

Safety on African mines

Speaking at the Electra Mining West Africa recently, Nico Pienaar director of the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (Aspasa) said that some lesson can be learned from South Africa's well developed mining industry that has recently begun to transform the industry to embrace a culture of safety.

Making mining in Africa safer

Expanding economies throughout Africa are creating vast requirements for raw materials to build new infrastructure and pave the way for further growth.

This type of demand for materials is giving rise to a plethora of new mines and quarries that work round the clock just to try to keep up with demand. While productivity is at an all time high on these mines however, sight should never be lost of the importance of the safety of each and every worker on these mines.

All aboard for safety

He says legislators must make health and safety tantamount to maintaining an operations' mining licence. If legislation is not adhered to, then he recommends that Governments must be in a position to withdraw the licence of an operation, especially when the immediate health and safety of its workers is at risk.

"Although challenging, it is also imperative to get workers and management of a mine to work together. Right from the outset it is best to get unions and workers involved so that it doesn't become a "management" issue only.

"Leaders need to take charge of health and safety and this must be visible. They must walk among workers and talk to them in order to create a visible culture that extends from the top to every person on site. It is also important to "enable" workers and let them take decisions and give input on their own health and safety," Pienaar said.

He added that while strides are being made in

promoting safety on southern African mines, health of workers still needs to be highlighted and addressed. For example, there has been no significant improvement in the occurrence of occupational diseases.

Too few companies have effective programmes to combat TB/HIV/AIDS on site, while other risks such as the safety and security of women on mines is not taken seriously enough. Poor contractor management is another contentious issue that needs to be addressed throughout Africa as is the prevalence of illegal mining activities. In these instances he recommends law makers work with formal mines to try eradicating these problems before they become an issue in developing mining industries.

Typical Health Risks

While it remained difficult to pinpoint each-and-every risk on individual mines, some health risks remain universal. According to Pienaar some of the major risks that can be easily prevented include:

- Inhalation of respiratory sensitizers
- Awkward body postures or repetitive movement. Upper limb disorders etc.
- High noise levels
- Too much vibration
- Exposure to ionising radiation
- Sun burn
- Heat exposure
- Bad lighting

Many of these risks can be neutralised through simply ensuring fitness and physical capability of a person to perform a job safely, health education and promotion, providing medical services

including health surveillance and correct rehabilitation after illness or injury.

"It is clear to see how the southern African mining industry, and especially the quarrying industry, has transformed to promote safer and healthier workplaces. Aspasa stands ready to assist our neighbours North of our borders to implement effective health and safety standards effectively work towards zero harm," Pienaar concluded.

Aspasa, Nico Pienaar, Tel: (011) 791 3327, Fax: 086 647 8034, Email: nico@aspasa.co.za, Web: www.aspasa.co.za



Nico Pienaar
Aspasa Director

PUBLISHED BY: WOOTA PUBLISHERS AND PROJECTS

TEL: +27 11 483 0860 FAX: +27 86 601 9195 EMAIL: info@minersmagazine.com WEBSITE: www.minersmagazine.com
P.O. BOX 46593 ORANGE GROVE 2119, NO. 4, ACROPOLIS, 107 LOUIS BOTHA, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
The Publisher does not accept any responsibility for the accuracy or authenticity of the contributions contained in the Magazine and advertisements. Views expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Publishers.

© All rights reserved