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# Guidelines for Agency Coordination During Body Recovery at NSW Mines

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Produced by Mine Safety Operations Division,  
New South Wales Department of  
Primary Industries

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## **GUIDELINES FOR AGENCY COORDINATION DURING BODY RECOVERY AT NSW MINES**

Revision 2.5  
11 April 2007

### **1 PREAMBLE**

The death of a mineworker is always a tragic event. The image of persons entombed in underground workings has long held evocative emotions for the general community. The reality of such tragedies is more fully felt, and feared, in mining communities who have responded traditionally by developing a close knit kinship and support network.

The development of guidelines to help co-ordinate inter-agency activities during mine tragedies arose from the Gretley Colliery disaster in 1996. The Inquiry into the disaster determined that a more systematic and compassionate response by rescue and recovery agencies was required. These guidelines address this need and it is hoped will ease, albeit to a small extent, the distress and trauma felt by the next of kin of mineworkers who have lost their lives at work.

It behoves all those involved in rescue and recovery operations to follow these guidelines and to act in the spirit they envisage. Only with the full cooperation of all parties can we, as an industry hope to meet the expectations of our community in caring for those affected by mining tragedy.

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## 3 DEFINITIONS

Recovery: The safe and systematic retrieval of deceased persons.

Rescue: The safe removal of persons from actual or threatened danger of physical harm.

DVI: Disaster Victim Identification. (NSW Police Force responsibility)

NSW DPI New South Wales Department of Primary Industries

## **4 BACKGROUND**

Officers of the NSW Police Force, and officers of the NSW DPI and the Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union must attend mine sites where death or suspected death occurs. Various other agencies, including Ambulance, Fire Brigade and accredited rescue bodies may be called upon to attend the mine. Each agency has specific obligations and often these overlap with other groups attending the mine. In addition other employer and employee representatives need to have access to certain information to allow them to assist their stakeholders. In order to minimise confusion over roles and responsibilities and to enhance inter-agency cooperation these guidelines need to be implemented.

- 4.1 All incidents are likely to be different, so common sense and judgement need to be applied on a case by case basis. These guidelines form the basis upon which decisions can be referenced.
- 4.2 Nothing in the guidelines should be construed as impeding the implementation of individual agency protocols (e.g. NSW Police Force DVI procedures or NSW DPI investigation procedures) once these become necessary.
- 4.3 In the case of a very small or isolated mine discretion in the application of these guidelines, by any response agency may need to be exercised.

## **5 SITE SAFETY AND UNDERGROUND OPERATIONS**

- 5.1 Mine Management is responsible for site safety and control of all operations, both surface and underground.
- 5.2 Mine personnel and volunteers from the Mines Rescue Service may participate in these operations.
- 5.3 Mines Inspectors overview these operations and may impose additional safety requirements.
- 5.4 All agency representatives must contact Mine Management upon arrival for ongoing briefing and information exchange.

- 5.5 Individual agency involvement may range from active participation to a watch and monitor role over the life of the incident. Self restraint and discretion will be required to ensure appropriate agency participation. These guidelines are aimed at avoiding unnecessary repetition and jurisdictional conflict.

## **6 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

### **6.1 TO AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES**

- 6.1.1 Mine Management is responsible for the establishment of an incident control room on site as soon as possible after an accident occurs
- 6.1.2 Mine Management is responsible for supervision of the incident control room.
- 6.1.3 Nominated agency representatives should assemble at the incident control room to receive regular briefings and updates.
- 6.1.4 Decisions on agency actions and operations should be based on the information disseminated by Mine Management at these briefings
- 6.1.5 The number of any agency's representatives on site is likely to vary throughout the incident's duration. In order to avoid congestion and possible communication difficulties in the control room it is recommended that only one senior agency representative be responsible for decision making at any point in time.

### **6.2 TO RELATIVES**

- 6.2.1 Mine Management need to ensure the relatives of the deceased are constantly informed of the state of the recovery. Their briefings need to be private and undertaken prior to any public release of information.
- 6.2.2 Mine Management should endeavour to explain the reasons behind recovery activities so as to ease uncertainty and apprehension that may be present in relative's concerns.
- 6.2.3 A telephone inquiry line (initially a NSW Police Force line) should be established.

### 6.3 INFORMING THE VICTIM'S NEXT OF KIN

- 6.3.1 Where death is reasonably certain, or confirmed, the NSW Police Force aided by Mine Management and union personnel should inform the next of kin.
- 6.3.2 NSW Police Force will provide next of kin with information regarding the NSW Police Force investigation, including the process of positively identifying the victim/s.
- 6.3.3 Notification should be done in person and as soon as is possible after the incident.
- 6.3.4 Mine Management aided by union personnel should inform other immediate family relatives prior to any public release of information.
- 6.3.5 Steps need to be taken, primarily by Mine Management and union personnel, to ensure that relative(s) have support counselling. Arrangements for family members to support the deceased's immediate relative(s) should be coordinated by Mine Management and union personnel. Matters such as medical assistance, transport arrangements need to be addressed. The deceased immediate relative(s) should not be left alone and should not be permitted to transport themselves to the mine.

### 6.4 MISSING PERSONS

- 6.4.1 Where an incident results in persons being unaccounted for, Mine Management is responsible for contacting next of kin.
- 6.4.2 Contact should be made as soon as possible and use of the telephone is appropriate.
- 6.4.3 Transport needs, for next of kin, to the mine must be considered and where necessary provided by Mine Management.

