

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

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### **South Africa's mining industry records its first-ever January and calendar month without a fatality as safety initiatives to achieve zero harm gain traction.**

**Johannesburg 1 February.** The South African mining industry recorded its first fatality-free January -- and full calendar month without a death -- as safety initiatives adopted and implemented by the Minerals Council South Africa, its members and stakeholders gain traction towards the goal of zero harm.

The mining industry reported 49 fatalities in 2022, a significant reduction from 74 fatalities the year before and a new record low. The largest contribution to the safety performance in 2022 was the 70% decrease in fall-of-ground (FOG) fatalities, which has historically been a leading cause of deaths.

The industry marks 39 consecutive days (as of 31 January 2023) without a fatality, which is also a record.

As a continuation of the safety improvement, the mining industry had no fatalities in January. The industry has averaged nearly five deaths a year in the month of January since 2018. This is normally a difficult month for safety as mines restart after the year-end break.

"This is the first time in South Africa's mining history that this occurred. Although a lot of effort went into our start up campaigns, there's a lot that still has to be done," says Japie Fullard, the Chair of the Minerals Council's CEO Zero Harm Forum.

To ensure the trajectory for safety remains on a downward trend, the Minerals Council Board has started monthly meetings to share learnings in successes and failures, maintaining a high degree of company leadership focus on safety initiatives developed internally and with the Minerals Council.

The Elimination of Falls of Ground Action Plan (FOGAP) adopted by the Minerals Council Board and CEO Zero Harm Forum in July 2021, has contributed a step change in performance. In 2022, there were six FOG-related fatalities, a 70% reduction from the 20 deaths the year before, and a 92% decline from 76 deaths in 2007. There was also a decline in the number of FOG injuries, which is a positive reflection on the efforts of the industry.

"We recognise that this reduction in FOG-related fatalities has been a group effort among employers, organised labour, the DMRE, equipment suppliers, and researchers. It's only through collaboration that we will achieve our target of zero harm," says Mr Fullard.



The role of CEOs providing strong leadership, the adoption of leading practices and implementing research and development projects, making significant investments in the adoption of FOG-specific safety interventions, and recognising the special role of rock engineers in mine design to limit falls of ground were major contributing factors in the improvement.

A key development is encouraging employees in their right to refuse to work in unsafe areas or to do dangerous work. Exercising this right leads to a change in workplace culture and morale, which in turn improves safe working behaviours.

The industry has invested heavily in eliminating FOG-related incidents.

The Mine Health and Safety Council, a tripartite body comprising the Minerals Council, DMRE and organised labour, has invested R500 million in rock-related research over the past two decades; the Minerals Council has committed R46 million over five years in its FOGAP; mining companies have spent hundreds of millions of rands in innovative technologies and in sponsoring university research chairs.

“Our commitment to eliminating fatalities and injuries resulting from falls of ground is unequivocal. We will maintain constant vigilance and leading industry practices to ensure zero harm,” says Mr Fullard.

Among the leading practices adopted by South Africa’s underground mines are permanent meshes held up with bolts in tunnels and working areas, brightly lit working areas so miners can check for dangers rather than just relying on their cap lamps, safer ways to remove loose rocks from the roofs and walls of tunnels and working areas, and improved methods to identify loose rocks.

The six pillars adopted by the Minerals Council Board and its members in the FOGAP are:

- Adoption of leading practices.
- Research and development.
- Skills Development.
- Policy issues.
- Enabling zero-harm production, behaviour, culture and operational discipline.
- Implementation and monitoring.

These milestones should not be seen as achievements, but rather as motivation to inspire us all to focus on fatality elimination strategies, especially with regards to Trackless Mobile Machinery (TMM) related fatalities where we have seen a regression.

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