

SPOTLIGHT—MineSafe Conference

Mining professionals and experts from across the country gathered again for this year's MineSafe Conference which took place from 15 to 19 August 2011 at Emperors Palace, Johannesburg. The conference consists of the Technical Conference—aimed at sharing best practice in safety, employee wellness, and community involvement, as well as the MineSafe Industry Awards—aimed at recognizing and rewarding significant achievements in safety.

Previously known as the Hard Rock Safe Conference, the growing success of the conference led to the decision to include the coal mining industry and the subsequent renaming of the conference MineSafe.

The conference is a combined effort between the Association of Mine Managers of South Africa (AMMSA), The Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), and the South African Colliery Managers Association (SACMA), with valued input from the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR), the Chamber of Mines, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), Solidarity and The United Association of South African Unions (UASA). All the stakeholders took an active part in organizing the conference, with representatives from SAIMM, AMMSA, SACMA, DMR, the Chamber of Mines, NUM, UASA and Solidarity forming part of the steering committee.

The inclusion of all affected parties is in keeping with MineSafe's goal of promoting 'zero harm' mining through a tripartite alliance between industry, Government, and organized labour.

Technical Conference

The MineSafe Technical Conference aims to share best practice in safety, employee wellness and community involvement from across the industry. Presentations given during day 1 of the conference focused on employee wellness and health, as well as addressing employee behaviour in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace.

Much of day 2 and day 3 of the conference were dedicated to the application of technologies to ensure safer work practices, with some of the presentations also focusing on the importance of managing the industry's impact on the environment.

On day 4 of the conference, delegates participated in discussions through an interesting clicker-based survey that included questions such as whether zero harm was indeed realistic and the role of various stakeholders such as the DMR, organized labour, and industry. The clicker system allows results to be processed immediately, which was followed by a discussion on the outcomes.

Industry Awards

Day 5 of the conference was dedicated to the MineSafe Industry Awards, which recognize and reward those industry players who demonstrated real commitment to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.

The day opened with several speakers representing the tripartite alliance sharing their thoughts on the journey towards zero harm and the challenges facing the industry.

Speaking on behalf of organized labour Mr Eric Gcilitshana, NUM Health and Safety General Secretary, noted the importance of coming together to celebrate

achievements in the industry, but urged the industry not to relax after reaching milestones. According to Mr Gcilitshana, it was important that the tripartite alliance work together to change the negative perception that exists about the safety of the mining industry. 'We should become known as the safest industry, encouraging people to want to work here', said Mr Gcilitshana. He further reminded everyone present of the number of people affected by the death of one worker, and reiterated the belief that the death of one person is a death too many. During his address Mr Gcilitshana highlighted some of the issues that organized labour believes pose significant health and safety challenges in the industry, such as the issue of nutrition in the mining environment; preserving people's rights, particularly the right to withdraw from unsafe workplaces; and the importance of treating people with dignity and respect. 'We are willing to engage with industry on achieving zero harm', said Mr Gcilitshana, but added that organized labour should be involved from the beginning of any planned initiative. He further urged all participants to take what they learn from conferences such as these and turn it into action.

Dr Frans Barker from the Chamber of Mines echoed many of Mr Gcilitshana's viewpoints, noting that health and safety management was a core value in the industry, taking precedence over production. Dr Barker urged everyone present to recommit to the 2013 milestones. He further called on everyone to ensure that the Tripartite Action Plan is implemented across industry. He agreed with organized labour on the importance of treating people with dignity and respect. He added that training plays an important role in ensuring compliance with safety standards and procedures. Speaking on health-related issues, Dr Barker highlighted the need to address the issue of compensation and confirmed the Chamber's support of drawing up and implementing a fair and sustainable compensation system. He further urged the Tripartite Alliance to actively support and participate in the Chamber's Learning Hub, moving from sharing leading practices to adopting those practices.

President of the Association of Mine Managers of South Africa (AMMSA), Johan Ferreira, advocated the need for a revolutionary approach to achieving zero harm, noting that there were two important components to the idea of zero harm—to be able to recognize hazards; and to reduce the risk. In order to achieve this, Mr Ferreira believes that changing behaviours is important. Safety should not be seen as an added duty or an imposed responsibility, but rather an integral part of our work and our lives. He presented two models he believes can help change people's behaviour, noting the importance of reaching people's hearts before trying to achieve actionable change. 'We can only do this in a unified environment', said Mr Ferreira, adding that caring, connecting, and coaching are critical in ensuring the needed unity. 'We must plan our work, accept accountability, care for each other and lead by example', he said. Mr Ferreira further thanked the Chamber of Mines, the Department of Mineral Resources, and organized labour for their support of, and active participation in, the MineSafe conference.

