OVERVIEW OF HEALTH PERFORMANCE

Exposure to various health risks in the workplace has been well documented over the years. The mining industry poses several health challenges, which vary from sector to sector. In the last decade, health-related statistics have improved significantly as the industry has undertaken efforts to reduce occupational health risks.

Tuberculosis (TB), silicosis and noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) are the most common occupational diseases in the mining industry. While NIHL is a health risk in almost all areas of mining, occupational lung disease, particularly silicosis, is a major issue in the gold and coal sectors. In the last decade, the mining industry has made significant strides in reducing incidence of these diseases. Between 2008 and 2018, there was a decline in reported cases of TB by 63%, in silicosis by 74% and in NIHL by 56%. In the period from 2017 to 2018, disease incidence and rates overall showed a marked reduction, with a 23% decline in total diseases. Gold had the largest improvement at 31%, followed by platinum (19%) and coal (4%).

"23% decline in the total number of occupational diseases between 2017 and 2018"

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES (4,483 IN 2017)

NOISE INDUCED HEARING LOSS CASES (1,141 IN 2017)

SILICOSIS CASES REPORTED (652 IN 2017)

TB CASES REPORTED (2,247 IN 2017)

Quick Facts*

* The health data is only available up to 2018

Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy

*Due to a lag in the reporting of health-related performance, the statistics represented are for 2018.
Main occupational diseases reported between 2017 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Percentage change (2017-2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>(23.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIHL</td>
<td>1,141</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>(22.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silicosis</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>(28.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SilicoTB</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>(38.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>(8.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total reported cases</td>
<td>4,483</td>
<td>3,458</td>
<td>(22.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy

The improvement in health-related statistics can be attributed to the collaborative and collective efforts of individual companies, Minerals Council programmes, the efforts of unions, government and tripartite initiatives led by the Mine Health and Safety Council.

HEALTH PROGRAMMES

The Minerals Council remains committed to reach industry targets on health and safety, assisted by the implementation of various health initiatives.

Masoyise Health Programme

The Masoyise Health Programme is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at reducing TB, HIV, occupational lung diseases and non-communicable diseases. Both pulmonary TB and HIV/AIDS are significant public health threats in South Africa. It is estimated that 80% of the country’s population is infected with latent TB and 1% develops active TB every year. The Masoyise Health Programme has contributed to an increase in both counselling for HIV and screening for TB. In 2018, counselling for HIV rose to 84% from 72% in 2017. Screening for TB also showed an improvement at 90.3% in 2018. The total number of TB cases diagnosed has been reducing dramatically, with 1,716 cases diagnosed in 2018, 24% lower year-on-year.

Khumbul’ekhaya health and safety initiative

In October 2019, the Minerals Council launched Khumbul’ekhaya, a CEO-led strategy to drive a step-change in both health and safety performance in the mining industry. The Khumbul’ekhaya initiative emphasises the need to develop a holistic approach to address health- and safety-related issues in mining, and to develop a system of understanding occupational deaths in and beyond employment. During the last quarter of 2019, Minerals Council member companies held Khumbul’ekhaya health and safety days in support of industry’s commitment to Zero Harm, to ensure that every mineworker returns home safely and in good health, every day.

FITNESS TO WORK

The risk presented by fatigue is managed by means of specific occupational health and safety management plans implemented by each mine. Fatigue (a symptom of over-exertion) is a state of physical and mental impairment that reduces alertness and performance. Employees often complain of feeling lethargic, exhausted and tired. Fatigue is multi-faceted but often associated with an individual’s circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycles). If not managed properly, the effects of fatigue are dangerous mentally and physically, leading to debilitating depression, keeping employees away from work, reducing productivity and increasing the risk of occupational injuries.

SPECIFIC MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy requires mining companies to ensure that employees meet specific minimum standards of fitness to perform work, and provides guidelines for a mandatory code of practice on risk-based fatigue management. Fitness assessments consider records of medical history, including clinical examinations, blood tests and diagnostic radiology, in determining fitness to perform specific jobs on a mine. Wellness encompasses more than fitness to work, however, it is about preventing disease. Practically, this means eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and achieving work-life balance. It also advocates regular health screening for common diseases, such as HIV, and lifestyle ailments (such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer). It is also important to manage stress through counselling.