

TARGETED INTERVENTION CAMPAIGN

Vehicle interaction – Surface coal and metalliferous mines



When operating mobile plant at a mining operation, there are numerous risks that should be continually assessed and subsequently controlled to ensure the health and safety of workers. The risk of vehicle interaction is one that all mine operators should consider when determining the appropriate controls for roads or other vehicle operating areas.

Following a targeted awareness campaign that was conducted in 2021, the NSW Resources Regulator conducted a campaign focussing on vehicle interaction at surface coal operations and a selection of metalliferous/extractives operations in NSW. Although the awareness of such incidents was highlighted during the 2021 campaign, the seriousness and potential consequences of vehicle interaction incidents has not improved significantly since. The majority of such incidents have either resulted in serious injuries or had the potential to kill workers.

As a result, the 2022 targeted intervention campaign was developed to focus primarily on the responsibilities of front-line leaders and their duties to establish and maintain the required standards. Workers were also consulted to measure the level of understanding and awareness of the nominated vehicle interaction controls at each site. This included assessing the site traffic management standards, road conditions, road design, effective use of positive communication, and willingness to report compliance issues.

Over 10 days in late May/early June 2022, inspectors addressed 78 crews across 22 surface coal mines highlighting the importance of managing vehicle interaction risks. This also included detailed discussions with 214 front-line leaders and 563 individual workers.

Similarly, inspectors addressed 37 crews across a combination of 14 surface and underground metalliferous/extractives mines. These same detailed discussions were held with 96 front-line leaders and 321 individual workers.

This year's campaign was again well received by industry participants and has further reinforced the importance of actively engaging with controls for vehicle interaction. Front-line leaders play a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of such controls and have a significant responsibility in upholding mine

standards and monitoring procedural compliance. For this reason, mine operators should reflect on their own safety management systems, to ensure adequate supervision can be fulfilled across the mining operation.

Several key themes were identified throughout the campaign including:

- Workers and supervisors generally had a good understanding of controls relating to the Principal Hazard of Roads or other vehicle operating areas (ROVOA)
- Workers and supervisors were mostly compliant to ROVOA-related critical controls, however there were several scenarios when non-compliance was observed
- On numerous occasions, supervisors immediately intervened when a non-compliance was discovered or communicated to them
- The majority of vehicle interactions observed used a form of communication (when required), though there were numerous instances where they did not fully meet the requirements of positive communication standards of the mine site
- On some occasions, ROVOA-related controls appeared to be ineffective or absent, nor had they been regularly reviewed
- The majority of workers felt confident to report safety issues, although there was a minority of workers (particularly contractors) who had fears of being reprimanded if they raised concerns.

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