



**DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT NO. 65

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO HAZARDS AT UNATTENDED MINE

INCIDENT

During a weekend, three young children ventured into an unattended sand mine which is located a short distance from their homes. They climbed up into the small screening plant and decided to start it up. This was a matter of pressing one button.

One of the 7 year olds was caught in a rotating screen trommel and suffered minor abrasions. His mate then recognised the danger, jumped off the plant and switched the unit off.

CAUSE

The investigation revealed that the power to the plant had not been isolated. Fencing around the site was incomplete and did not provide a barrier to prevent entry by members of the public – especially children.

The owners claim that a caretaker lived in a house on the site. His presence was not a deterrent.

COMMENT AND PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Operators of mines within the vicinity of built up areas are required to recognise their special duty of care in relation to the community. This is especially important when considering children. Children are attracted to mining activities, particularly sand mining.

Operators in such circumstances must not only consider their obligations under the Mines Safety and Inspection Act but under other statutes as well, including the Criminal Code Act.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES MUST INCLUDE:

- barriers to prevent entry
- an energy isolation system that can only be used by authorised persons
- a plant and work place which conforms with recognised safety standards.

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STATE MINING ENGINEER

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SAFETY AWARENESS SAVES LIVES