

Duty of Care to Mine Workers in Camps or On-Site Accommodation

Increasing numbers of mine workers now live in mine camps or single person accommodation provided by mine operators or contractors for the workers rostered to work on site. In general, this accommodation is provided for workers employed on a fly in - fly out or drive in - drive out basis.

Following recent incidents (including deaths) involving sick workers in such accommodation, mines must review their systems and practices to ensure the safety and health of those workers.

Recent incidents include:

- A worker who failed to turn up for his shift. In accordance with the mine procedure, local police were requested to check the person's accommodation. Police found the worker injured and their actions successfully reduced the severity of the injuries.
- A worker who failed to turn up for his night shift. It was thought he may have been doing different work so there was no check on his whereabouts. A colleague went to the worker's room the following morning and found the worker had died some time after dressing to leave his room for his night shift.
- After completing two night shifts of his roster, a worker reported sick to the first aid room, but declined an offer to be taken to a doctor. Several hours later he reported he was worse and asked to be taken to hospital where he died of a severe bacterial infection two days later.
- A contract maintenance worker who had been ill during his rostered break returned to work and completed his first shift. He failed to report for his second shift and could not be contacted. A supervisor went to the off-site camp to check the worker's welfare. With assistance from the camp staff, the supervisor gained access to the worker's room where the worker was found deceased.

These, and other incidents, serve as a reminder of the obligations of mine operators and contractors to ensure the safety and health of their workers who reside, between shifts, in accommodation provided by the mine operator or contractor.

When reviewing systems and practices, mines must consider :

- If a worker known to be in the camp or accommodation fails to turn up for a shift, a procedure should be in place to check the worker's whereabouts and wellbeing at any time during the shift.
- When a worker becomes ill, the worker should be examined as soon as possible by a paramedic, nurse or other health care provider to establish the type, severity and prognosis of the illness.
- Based on the examination, a decision must be made whether the worker should be allowed to recover in the accommodation provided, or should be relocated to where their health can be checked and medical assistance provided if needed. The worker should not be allowed to drive.

- If it is determined it is safe for the worker to remain in the accommodation unit, a reliable procedure must be put in place ensuring the person's health is monitored by an appropriate person at regular intervals during day and night.
- If it is determined the worker should not remain in the accommodation provided, care must be taken to ensure the worker's health is considered during transport to hospital, home or other place of treatment and recovery. The worker may need to be accompanied by an appropriately qualified person.
- It is important processes are in place on site that ensure a person's family or next of kin are contacted in the event of illness or death.

Roger Billingham
Chief Inspector of Mines

Gavin Taylor
Chief Inspector of Coal Mines

Contact: Roger Billingham, Chief Inspector of Mines, +61 7 3237 1613

Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety bulletin. Any such advice supplied to site should reach those who require it, and it should also be placed on the mine notice boards.

See more Safety alerts and Safety bulletins at
www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/safety_information_bulletins.cfm