

# SAFETY BULLETIN

## Mines and severe weather events

### BACKGROUND

The western, central west, north west, Murray and Riverina regions of New South Wales have experienced heavy rains and flooding in recent weeks. Further severe weather events are forecast with heavy rainfall and damaging winds for much of the state.

Severe weather events may involve high velocity destructive winds, lightning strikes, and heavy rain and hail causing flash floods.

Some areas of NSW have already experienced record-breaking river rises and flooding that may already have impacted on mining and petroleum operations.

The floodwaters are also expected to present downstream risks to nearby mine and petroleum sites.

Severe weather events may disrupt mining operations. This safety bulletin serves as a reminder to persons conducting a business or undertaking- in particular mine and petroleum site operators - to consider the risks posed by the recent rains and flooding.



Image 1 - Middlemount Coal Mine QLD in flood (January 2008) [www.miningmayhem.com](http://www.miningmayhem.com)

## RISKS

The potential risks that heavy rain and flooding can present at mine and petroleum sites are many. These include:

- access to and from site
- loss of communication systems
- highwall and face instability
- road and ramp instability
- unconsolidated materials, water tables and aquifers in or near surface and underground mining operations
- ingress of water and other materials into workings, both surface and underground
- working in and around water and mud
- stability of emplacement areas, stockpiles, sedimentation ponds and dams
- submersion of mobile and fixed plant including electrical installations and equipment presenting electric shock and fire risk
- recovery of mobile plant and fixed equipment
- work to reinstate electrical power to buildings, plant and electrical equipment
- inundation of water into explosives magazines, blast holes and sleeping shots
- loss of power to underground mine infrastructure and equipment such as ventilation and gas control, and communication systems
- material and/or water out-flows from the mine or petroleum site that may have an impact on public safety.

There are many more hazards and risks not identified here that may arise from severe weather events. Severe weather events at the least may cause damage and operational losses as well as threaten the health and safety of persons at mine and petroleum sites.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The work health and safety legislation of NSW requires mine and petroleum site operators, contractors and other persons conducting a business or undertaking at mine and petroleum workplaces to conduct risk assessment to identify potential emergency situations caused by severe weather and natural disasters.

Mine and petroleum site operators must ensure that they have adequately assessed the risks associated with severe weather events and have suitable and sufficient, safety management, emergency response and recovery plans in place.

As severe weather is often infrequent and localised, it is important that everyone on a mine or petroleum site, including contractors and visitors, are made aware of the sites emergency plan, emergency response and rescue systems.

Be aware that storms may have passed but risks may yet remain.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Legislation:

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* section 17 (management of risks)
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* clause 43 (emergency plans)
- *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2014* Division 6 (emergency management and emergency plans).

Queensland mines safety bulletins:

- [Severe weather preparedness](#)
- [Storm season is coming - be prepared!](#)

- [Flood recovery in mines](#)

**NOTE:** Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Bulletin, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Bulletin should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

Issued by

**Dave McLean**

**Chief Inspector of Mines**

**Appointed pursuant to Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013**

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