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**MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**STATEMENT ON THE RELEASE OF THE 2022 MINE HEALTH  
AND SAFETY STATISTICS**

**BY THE HONOURABLE  
MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY  
MR GWEDE MANTASHE (MP)**

**31 JANUARY 2023**

Programme Director

Honourable Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane

Leadership of Organised business;

Leadership of Organised labour – AMCU, NUM, SOLIDARITY AND UASA

Professional Associations – AMMSA, SACMA and SAIMM;

Equipment Supplier Representatives;

Representatives of MHSC and MQA;

Team DMRE;

Members of the media

The purpose of today's engagement is to officially release the 2022 occupational health and safety statistics for the mining industry.

You will recall that sixty-three years ago on the 21st of January 1960, four hundred and thirty-five (435) mineworkers lost their lives in what we today refer to as the Coalbrook Disaster.

We have since made significant strides in improving the health and safety of mineworkers and other persons at our mines. Following the democratic breakthrough in 1994, we enacted the Mine Health and Safety Act in 1996 to protect the health and safety of persons at mines and promote the spirit of tripartite stakeholder collaboration. In this regard, together with our social partners in the mining industry – organised business and organised labour – we have assessed progress made on health and safety towards the realisation of the goal of zero harm in the mining industry.

There is a general understanding and appreciation that the health and safety of mineworkers is central to the long-term sustainability of the mining industry. It is the workers who convert investments in the industry into wealth. Therefore, it remains a collective duty for all social partners to ensure that our mineworkers return home from work unharmed every day.

We are encouraged that our collective efforts continue to show a downward trend in occupational diseases, injuries, and fatalities.

With over 150 years of mining, we have learnt many lessons and have gained the necessary experience to sustain this downward trend and ultimately reach the goal zero harm.

### **Occupational Fatalities**

The sector recorded forty-nine (49) fatalities in 2022. This is the lowest ever number of fatalities on record representing a 34% improvement, year-on-year, compared to the seventy-four (74) fatalities recorded in 2021.

It is also important to note that there has been no mine disaster or an accident where five or more people lose their lives recorded in the past three years. This is a result of concerted efforts by all social partners who actively participated in the health and safety campaigns throughout the years. However, we must redouble our efforts and ensure that there is no loss of life in the industry as one life lost is one too many.

The statistics indicate that the most significant progress recorded is in the reduction of deaths from Fall of Ground (FOG) accidents. There has been a reduction of 70% from 20 fatalities in 2021 to 6 in 2022.

We wish to also recognise the 100% reduction in machinery related fatalities as there are no recorded machinery related fatalities in 2022 as compared to the 3 related fatalities in 2021. However, we must continue to pay a considerable focus on transportation related accidents as it shows to be an emerging source of occupational fatalities. Fatalities under this category increased from 16 in 2021 to 17 in 2022.

To address the challenge of transportation related accidents at mines, all stakeholders are urged to implement the collision avoidance systems brought about by the introduction of the new regulations on trackless mobile machinery (TMM).

### **Occupational injuries**

A total of two thousand and fifty-six (2 056) injuries were reported in 2022, compared to two thousand one hundred and forty-three (2 143) reported during 2021, translating to a 4% improvement year-on-year.

Most of these injuries are mainly because of repeat accidents categorized as general types of accidents, fall of ground, as well as transportation and mining respectively.

### **Occupational diseases**

The number of Annual Medical Reports (AMRs) submitted to the Department decreased slightly from a total of nine hundred and thirty-two (932) reports in 2020 to nine hundred and thirty-one (931) reports in 2021.

The latest statistics and reports on occupational health show that employees are exposed to hazards that exceed the occupational exposure limit. This is a great concern to us.

Progress has been made in reported occupational diseases, with a drop from two thousand and thirteen (2013) in 2020 to one thousand nine hundred and twenty-four (1924) cases in 2021. Much of the progress is attributable to the manganese, iron, chrome, coal, diamond, copper, and platinum sectors.

There was also a decrease in silicosis, Pulmonary TB (PTB), Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis (CWP) and other diseases.

Unfortunately, the gold sector regressed, showing an overall increase in the total number of occupational diseases reported.

It is worth noting that non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes exacerbate the burden of disease in the industry.

### **Women in Mining**

We continue to make a call to all social partners to ensure the health and safety of women employees at our mines. We reiterate that women must feel and be safe in the workplace and everywhere. Every one of us must abide by the code, if you love her, you must take care for her.

## **Health and safety improvement measures**

Our collective efforts have so far proven that stakeholder collaboration is critical. In 2022, the Department and the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) hosted the 2022 Mine Health and Safety Tripartite Summit where we updated the report on the implementation of milestones to improve occupational health and safety performance in the industry.

We further published by notice in the government gazette the 2022 MHS Amendment Bill for public comments. We further published regulations relating to diesel powered trackless mobile machines and issues on collision avoidance systems. We continue to also address all risks associated with exploitation of mine pillars and residue deposits/tailings dams.

The burst of the tailings dam in Jagersfontein is a reminder of the dangers posed to the lives of mining communities by operations that fall outside of the Mine Health and Safety Inspectorate.

Once more, it is incumbent upon the industry - especially mine owners and bosses, to work tirelessly to gain the trust of the communities in which they operate in. Health and safety of persons at and around the mines are an essential ingredient of trust and social license.

The Department will continue to embark on the following interventions to improve the health and safety of mineworkers:

- Engaging all social partners to enhance the concerted efforts towards the goal of zero harm.
- Continue with the stakeholder collaborations to meaningfully implement the programmes of the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) and Mining Qualification Authority (MQA).
- Escalate the monitoring and enforcement of health and safety at mines through focused inspections and audits.
- Ensure that safe technologies and mining practices are adopted given that a significant number of accidents occurred whilst opening or mining in old areas.

- Ensure that all mines collaborate with inspectors and organized labour and ensure that all mines observe health and safety days and participate in campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of adhering to health and safety protocols.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is also critical that mine employers, mineworkers and the department are extra vigilant at the start of the year. Historical data of accidents has revealed that most occupational fatalities occur during the first and last quarters of any calendar year.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, the lowest records on fatalities, injuries and occupational diseases are encouraging. However, we can do better than this. Collaboration and the spirit of genuine tripartism should be our anchor going forward. We must maintain and strengthen relationships at the mine level to ensure that the vision amongst stakeholder representatives is closely aligned.

We must strengthen our dedicated teams to do regular monitoring of workplaces and encourage mineworkers to exercise their right to withdraw or refuse to work under dangerous working conditions.

Occupational health and safety will find practical expression when we make it part of our daily work routine. Zero Harm is our goal. We must ensure that each mineworker returns home unharmed.

I thank you.