Speaking on behalf of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), Professor Neilen van der Merwe, President of the Institute, demonstrated that,

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scientifically, it is possible for the industry to achieve the 2013 milestones. 'We can by no means be complacent, because we have not yet reached our target', he said. 'But I think we have good reason to be optimistic and proud of our achievements so far.' Dr van der Merwe focused on the improvements already made in the industry and urged everyone present to not get discouraged by setbacks. In his opinion, the industry was making good progress and had the ability and the commitment to achieve its targets.

Mr Gerhard Stenzel, President of the South African Colliery Managers Association (SACMA) revisited the Du Pont Safety Principles, focusing on how the South African mining industry compares with these principles. He echoed Mr Ferreira's sentiments in that safety should be integrated as core business and personal values, making it part of every job and every person's life. He also stressed the importance of Visible Felt Leadership in the workplace instead of in the boardroom. He concluded by leaving delegates with three points to consider in their quest for zero harm. First, he urged industry leaders to have a vision of the future that was different from the past. Second, to get back to the shop floor and to focus on Visible Felt Leadership. Third, the principle of 'each one teach one'—of passing on knowledge and expertise to others in the industry.

Mr David Msiza, Chief Inspector of Mines at the Department of Mineral Resources, gave an overview of how the industry was doing in terms of both health and safety issues. During his address, Mr Msiza made reference to the boom in commodity prices, combined with Government's significant budget allocation for infrastructure development, both of which the Department believes will enhance employment. With a target of employing 140 000 people in the mining sector over the next ten years, the Department sees significant growth, particularly in the NorthWest and Limpopo provinces. For this reason, it becomes even more critical to address the safety and health challenges in the industry. Mr Msiza acknowledged the improvement in safety over the past ten years, particularly during 2010 when the industry had one of the best years in terms of safety. However, during 2011, the trend has plateaued and the challenge remains to achieve sustainable improvement.

Mr Msiza paid much attention to occupational health issues during his address, noting that much more focus is needed in this area. While there has been some improvement in noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) cases, silicosis and pulmonary TB still remain a major challenge. In terms of safety, Mr Msiza commended the industry on achieving a 63% decrease in the fatality rate in the period between 2003 and 2010, as well as 42% decrease in the injury rate in the same period. While this is encouraging, it is still not at the targeted 20% year-on-year improvement. There has also been an 84% drop in rock mass related fatalities, but TMM related fatalities still needed greater focus. Looking forward, the Department will be placing greater emphasis on the management of occupational hygiene, while balancing this with the required focus on safety issues.

After a short entertainment break during which delegates were treated to the comedic genius of Eugene Khoza, the recipients of the Most Improved Corporate and Significant Safety Achievements had the opportunity to share their success stories with the audience. The award for Most Improved Corporate over the last 5 years went to: AngloGold Ashanti.

Other significant Achievement Awards with regards to mine performances were handed out in the following categories:

- Gold: Goldf Fields KDC East Business Unit 5
- Platinum: Modikwa Mine
- Diamond/base: Idwala Lime
- Coal: Graspan Colliery, Shanduka Coal
- Contractors: NewRak Mining.

Following this, the Best in Class Awards, based on the all injury frequency rate (AIFR) improvement over the past three years, were handed out across five categories—gold mining, coal mining, platinum mining, base metals/diamond

Mining and South African contractor companies. The awards were as follows:

Gold Mining Industry

- Best in Class: Savuka Mine (Moses Madondo)
- 2nd in Class: Moab Khotsoeng Mine (Barend Swanepoel)
- 3rd in Class: South Deep Mine (Sarel Ferreira).

Coal Mining Industry

- Best in Class: New Vaal Mine (Johan van Schalkwyk)
- 2nd in Class: Shanduka Mine (Z. van der Bank)
- 3rd in Class: Goedeheop Mine (Andrew Fulton).

Platinum Mining Industry

- Best in Class: Western Platinum W1 Shaft (A. du Preez)
- 2nd in Class: Siphumelele Mine, 2 Shaft (Ken Hanekom)
- 3rd in Class: Eastern Platinum, E2 Shaft (I. Tshabalala).

Base Metals/Diamond Mining Industry

- Best in Class: Finsch Mine (Maxwell Morapeli)
- 2nd in Class: Idwala Lime (Bertus Wessels)
- 3rd in Class: Beeshoek Iron Ore Mine (Mark Oosthuizen).

South African Contractor Companies

- Best in Class: NewRak Mining (Klaus Fischer)
- 2nd in Class: Shaft Sinkers (Rob Schroder).

In addition, the John T. Ryan Award was launched in South Africa for the first time. Modikwa Platinum walked away with this prestigious award along with the Significant Industry Achievement in the Platinum Sector for its achievement of 8 million fatality-free shifts.

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