



**DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT NO. 40**

**NEAR-MISS UNDERGROUND BLASTING INCIDENT**

**INCIDENT**

A sampler was working some 30 metres from the face in a development heading in an underground gold mine. He was asked by the miners at the face to turn off the fan when he had finished sampling. The two miners (one of whom was a trainee) had charged up the face and connected it to the firing cable and were leaving the area to connect up another development face on another level. The two headings were subsequently fired from a central underground firing point. After firing, it was discovered that the fan in the first heading was still operating and that the sampler was not accounted for. He had been in the heading when it was fired, but fortunately, had suffered only shock and minor injuries.

**COMMENT**

A number of factors contributed to this potentially very serious incident:

- The sampler had only been employed at the mine some six weeks previously and this was the first time that he had worked alone underground close to firing time. He later stated that he was confused about the time of firing, despite having been through the normal underground induction process.
- The development miners failed to comply with the statutory requirements regarding connection of firing cables to charged faces, the withdrawal of workers to a safe place prior to firing, the giving of clear and definite warning prior to firing and the guarding of entries to the blast area to prevent inadvertent access.
- The development miners also failed to comply with mine policy regarding checking with the surface prior to firing to ensure that all personnel were accounted for.

**PREVENTATIVE ACTION**

- Review induction procedures for underground personnel to ensure that instructions regarding the use of explosives are clear and unequivocal. This is particularly important with regard to firing times.
- Introduce positive checks to ensure that the messages passed to trainees during the induction process have been properly received and understood. This may involve close and continuous supervision of trainees until they have demonstrated both their knowledge and their understanding of the necessary operating procedures.
- Ensure that there is a management system to continuously monitor and enforce compliance with statutory requirements and internal mine policies and procedures.
- Introduce fail-safe procedures to ensure that all "mobile" personnel (samplers, geologists, engineers, surveyors, maintenance workers, supervisors etc) are properly accounted for before firing is permitted.

G Dodge  
ACTING STATE MINING ENGINEER

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**SAFETY AWARENESS SAVES LIVES**