

SAFETY BULLETIN

DATE: JANUARY 2022

Strata failures increase in underground coal mines across the state

This safety bulletin provides safety advice for the NSW underground coal mining industry.

Circumstances

There have been 30 notifications of strata failures across 11 underground coal mines in NSW in the past year. A review of incidents that were reported to the Resources Regulator indicates the actual or potential consequences of these incidents is becoming increasingly severe.

Two workers were hospitalised because of injuries sustained when roof ply fell in front of the breaker line supports on November 2, 2021. The roof fell from between installed roof bolts. The incident was still under investigation at the time of writing, however an initial [investigation report](#) was released. This was the most recent of several incidents including:

1. Workers were performing maintenance on a continuous miner and noticed roof flaking and immediately evacuated the face area just before a rib-to-rib strata failure.



2. Workers were in the crib room at the start of their shift when a rib-to-rib strata failure occurred behind the continuous miner.



3. In a development roadway, a strata failure occurred 60 metres behind a continuous miner moments after a shuttle car passed through the area where the fall occurred.



Recommendations

Mine operators should review their principal hazard management plans for ground and strata with consideration to the following:

- Audits of strata conditions to ensure the adequacy of installed support in roadways, before commencing secondary extraction.
- Peer review of the suitability of proposed primary support design.
- Installation plans for secondary support that specify when the support is required to be installed to ensure that it functions as designed when secondary extraction takes place.
- Ongoing review of ground support trigger action response plans (TARPs) to ensure trigger levels for increasing or reducing support density are appropriate for the area being mined.
- The training and competency of supervisors and workers who have responsibility for installing support or inspecting and assessing ground support and strata conditions.

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