the incident.

The NSW Resources Regulator also responded and has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident. The regulator is investigating whether the death was mining-related.

The mine owner and the mine operator are cooperating with the investigation.

An investigation report will be prepared for the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment and the NSW Coroner.

The cause of death is being considered by the NSW Coroner.

Safety observations

Mine and petroleum site operators are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) and *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013* (NSW) and regulations.

Working remotely

Mine operators should consider the risks associated with working in remote locations and the availability of medical treatment or emergency services.

There is specific legislation about managing risks to the health and safety of a worker associated with remote or isolated work. Persons conducting businesses or undertakings should review clause 48 of the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (NSW).

Mine operators are reminded that information, training and instruction for working remotely should include administering first aid and obtaining emergency assistance when a co-worker becomes unwell or has a

medical emergency. Any worker who is unwell should **not** leave the work area unaccompanied. If a decision has been made to seek medical assistance in preference to waiting for emergency response, the worker should be accompanied by persons who hold first aid certification.

Emergency plans

Mine and petroleum site operators must prepare, maintain and implement an emergency plan for the workplace.¹ An emergency plan must address all aspects of an emergency response, including how assistance can be provided when a worker is in a remote area or is isolated from onsite medical and emergency assistance.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- Code of practice: [Emergency planning for mines](#)
- Code of practice: [Managing the work environment and facilities](#)

About this information release

The Resources Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a fatality in the mining industry. Investigations are ongoing and further information may be published as it becomes available.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Planning and Environment or the user's independent adviser. All photographs were taken by the Resources Regulator.

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¹ *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (NSW) clause 43.