

Health and safety report findings explained

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Features Reporter

One of the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of South Africa's (Aspasa's) committees, the Health and Safety Committee, released the results of its health and safety audit programme (ISHE – Initiating Safety, Health and Education) at the Institute of Quarrying Southern Africa's 35th conference and exhibition in March this year, which was held in conjunction with Aspasa.

The ISHE is done yearly and is implemented by doing a physical inspection of the mining operations, plant and workshops, which is then followed by a ten-section questionnaire.

Its purpose is to increase the standard and level of health and safety in the industry, since the status of their quarries will be conveyed to management.

The first section is related to policy statement, performance standards, appointments, permits and authorisation, emergency preparedness, hazard and risk assessment, audits and inspection and contractor control.

In terms of this section, out of the 39 quarries, 22 scored higher than 90%, of which four scored 100%.

According to **Fred van der Colff**, the independent auditor who did the audits for Aspasa, the small number of quarries scoring below 80% was due to unsigned-in appointments or the wrong regulations used.

The training section included aspects of training orientation, specific health and safety training, emergency and rescue, hygiene and induction and reinduction.

Only 14 quarries scored 100% in this section.

Two specific reasons for this is that, in some instances, no specific assessments were made to determine what health and safety training employees require for them to deal with their hazardous environments.

The other reason mentioned by Colff relates to the inadequate training of supervisors in their



Environmental importance seen at a quarry



Quarrying and farming integration demonstrated

supervisory task.

Section three included issues such as public relations, internal briefing and green areas.

Most quarries performed satisfactorily on these issues.

The results for occupational health and hygiene, which includes preplacement medical, specialised medicals, exit medicals, medical records and reports, occupational health-care services and dust sampling, showed that these issues were all well catered for by most quarries except for dust sampling; this indicated that some areas still need to be improved.

Nonconformance control investigated accident and incident reporting, investigation and feedback, where only a small number of serious injuries were reported during the past year.

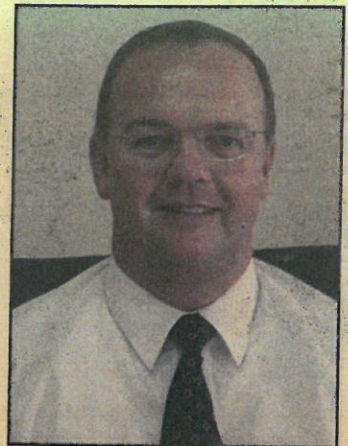
The section relating to dangerous

or hazardous work was made up of procedure controls, permits and standard operating procedure, codes of practice, safety rules and instructions, task observations, quarry faces and haul roads.

The workplace environment and facilities section indicated that, although dust suppression is undertaken by all mines, not all systems are effective, as operators neglected to turn the water on in some cases.

With regard to dust surveys, the high visual dust exposure of personnel could not be determined and, during the last 12 months, there has been an increase in the number of silicosis cases submitted to the Commissioner for verification.

This result questions the effectiveness of dust-suppression systems.



Nico Pienaar

Further, in terms of noise surveys, in several instances it was found that hearing protection was not worn by all personnel working in demarcated areas and the results showed an increase of cases submitted to the Commissioner in the last year relating to hearing loss.

In electrical equipment safeguarding, most mines scored high; this section relates to electrical installation, portable electrical equipment, switchgear and transformers, control gear, switchboards, earth leakage and electric fencing.

All quarries achieved an acceptable score regarding personal protective equipment and no quarry scored 100% in the mechanical-equipment safeguarding section, which deals with general safeguarding of machinery, grinders, mobile equipment, scaffolding, pneumatic equipment, overhead beams, overhead cranes, hand tools and explosive powered tools just to name a few.

The overall result indicated an increase in show place status, the highest score possible.

Some 14 quarries achieved this rank for 2003 compared with nine quarries for the previous year, and two for 2001.

According to Van der Colff, this audit achieved its objectives of improving health and safety standards, reinforcing the quarry industry's responsible image and it set the course to become self-governing as far as health, safety and the environment is concerned.

Aspasa director **Nico Pienaar** explains that the industry is proactive on health and safety issues and a great deal of work is done by the industry on this issue.

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