

Mining sector directive on resuming operations issued

The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy has issued a directive to all mining operations to ensure safe start-up procedures as the sector prepares to ramp up to 50% of capacity.



Image source: Getty/Gallo

"The directive was issued to ensure compliance with Section 5(1) of the Mine Health and Safety Act (Act No. 29 of 1996), as amended, which requires that every employer must as far as reasonably practicable, provide and maintain a safe working environment," the department said.

The start-up procedures must also address measures to be taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19, as well as actions to provide a safe working environment, especially following the prolonged closure of some operations.

These measures, in line with the latest disaster management regulations, should include:

- Rigorous screening of all employees, including contractors, prior to accessing the mine;
- Testing of employees with symptoms of Covid-19;
- Adequate social distancing;
- Provision of quarantine facilities for employees showing signs of Covid-19;
- Establishment and maintenance of a personal hygiene programme; and
- Provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including face masks.

The directive also encourages employers to systematically phase in workers at the mines. Mining companies must, in consultation with labour unions in the respective operations, develop the start-up procedure, and provide a copy to the department, prior to ramp-up of operations.

"The nature and extent of the Covid-19 pandemic is dynamic, unpredictable and changes almost daily as new scientific research about the virus becomes available. This calls for an equally dynamic response from the government and society as a whole.

“The department will therefore continue to introduce specific and appropriate measures for the sector when required. Stakeholders are urged to continue participating in this process as they have done to date, through the established consultative forums,” the department said.

The department continues with scheduled and unannounced visits to mining operations to monitor compliance with the lockdown regulations, guiding principles on prevention and management of Covid-19, as well as the start-up procedure.

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