

Mining records a drop in occupational fatalities

The Mineral Resources Department (DMR) has recorded a 10% decrease in occupational fatalities. In 2018, a total of 81 fatalities were reported versus 90 in 2017," said Chief Mining Inspector David Msiza.



Image source: Getty/Gallo

He was speaking at a briefing where Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe released statistics on the health and safety performance of the mining industry for the 2018 calendar year.

The release included statistics on fatalities, injuries and occupational diseases.

Announcing the statistics, Msiza said the platinum sector recorded a commendable decrease of 59% in the number of fatalities reported.

In terms of occupational injuries, there was a 12% decrease in the number of injuries, from 2,669 in 2017 to 2,350 in the 2018.

Occupational diseases

The DMR noted some slight increases in occupational diseases, although no medical deaths were recorded.

- Occupational diseases decreased by 3%, from 4,632 cases in 2016 to 4,483 cases in 2017.
- Annual medical reports increased by 8% from 902 in 2016 to 975 in 2017.
- Diamond mines reported no medical deaths in 2017 compared to one (1) medical death reported in 2016.

"This proves that the slogan of Zero Harm in the mining sector is attainable," said Msiza.

Noting fatalities according to the commodity, the gold sector recorded 40 fatalities in both 2017 and 2018.

The coal and platinum sector, however, showed a decrease in fatalities, with nine deaths recorded in 2018 in the coal sector, compared to 10 in 2017. In platinum, 12 deaths were recorded in 2018, a drop from the 29 recorded in 2017.

The number of fatalities in other mines increased from 11 in 2017 to 20 in 2018.

Highlighting the major contributors to the fatalities, Msiza said 31 of the deaths were as a result of fall off ground injuries, with nine caused by transportation and seven were recorded as general.

Breakdown of injuries per commodity year-on-year (2017 versus 2018)

- The gold sector recorded a decrease from 1,021 in 2017 to 880 in 2018.
- The number of injuries in the coal sector decreased from 202 in 2017 to 167 in 2018.
- The number of injuries in the platinum sector decreased from 1 154 in 2017 to 1 048 in 2018.

Occupational health statistics

Msiza also gave a breakdown of medical deaths due to occupational diseases per commodity year-on-year comparing 2016 and 2017.

- Gold decreased from 26 in 2016 to 15 in 2017.
- Coal decreased from 2 in 2016 to 1 in 2017.
- Platinum increased from five in 2016 to seven in 2017.
- Other mines increased from 1 in 2016 to 2 in 2017.

Noise induced hearing loss cases increased from 966 in 2016 to 1 141 in 2017.

Silicosis cases increased from 635 in 2016 to 653 in 2017. TB cases decreased from 2,580 in 2016 to 2,247 in 2017.

To improve health and safety in mines, the DMR issued two directives in 2018. The first is to eliminate fire, heat and oxygen deficiency related accidents. The second is to eliminate rock-burst and rock-fall related accidents.

The Xolobeni question

Answering questions on Xolobeni, where there is a dispute on the granting of mining rights in the area to Australian-owned Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources (TEM), Mantashe said an informed decision must be taken.

“Xolobeni has been on the table from 2002. I’m going to take a final decision. If we say yes or no to Xolobeni, we must say yes or no based on scientific facts,” said Mantashe.