



# S A F E T Y B U L L E T I N

## EFFECTS OF TIREDNESS, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

A fatality which occurred at an open cut mine in August 1994 was the subject of a Coronial inquest. The fatality occurred when a large haul truck overturned after the operator apparently lost control. The driver suffered massive crush injuries to the chest and abdomen from which she died.

The jury found that death arose by way of accident, but evidence led at the inquest prompted the Coroner to issue the following rider, which was recommended by the jury:

*"We recommend that on-going consideration be given to the issue of tiredness and the issue of drugs and alcohol within the industry."*

It appears from this recommendation that the jury were mindful of the effects that tiredness and drugs and alcohol may have had with respect to the occurrence of this particular accident. Their concern in this regard (which is shared by the inspectorate) has prompted them to draw the attention of the mining industry to this potential hazard with a view to preventing further deaths in similar circumstances.

Employers, managers and workers in the mining industry are urged to give consideration to the effects that tiredness, drugs and alcohol can have on the safe work performance of the persons employed in the operations with which they are associated. These effects may well constitute a hazard in the workplace.

Attention is drawn to the duty of care of employers and employees under Sections 9 and 10 of the Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994. The employer has the duty to provide and maintain (so far as is practicable) a working environment in which employees are not exposed to hazards. An employee has a duty to ensure his or her own health and safety at work and to avoid adversely affecting the health or safety of any other person. Every person working on a mine also has a duty to report any situation at the mine which he or she has reason to believe could constitute a hazard to any person.

It is well understood that the issues of tiredness, drugs and alcohol are receiving attention throughout the industry, however, the message from the members of the jury in this particular case indicates that there may be a need for an increased effort to be made.

These issues can be emotive and must, therefore, be dealt with in a consistent, impersonal and non-confrontational fashion with a commitment from everyone to the safety of the whole operation and concern for the well-being of the individuals involved, if effective control of the problem is to be achieved.