

**INDUCTION, TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPETENCY OF
EMPLOYEES IN THE MINING INDUSTRY**

A fatality which occurred at an underground mine in June 1996 was the subject of a recent Coronial inquest. The fatality occurred when a rock fell from the shoulder (intersection of the face and back) of a development heading and struck the jumbo operator's assistant who was standing in the area forward of the operator's cab during bolting operations.

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

- "(1) An induction process should include a mechanism to evaluate the inductee's understanding of the material covered. The process should include provision for regular re-assessment of employees' knowledge of induction material.*
- (2) Operator competence should be assessed on a regular basis, especially where tasks or procedures change."*

It appears from this recommendation that the jury were mindful of the influence which induction, training and competency assessment processes 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 and managers in the mining industry are urged to give consideration to the current systems of induction, training and assessment in place in operations under their control and principal employers are reminded of their duties and responsibilities in respect of contractors who may be employed in their operations.

Of particular note is the need to ensure that, not only are the safe-working standards of the operation **communicated** during the induction process, but also that some positive check is carried out to ensure that the message presented has **actually been understood** by the person receiving it. Similarly, there is a need to regularly and consistently monitor the application of the appropriate standards in the workplace. This is of particular importance when conditions or systems of work change and where employees may be assigned new tasks.

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, and to the particular obligations in Regulation 4.13. 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.

The issues of training and competency assessment are receiving attention throughout the industry as a result of the endeavours of a tripartite working party set up following the recent inquiry into fatalities in the mining 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 with more immediacy by individual employers.

J M Torlach
STATE MINING ENGINEER

27 May 1998