

Safety Alert

Date: June 2025

Supporting video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A1ltruEBzE

Rock falls from an unsupported face, hitting worker

A 2-3 tonne rock dislodged from an unsupported underground face, hitting a worker's head and shoulder and landing right beside him, highlighting the hazards of working near unsupported ground.

Circumstances

At 3:40 pm on 5 May 2025, 2 workers were charging an underground development face when a large rock (about 2-3 tonne) dislodged from a wedge failure at the face at a height of about 2.5 metres.

The drill face was being charged up from a Normet charge-up rig when the rock fell from the upper left face out of a wedge made by an intersection of 2 clay-lined joints. The heading was meshed and bolted up to the face and had been scaled 3 times in the development cycle.

The rock hit one of the workers, grazing his head and hitting him on the shoulder. An emergency was called, and the worker was transported to hospital.

Incident scene

Figure 1: The 2-3 tonne rock that fell from the face



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Figure 2: Worker standing next to the fallen rock showing the scale of the rock that hit the worker



Investigation

- A Resources Regulator inspector was sent to the incident site.
- The face had been scaled multiple times before the incident occurred.
- Initial findings were that the wedge of rock slid off the face from intersecting clay seam and natural rock joint set.
- The face was not supported by ground support.
- The Resources Regulator is considering adopting a clearer and more definitive position on the management of unsupported ground at working faces, in the underground metalliferous mining industry.

Recommendations

- Mine operators should identify the potential for ground instability and hazardous ground movements and assess the risks associated with those movements. Using the hierarchy of controls, mine operators should implement ground support systems that protect workers from the risks associated with rockfall or strata collapse.
- Mine operators should consider ground support for all active faces where there may be a risk of rockfall to workers from working under an unsupported face.

Note: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this safety alert and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety alert should be processed in a

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systematic manner through the mine’s information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine’s common area, such as your notice board where appropriate.

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