27 May 2022

RE: Request for Compressed Air Cleaning Registers

Dear SSE,

The Mines Inspectorate is committed to the ongoing reduction in dust exposure and improvement of dust controls across the Coal Industry. We recently established a tripartite industry working group to develop guidance for *Preventing and Managing Dust Ingress into Electrical Enclosures and Equipment.* To ensure this document is as useful and as current as possible, we are requesting a copy of your site's *Compressed Air Cleaning register as required under Section 9.1.2.2 of Recognised Standard 20.*



Background Information

- Since regulatory changes regarding dust management and the establishment of the RSHQ database in 2017, the inspectorate have been able to increase their focus on tasks that are deemed high risk of exposing workers to harmful levels of dust, through data analysis.
- In 2017, approximately 50% of exceedances in surface coal mines, related directly to the use of compressed air for cleaning down enclosures and equipment during maintenance activities.
- In 2018, Russell Albury - Chief Inspector of Coal Mines issued a letter to all SSEs requesting sites develop and maintain a Compressed Air Cleaning register.
- In 2019, the inspectorate issued Safety Bulletin 183 regarding the use of compressed air in cleaning.
- In 2019, the release of *Recognised Standard 20: Dust control in surface mines* required sites to establish and maintain a register of the use of compressed air for cleaning (Section 9.1.2.2).
- In 2022, we continue to see the use of compressed air generating high levels of dust into the worker's breathing zone. Approximately a third of all exceedances recorded for respirable crystalline silica (RCS) at surface mines are during blow out tasks with an average concentration of 0.22 mg/m^3 and a maximum value of 1.1 mg/m^3. This is compared against the current regulatory limit of 0.05 mg/m^3 (8-hour shift).

Actions

1. Please provide by email a copy of your site's *Compressed Air Cleaning register* as outlined in Section 9.1.2.2, Use of compressed air for cleaning in Recognised Standard 20. This register must be sent through to AirborneContaminants@rshq.qld.gov.au, by **no later than 30 June 2022.**

2. Please ensure your site is undertaking monitoring of these tasks. This should include a combination of both personal gravimetric sampling and real time monitoring. In addition to compliance monitoring there is also opportunity for undertaking "Control Monitoring" described in section 6.3 of Recognised Standard 14.

   When undertaking monitoring it is important to record information that includes but not limited to:
   a. Details of component (s) being cleaned
   b. Duration of the cleaning task (s)
   c. Duration of the monitoring period
   d. Number of persons involved in task (s)
   e. Controls in place (refer RS20)
   f. Type of RPE worn

3. When conducting real time monitoring the following additional information should be collected:
   - Tasks contributing to peak concentrations recorded
   - Task based TWA
   - Exposure range over the tasks

4. During the last quarter of this calendar year (beginning 1 October 2022), we will issue a request for this monitoring data. This data will be able to further inform the tripartite working group to assess and understand the issues regarding the use of compressed air to clean electrical enclosures and equipment.

Thank you in anticipation for providing this valuable information that will assist with improving the health of coal mine workers.

Peter Newman

Chief Inspector of Coal Mines

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of the below RSHQ team members:

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