



**DEPARTMENT OF MINES  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT NO. 10**

**CYANIDE POISONING**

**INCIDENT**

A man suffered serious, but fortunately not fatal, cyanide poisoning due to accidental ingestion of cyanide. He received immediate treatment and was hospitalised where he recovered rapidly.

**CAUSE**

The man picked up a piece of scrap steel which was lying on an area paved with crushed blue metal in the vicinity of the cyanide mixing tank, but outside the concrete bunded area. He subsequently touched his lips and evidently transferred a small trace of cyanide powder to his mouth.

It is believed cyanide solution had splashed or sprayed onto the piece of scrap from a process tank or from the solution delivery system, and on drying, left traces of cyanide powder on the piece of steel and the surrounding blue metal.

**COMMENTS AND PREVENTATIVE ACTION**

Regularly emphasise to all personnel working with cyanide the risk of ingestion of cyanide in the solid or liquid form as well as from inhalation of HCN gas. A very small amount can be lethal. In particular, the need for protective equipment during direct handling and scrupulous hygiene, both during and following completion of work, are essential. Remember, loose material can be picked up on footwear and transferred to office or home with deadly results.

Ensure that mixing and transfer areas are designed for spillage collection and cleaning, and that cleaning and inspection are carried out regularly and thoroughly.

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**SAFETY AWARENESS SAVES LIVES**