

Sector plan for health and safety: **Mines**

This sector covers underground coal mines, mines producing other minerals, tourist mines, and those used for adventure or educational activities and storage.

Coal production has reduced over recent years, but the sector still contributes to the economy, producing rock salt for winter road treatment, potash for fertiliser production and gypsum for cement and plaster production and other specialist minerals.

Tourist and adventure activities at mines have the potential for a substantial public hazard. The numbers of leisure mines and mines used for storage and controlled waste disposal are slowly increasing.

The sector comprises around 100 mines around Great Britain. Work is in progress to sink a new coal mine in West Yorkshire and there is also a well-developed proposal to sink a very large polyhalite mine in North Yorkshire to produce up to 12 million tonnes per year.

Current position

Mining technologies and techniques are generally well established and unlikely to change significantly in the future. The health and safety hazards and control measures are well known, although reduced exposure limits are being introduced for various gases commonly found underground.

Working conditions in the sector have improved greatly over the years, but workers can still be exposed to a range of hazards such as fire,

explosion, rockfalls, dusts and gases. The change in the size of this sector is causing a loss of core skills, coupled with an ageing workforce.

The potential for catastrophic incidents remains high. An inrush of water at the Gleision Mine in 2011 killed 4 workers, a spontaneous combustion on a coalface at the Daw Mill Mine in 2013 resulted in its closure (with the loss of over 500 jobs), and a major underground fire occurred at the Cleveland Potash Mine in 2016.

Outcomes and priorities

Controlling major accident hazards will remain the focus of HSE activities, alongside tackling the main

causes of ill health, particularly occupational lung disease. We aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Prevent major incidents with potential to harm multiple workers and the public
- Address the decline in core skills and an ageing workforce
- Focus on occupational lung disease caused by exposure to diesel fume and particulates, dusts, radon and respirable crystalline silica



What HSE will do to #HelpGBworkwell

We will reduce the likelihood of low-frequency, high-impact catastrophic incidents by:

- delivering a programme of targeted interventions;
- engaging at an early stage in the design, construction and development of new mining projects.

We will lead and engage with others to improve workplace health and safety by:

- encouraging and enabling leaders, trade unions and others to address key problems, particularly the decline in core skills and an ageing workforce;
- delivering improved leadership by supporting developments in competence management and improving control of contractors.

We will secure effective management and control of risk by:

- designing a range of targeted interventions focused on work-related health issues, especially occupational lung disease and noise and vibration;
- ensuring risks to members of the public are being properly controlled at tourist and leisure sites;
- supporting the sector to achieve compliance with a range of new indicative occupational exposure limit values affecting underground mining activities.