

Safety Bulletin

Date: July 2024

Overtaking or passing equipment in mining areas

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

Issue

The Resources Regulator in NSW has identified a significant increase in incidents involving equipment when overtaking or passing on the incorrect side of the road in mining areas. All of the incidents resulted in near misses, placing workers involved at serious risk.

Incident 1

When approaching a T-intersection, a haul truck crossed onto the right-hand lane to pass a grader. At the same time, a light vehicle approached the intersection up a ramp to turn left.

The haul truck proceeded through the intersection on the wrong side of the road as the vehicle attempted to turn left. Before turning left, the vehicle driver looked to the right for oncoming traffic. The driver began the left hand turn but had to quickly apply the brakes to avoid a collision with the oncoming haul truck.

Figure 1: The vehicles at the NSW mine site



Safety Bulletin SB24-03

Incident 2

A near miss occurred between a haul truck and a light vehicle towing a tandem-axle trailer with a water tank/pump set up for cleaning. The incident occurred at a haul road intersection on a NSW mine site. The loaded truck was travelling northbound and started to make a left turn at the T-intersection. It had to stop about 7 metres from the light vehicle, which was positioned on the wrong side of the road intersection, with 2 people in the vehicle, travelling towards the intersection.

The passenger was using a pressure washer gun held out the passenger window as the vehicle was driven along the wrong side of the road to allow the passenger to wash the 'Keep left' left sign on the centre island.

Figure 2: A haul truck and light vehicle near miss incident during road maintenance on a NSW mine site recently.



Incident 3

A light vehicle with 2 people inside was in the process of passing trucks that were stopped for a potential hierarchy traffic rule non-compliance at a T-intersection on a NSW mine site recently.

The driver obtained positive communications with the truck operator to pass on its off side.

While the light vehicle was passing the stationary truck, a supervisor communicated that the hierarchy scene preservation requirement was no longer required and the truck operator was advised to resume normal operations.

The truck operator checked their mirrors, released the park brake and rolled forward about 5 metres at up to 4 km/h while the light vehicle was in the process of passing on its off side.

After noticing that the truck had started to move, the light vehicle driver called the truck operator to stop, which it did immediately.

The light vehicle remained outside the line of fire of the truck and was travelling parallel with the truck when it started to move. The vehicles stopped about 7 metres apart.

Safety Bulletin SB24-03

Figure 3: Haul truck and light vehicle near miss incident (vehicle passing haul truck)



Investigation

Both the Regulator and the mine operators investigated all of the reported incidents and near misses, which has identified similar contributing factors.

Most of the incidents could have been avoided if site procedures were followed, or if a thorough job hazard analysis (JHA) was completed and the identified controls were applied.

The incidents could also have been prevented if the vehicle operators had maintained situational awareness and recognised the changing circumstances of their work environment, operated equipment defensively and made clear and direct communications with each other before taking the next step.

Recommendations

Mine sites have procedures in place to manage hazards when overtaking or passing equipment on site. These procedures must be applied at all times.

- JHAs should be completed by all stakeholders to identify the hazards and controls when conducting road/intersection or maintenance activities such as installing signs, demarcation, or associated tasks including managing equipment breakdowns.
- When conducting work on roadways and intersections, tasks should be supervised and workers should be trained and competent to carry out the work.
- Roadworks and maintenance tasks should be communicated to all workers at pre-start meetings and before works commence.

Safety Bulletin SB24-03

- Road works should be planned and conducted when there is minimal traffic (such as crib breaks, during equipment breakdowns, or planned equipment maintenance).
- Consider weather conditions such as reduced visibility, daylight hours, fog and location of the sun before starting roadwork jobs.
- Restrict access to work areas by signposting and/or barricading areas off during road/intersection maintenance.
- All workers must follow the site road rules and not be courteous at intersections – this causes confusion about the road rules.
- When grading roads, grade with the flow of traffic and notify other road users before starting work.
- Grader operators should consider the location of windrows reducing the road widths at intersections and roadways creating a hazard for other vehicle users.
- Equipment operators should consult with their supervisors to prioritise roadwork tasks to reduce interaction with other equipment.
- Equipment operators should also take note of the visibility on road crests and at road intersections.
- Workers should comply with positive communication controls and report when standards are not being achieved.
- Maintain situational awareness when operating and working with other mobile equipment.
- Operators must not overtake or pass equipment where visibility is obstructed such as at intersections, corners, junctions or by other equipment.
- All workers should follow designated speed limits when passing or overtaking equipment.
- Maintain minimum clearance distances between equipment during operation and distances should be increased during wet weather.
- Operators should drive defensively and indicate the direction of travel.
- Report unsafe road conditions, obstructions and spillage immediately.
- Intersections should be constructed at 90 degrees. Centre bunds should be in place at intersections as well as on bends to separate equipment and improve visibility.
- All workers must report incidents and near misses to their supervisors immediately. This allows the incident to be investigated and controls to be put in place to prevent a similar incident from occurring.

Note: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this safety bulletin and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety bulletin should be processed in a 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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Safety Bulletin SB24-03

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