

# Prioritising safety on small mines

**DMR inspector calls for small miners to meet industry's health and safety requirements**

The Department of Minerals Resources (DMR) has called on smaller mines to adhere to safety, health, environment and quality regulations following statistics that reveal only a marginal decrease in the number of fatalities on these mines last year. Thabo Dube, DMR deputy chief inspector of mines, addressed safety issues during a presentation to members of the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (ASPASA). He said measures to curb accidents, as well as prevent the spread of diseases among workers needed to be implemented by the

industry in association with the DMR. "Despite steady progress being made to improve the health and safety of miners in small and medium sized mines, the industry is not meeting milestones set by the trade in 2003. Since then, better management of diseases on mines, as well as the implementation of safer systems has indeed led to an overall improvement, but there is still more to be done. "Part of the problem is that smaller mines fall into the category of 'other' in the department's classification of mines and as a result do not have specific industry related guidelines to

assist miners in managing risks," Dube says. ASPASA members, for example, excavate sand and stone from pits and quarries where heavy machinery and vehicles are the main dangers. Issues like working beneath the surface of the earth or inhalation of gases do not really affect these miners, yet legislation and guidelines lump them together with all other mining types. Dube says the department is moving towards aligning safety and health standards with certain individual sectors of the industry, as well as promulgating legislation that is specific for small mines. ■