

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT MINE SAFETY REGRESSION, SUPPORTS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MINESAFE SUMMIT

Johannesburg, 29 October 2021. The Minerals Council South Africa is deeply concerned about the worrying regression in the safety performance of the mining sector since 2020, and it supports the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), organised labour, mine professional associations and mining suppliers in arranging a MineSafe summit in November 2021 to address safety and to establish urgent corrective measures.

As of 28 October, the number of fatalities at the country's mines stood at 55 compared to 43 at the same time last year. The industry experienced one of its worst weeks with two multiple fatalities incidents.

This is the second year of regression in the safety performance since the 2019 record low of 51 fatalities.

The Minerals Council recommits itself to finding solutions to reverse the trend and to ensure mineworkers return home unharmed every day.

At the CEO Zero Harm Forum this Friday morning, CEOs and mine leadership recommitted themselves to achieving fatality free operations, to re-evaluate and re-energise their safety programmes, and learn from each other to minimise repeated incidents.

"We are seriously concerned about this regression in safety. We need to reflect, regroup, get back on track and minimise exposure of our people to hazardous situations," said Themba Mkhwanazi, chair of the CEO Zero Harm Leadership Forum.

"With the regression we are experiencing, we need to put a lot more focus on technology and modernisation to improve skills and mining methods to keep employees safe," he said.

The Minerals Council is with the DMRE, organised labour, mine professional associations and mining suppliers to expedite the MineSafe summit to urgently address the regression in safety. The Minerals Council urges that the summit be held in November as soon as possible after the elections.

"We need an action-driven programme at Mine Safe," said Mkhwanazi.

"We see technology as the way to significantly reduce our risks and improve safety. As human beings we all make mistakes and by using technology we can start eliminating the fatal risks from unintentional mistakes," he said.

"The last quarter of the year is normally a time when higher vigilance is needed so the urgency of holding the summit and addressing the regression in safety and agreeing solutions cannot be understated," he added.



The industry is tackling the three leading causes of fatalities in mining through our CEO-led Khumbul'ekhaya strategy with a focus on a holistic approach to eliminating fatalities as a result of safety and health incidents, including Covid-19.

The disruptions to the work environment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are a factor in the regression. Absenteeism and changes to front-line underground mining teams unsettling work patterns and flows since the start of the pandemic in early 2020 have been one of the causes in the setbacks in the mining industry's safety performance.

The gold sector has recorded the highest number of fatalities with 23 followed by the platinum sector with 14 fatalities compared to the previous year.

The leading cause of fatalities remains falls of ground (FoG), which is a focus area for the Minerals Council and in its partnership at the Mandela Mining Precinct with the Department of Science and Innovation.

The Minerals Council is implementing the R46 million, five-year Elimination of FoG Fatalities Action Plan approved by the CEO Zero Harm Forum and the Minerals Council Board.

The Action Plan was launched during the National Day of Health and Safety in Mining held on 8 July 2021. The Action Plan will complement other industry health and safety initiatives at the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) aimed at achieving a desired step change in the elimination of fall-of-ground fatalities.

There were 60 fatalities in the full year of 2020, over 20 of which were caused by fall of ground. General types of accidents were the second-largest cause of fatalities, with transport-related incidents third.

In transport-related incidents, the Minerals Council has a three-year, R20 million project to support members on the adoption of collision management systems.

The Minerals Council is working with various stakeholders including the DMRE, trade unions, research institutions, academia, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and suppliers on the development of a holistic risk phased approach to the development and implementation of collision avoidance systems technologies.

In general causes of fatalities, the Minerals Council is stepping up efforts around employee wellness and behaviour to address the possible impact of Covid-19 on the scheduling of work, mining teams and frontline supervision.

The Minerals Council reiterates its commitment to Zero Harm and will work tirelessly with government, organised labour and other stakeholders to improve the industry safety performance.

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For further queries:

Allan Seccombe

Tel: 064 650 4636

Email: aseccombe@mineralscouncil.org.za

Web: www.mineralscouncil.org.za