

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS MEMBERS COMMIT TO AN UNWAVERING FOCUS ON SAFETY DESPITE SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN FATALITIES TO A NEW RECORD LOW

Johannesburg, 31 January. The Minerals Council South Africa and its members are unwavering in their commitment to Zero Harm and note the significant reduction in fatalities to a record low of 49 during 2022 after a concerted effort by all stakeholders and strict focus on the safety strategies developed to improve working conditions.

The Minerals Council expresses its condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of the 49 employees who lost their lives in mine accidents during 2022.

“The industry will build on the momentum we achieved during 2022 when we halted and significantly reversed the regression in safety during the previous two years in which 74 and 60 of our colleagues died in 2021 and 2020 respectively. This has been the result of many organisational and industry level interventions and resolute leadership from, particularly, the industry CEOs initiating and supporting multi-tier projects as part of the Khumbul’ekhaya strategy,” says Lerato Tsele, Acting Head of Safety and Sustainable Development at the Minerals Council.

“The significant step change in safety during 2022, following the record low number of fatalities of 51 in 2019, proves that we are back on the right track with our safety initiatives but that there’s a lot of hard work ahead of us. We must maintain constant vigilance and safety management in partnership and collaboration with all our stakeholders to achieve our goal of zero harm,” she says.

The industry reported a total of 1,946 serious injuries in 2022, down from 2,123 in 2021.

There were reductions of between 19% and 47% in fatalities across all commodities, while iron ore and manganese reported no fatalities during 2022.



There are encouraging signs that initiatives like the Elimination of Falls of Ground Action Plan (FOGAP) adopted by the Minerals Council Board and CEO Zero Harm Forum in July 2021 are contributing to the reduction in fatalities. In 2022, there were 6 FOG-related fatalities, a 70% reduction from the 20 deaths the year before.

The number of FOG fatalities had fallen to an average of 24 a year in the 2016-2020 five-year period from an average of 111 a year in 2001-2005, a 78% improvement. The key interventions were the implementation of entry examinations and actively making working areas safe daily from 2009. In 2012, netting and bolting of tunnel roofs and walls were introduced and the use of steel nets has become a common feature in South Africa's deep-level mines.

Of concern is the regression in transportation and mining (T&M) where 17 fatalities occurred compared to 16 in 2021.

The Minerals Council will continue to participate in collaborative work through the Mine Health and Safety Council to address this concern.

The Minerals Council will maintain implementation of the Khumbul'ekhaya safety strategy, which includes the FOGAP as well the Trackless Mobile Machinery (TMM)/Collision Prevention Systems (CPS) projects to further improve the industry's safety performance.

“Ensuring safe and healthy working environments remains an unwavering commitment of the Minerals Council and its members. While the reduction in fatalities in 2022 is a welcome step change from the previous two years, the number of deaths on our mines remains unacceptable,” says Ms Tsele.

The performance on occupational diseases and the milestones show a very mixed picture with improvements in some areas while there is stagnation and deterioration in others. Companies are urged to do more to achieve industry targets.

There was a decline in reporting of diseases in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The performance of health programmes such as screening and diagnosis of diseases was impacted. This was a worldwide phenomenon, and the mining industry was also affected.

We are encouraged there is a reduction in over-exposures to hygiene stressors in 2021 compared to 2020. These are stressors such as airborne pollutants and noise and are crucial for prevention of occupational diseases.

“While we are pleased with the reduction in hygiene stressors, we acknowledge there is still a long way for us to go and we will continue to work with our partners to eliminate the problem,” says Dr Thuthula Balfour, Head of Health at the Minerals Council.

We are heartened to see that occupational diseases reported continue to decline. From 2018 to 2021, there was a reduction of 44% and 54% in occupational diseases and TB respectively.

From the Minerals Council reporting system performance against compliance to reporting requirements in reporting for occupational hygiene for the first three quarters of 2022 was 94%, 92% and 89% respectively, which is up from the average of 92% since 2015.

“The Minerals Council embarked on a health and safety campaign in the last quarter of 2022 which included the promotion of wellness programmes. This focus will continue until pre COVID-19 levels of reporting and performance are achieved and surpassed,” says Dr Balfour.

The Minerals Council has been supporting the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases (MBOD) and Compensation Commissioner for Occupational Diseases (CCOD) since 2008, first through the Ex-Mineworker Project, then through a special fund of R120 million from 2019 to 2022. The Tshiamiso Trust is also available to ex-mineworkers. This support has led to massive improvements in operations at the MBOD and CCOD, with backlogs eliminated and R1.1 billion paid out in the last 5 years.

“We acknowledge that, for the South African mining industry to achieve our target in terms of elimination of lung diseases, we have a responsibility to continue working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders including original equipment manufacturers, government and organised labour,” says Dr Balfour.

“We have an opportunity to focus and accelerate our efforts in the next two years towards achieving the occupational health milestone targets, which go beyond legal compliance. The Minerals Council fully supports all recommendations made during the Tripartite Health & Safety Summit of 2022 regarding the elimination of occupational lung diseases,” she says.

For further queries:

Allan Seccombe

Head Communications

Tel: 064 650 4636

Email: aseccombe@mineralscouncil.org.za

Web: www.mineralscouncil.org.za