

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINERALS COUNCIL LAUNCHES NATIONAL DAY OF HEALTH AND SAFETY 2020, WITH A FOCUS ON COVID-19

Johannesburg, 17 July 2020. The Minerals Council South Africa today launched the National Day of Health & Safety in Mining 2020. This is the third annual day that is being commemorated.

They are intended to demonstrate and support the mining industry's recommitment to the shared imperative of Zero Harm, under the Khumbul'ekhaya strategy. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the lives of so many individuals around the world – therefore, in 2020, this day is focused on reinforcing behaviour change at home and at work in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minerals Council separately announced today the publication of a Behaviour Change Field Guide to re-enforce behaviours that support healthy and safe ways of working and community living in the context of COVID-19.

This launch marks the start of initiatives at each mine owned by Minerals Council members where the messages will be conveyed to managers and employees and, through them, into communities.

Chief Inspector of Mines David Msiza commended the industry for the work it has done with the Department of Health and communities in the COVID-19 period.

He told the virtual launch that the DMRE has carried out more than 1,700 audits and inspections regarding compliance with the COVID regulations and guidelines. It had found good levels of compliance on the part of large companies, but said that some companies were not fully compliant in certain respects. He called on companies to carry out full screenings, not only temperature monitoring, on all employees every day.



Mziwakhe Nhlapo, NUM health and safety head speaking on behalf of the industry's representative unions, said organised labour was concerned because, though there had been one fewer fatality this year compared with the same period as last year, many mines had been closed or operating at lower capacity. He urged that research on fall of ground and transport issues, the two main causes of fatalities, be accelerated.

Mr Nhlapo raised the impact of COVID-19 on other health issues. He appealed to the Minerals Council to ensure members did not neglect TB, HIV and silicosis treatment and management in this period.

He spoke of workers' anxieties and frustrations related to COVID-19. He commended certain companies for the programmes they are running to alleviate these, and urged that other companies should follow these examples.

Themba Mkhwanazi, Chair of the Minerals Council's CEO Zero Harm Forum, said that every mining company has had to focus on COVID-19, which has been a mammoth task in itself. He said he believed that "the trends and outcomes thus far indicate the effectiveness of the risk assessments and their implementation by our health and safety experts and operational management".

He urged member companies not to allow COVID to distract their focus from occupational health and safety issues. "We need to reinforce our efforts to anchor all we do around the elimination of fatalities due to occupational accidents and diseases, even as we continue to deal effectively with the public health risks -particularly HIV, TB and now COVID-19," he said.

Mr Mkhwanazi also drew attention to the Minerals Council's campaign against sexual and gender-based violence launched in March, and efforts to deal with mental health issues, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his comprehensive assessment of the situation, Minerals Council CEO Roger Baxter noted that disease incidence rates are improving significantly: "While there is a lag in the DMRE reporting of health-related performance, the 2018 statistics indicate that key disease rates for the mining sector - which include silicosis, TB and noise-induced hearing loss - improved by 74%, 63% and 56% respectively on the previous year."

He asserted that these and other improvements can be attributed to “the collaborative and collective efforts of individual companies, Minerals Council programmes, the efforts of unions, government and tripartite initiatives led by the Mine Health and Safety Council.”

For further information, please contact:

Charmane Russell

Tel: +27 (0)11 880 3924 or Mobile: +27 (0)82 372 5816

Email: charmane@rasc.co.za

Alan Fine

Tel: +27 (0)11 880 3924 or Mobile: +27 (0)83 250 0757

Email: mineralscouncil@rasc.co.za

Web: www.mineralscouncil.org.za