

INVESTIGATION INFORMATION RELEASE

DATE: JUNE 2021

Worker seriously injured during transit in underground roadway

Incident date: 20 May 2021

Event: Worker injured during transit

Location: Appin Colliery, Appin NSW

Overview

A mine worker, sitting in the front passenger's seat of an underground mine transport vehicle, sustained a serious laceration and crush injury to his upper left arm. The incident occurred when the transport vehicle drove into a cut-through and collided with a piece of stowed equipment in the cut through.

The worker sustained extensive injuries to his arm. It is unknown if he will make a full recovery.

The mine

At the time of the incident, Endeavour Coal Pty Limited (Endeavour Coal) was the mine holder (holder of the mine lease) for the Appin Colliery, which encompasses the Appin North Mine. Endeavour Coal was also the nominated operator for the mine and exercised the management and control of the mine, employees, and contractors. Illawarra Coal Holdings Pty Ltd (Illawarra Coal) holds 100% of the shares in Endeavour Coal. The ultimate holding company of Illawarra Coal is South32 Limited.

The incident

On 20 May 2021, a worker was travelling as a passenger in a personnel transporter, also known colloquially as a SMV, on his way to inspect and maintain a water pump. The SMV was being driven by a contractor who was assisting with the maintenance work.

To access the pump site, the workers planned to park their vehicle near the pump. The pump was in another roadway which meant they were required to traverse a cut through. The driver of the vehicle turned left into the cut through and noticed three orange poles (pogo sticks) demarcating a piece of stowed equipment on the passenger side of the vehicle. The driver noticed there was limited clearance and coasted past the piece of equipment. As the vehicle passed the stowed equipment, the driver reported hearing the worker scream. He stopped the vehicle and ran around to the passenger's side to determine what had happened. On observing the workers badly injured arm he returned to the driver's seat and reversed the vehicle clear of the equipment. He then attempted to access the first aid box, however, could not do so as it had a damaged handle. At this point the driver called an emergency over the two-way radio and proceeded to drive the injured worker out of the mine.

The worker was transported to hospital by ambulance, under police escort. The worker has undergone extensive surgery. The injuries to his arm are severe and it is unknown at this stage whether he will make a full recovery.

Figure 1. The incident scene (after SMV removed) Source Appin Colliery



The investigation

The incident occurred at about 5pm on 20 May 2021. The incident was notified to the Regulator soon thereafter and the scene was preserved. Upon receiving the incident notification, mine safety inspectors were deployed to site and commenced a preliminary assessment that included the assessment of the incident scene and equipment involved. On 24 May 2021 a decision was made to commence a major investigation into the cause and circumstances of the incident.

Recommendations

The investigation is ongoing to determine the causal factors involved in this incident. Following preliminary enquiries, the following recommendations can be made:

- Mine operators are expected to ensure that all workers are trained and competent in all aspects of the mine's safety management system where appropriate for the job task.
- Mine operators are expected to ensure foreseeable hazards and risks are mitigated through a sound risk assessment process.
- Mine operators are expected to ensure that rules are in place for stowage and demarcation of materials and equipment, and minimum clearances are specified around mobile equipment in all circumstances
- Equipment design must include a thorough evaluation to ensure the safety of all drivers and passengers.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum sites) Regulations 2014 Clauses 5, 14, 22, 28, 85, Schedule 1(4)

About this information release

The Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious incident in the mining industry. Further information may be published as it becomes available.

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