

MEDIA STATEMENT

Minerals Council South Africa commits to new milestones on the mining industry's journey to Zero Harm

Johannesburg, 16 October 2024. The Minerals Council South Africa is fully committed to supporting the third iteration of health and safety milestones agreed by the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, organised labour and the Minerals Council as the industry strives to realise its ambition of Zero Harm.

The first milestones to improve mineworkers' health and safety were agreed by the tripartite Mine Health and Safety Council in 2003 to deliver step-change improvements in the working environment for all people working in the mining industry. The second set of milestones were revised and agreed in 2014.

Since 2014, incidents of occupational diseases in the mining industry have decreased by 72%. The number of fatalities related to safety incidents have declined by 35% between 2014 and 2023.

The industry came close to meeting – and in some instances surpassed -- the milestones set for 2024. The milestones included eliminating fatalities and serious injuries, reducing occupational lung diseases caused by inhalation of silica, coal and platinum group metal dust, reducing noise-induced hearing loss, reducing the tuberculosis incidence rate below the national average, and providing counselling, testing and treatment of mineworkers living with HIV.

The three stakeholders have agreed on the next set of milestones to be achieved by December 2034, including mental health screening and interventions to improve safety of women in mining including personal protective equipment specifically designed for women, as well as reducing gender-based violence and femicide in the workplace.

“We commit ourselves to achieving the new milestones that we have collectively set to accelerate our quest for Zero Harm in our industry,” says Dr Nombasa Tsengwa, President of the Minerals Council.

“We are unrelenting in our ambition to eliminate health and safety incidents across the mining industry, including beyond employment. The Minerals Council remains committed to the industry goal of Zero Harm in which every mine worker returns from work without harm every day,” she said.



The Minerals Council and its members have implemented interventions and programmes to improve health and safety of all employees.

“Today, we have a workplace where there are less airborne pollutants, less noise and generally fewer hazards. Mining is a far safer place than when we started on this journey. Jointly, with the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources and organised labour, we are striving for an inclusive working environment where health and safety are of paramount importance,” says Japie Fullard, Chair of the Minerals Council’s CEO Zero Harm Forum.

Since 1994, the number of fatalities on mines has decreased by 88% from 484 to 55 in 2023. Injuries have decreased by 75% to 2,080 from 8,347 in that period. The industry reported a record low 49 fatalities in 2022.

The mining industry has made significant inroads into reducing cases of silicosis and noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), with reductions of 90% and 86% respectively between 2003 and 2022.

“We will review our initiatives and interventions as we strive to achieve our ambition of Zero Harm. We are working with all stakeholders on research, technology and innovation to modernise our industry and to make it safer and healthier. We look forward to our collaboration in reaching the milestones as tripartite partners in the coming years,” says Mr Fullard.

In 2011, the Minerals Council initiated CEO-level discussions on health and safety which are now institutionalised as the CEO Zero Harm Forum. This forum meets quarterly to review and advise on our performance regarding health and safety.

The Minerals Council Board has initiated a monthly Safety Hour of Learning where recent incidents are shared with the sole purpose of learning from each other and preventing similar incidents in the future.

The Minerals Council augmented our CEO-led initiatives in 2019 by adopting the Khumbul’ekhaya Health and Safety Strategy which is holistic in its approach and is a rallying cry for step-change efforts on health and safety.

The Minerals Council is reviewing the industry’s health and safety performance and is enhancing the Khumbul’ekhaya Strategy to implement a second version to achieve the 2034 milestones.

[See full speech here](#)

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