## 6.5 TO THE MEDIA

- 6.5.1 Mine Management must nominate a media liaison officer who shall be responsible for initiating press releases made on behalf of the mining company.
- 6.5.2 The nominated media liaison officer should issue factual press releases to all nominated agency representatives prior to each actual release occurring.
- 6.5.3 The nominated media liaison officer shall not release information that may identify the victim(s) until the immediate next of kin have been notified.
- 6.5.4 Efforts should be made by all agencies to ensure that no information is released to the media of a nature that would identify the victim(s) until such time as the immediate next of kin have been notified.
- 6.5.5 Correct reporting of factual matters either directly by Mine Management or subsequently by Agency media units is essential. If next of kin have been notified, media releases should identify that fact.

## 7 MEETING LOCATIONS FOR RELATIVES

- 7.1 Provided numbers permit, the meeting location should be at the mine site, with provision for direct access without media hindrance.
- 7.2 Where numbers exceed site capacity a venue, off-site but close to the mine, will be required.
- 7.3 The responsibility for organising meeting locations rests with Mine Management.
- 7.4 As relatives grieve, their need to be close to the mine and to view the general area must be considered.
- 7.5 Mine Management, aided by union personnel, is responsible for the physical and emotional support of persons gathering at meeting locations.

- 7.6 Mine Management should cater for the on-going physical and emotional support of relatives of the deceased.

## **8 BODY REMOVAL**

- 8.1 The preferred circumstances are that the deceased should be left insitu until all scene investigations are complete and the NSW Police Force acting for the Coroner and the NSW DPI, have authorised removal of the body.
- 8.2 Wherever possible, Mines Rescue personnel, in consultation with the NSW Police Force and the NSW DPI should recover the body. After being examined and photographed, the body should be placed in a sealed body bag, which has been sealed in the presence of the senior NSW Police Force officer, then transported to the mine portal or shaft top (in the case of an underground mine) or the nominated transfer point (in the case of a surface mine).
- 8.3 The body bag should not be opened until arrival at the morgue.
- 8.4 Should circumstances at the mine dictate (that is, likelihood of loss of the body permanently or loss of access to the accident site) the body should be recovered without prior NSW Police Force or NSW DPI authorisation, provided it is safe to do so.
- 8.5 In situations where NSW Police Force are unable to examine the scene, the NSW DPI may, if possible, and in consultation with the NSW Police Force, make arrangements for the scene to be photographed including the location of the deceased insitu. They may also take note of anything which may assist in determining the cause of the accident.

## **9 BODY TRANSPORT**

- 9.1 In the case of an underground coal mine, Mine Management together with Mines Rescue personnel shall, after consultation with the NSW Police Force and the NSW DPI, transport the body to the mine portal or shaft top.
- 9.2 In the case of a non coal underground mine, Mine Management shall, after consultation with the NSW Police Force and the NSW DPI, transport the body to the mine portal or shaft top.

- 9.3 In the case of a surface mine, Mine Management shall, after consultation with the NSW Police Force and NSW DPI transport the body to the nominated transfer point.
- 9.4 In the case of underground mines transfer of the body from mine transport to other transport should be done as close as possible to the portal or shaft top to provide as much privacy and dignity as possible.
- 9.5 In the case of surface mines transfer of the body from mine transport to other transport should be arranged to provide as much privacy and dignity as possible.
- 9.6 If the body is less than 24 hours old, ambulance vehicles may transport the body to morgue otherwise contract vehicles will be utilised. NSW Police Force shall be responsible for determining body transport from the mine site to the morgue.
- 9.7 Where a person dies during the rescue operation, either whilst being transported from the mine, or at the surface, ambulance vehicles may be used to transport the deceased to the morgue.

## **10 VICTIM IDENTIFICATION (ID)**

- 10.1 This is the responsibility of the NSW Police Force.
- 10.2 Provided the nature of injuries permit, NSW Police Force may authorise an identification of the body at the mine site.
- 10.3 In incidents involving multiple casualties, or where injuries are such that visual identification is not possible or reliable, Disaster Victim Identification processes will be implemented.

## **11 HUMAN REMAINS HOLDING AREA**

- 11.1 Should numbers, location and other factors dictate, it may be necessary to establish a human remains holding area on site. Responsibility for this decision and managing the human remains holding area rests with the NSW Police Force, in consultation with the NSW Police Force DVI commander or their delegate.
- 11.2 If a request is made by the NSW Police Force, the mine must provide a suitable area with adequate services. Such an area must be able to be secured and visually and audibly isolated.
- 11.3 During the pre planning phase, the NSW Police Force Forensic Services Group can be contacted for more information.

## **12 VIEWING THE BODY**

- 12.1 Viewing of the body by next of kin must occur at the morgue where controlled, sensitive conditions can be organised and appropriate support arrangements can be initiated.

## **13 FATAL ACCIDENT SCENE CONTROL**

- 13.1 Various agencies need to conduct detailed investigations of the accident scene.
- 13.2 Once the scene is declared safe by Mine Management and the Government Mine Inspector, the scene area will be cordoned off and access limited. The NSW Police Force and Officers of the NSW DPI will determine scene security.
- 13.3 Recovery agencies should limit disturbance of the scene wherever possible and record (photograph and note) any disturbance they initiated e.g. moving material, rock, equipment.
- 13.4 Securing the accident scene should involve multi-perimeter taping and the logging of persons accessing the scene.

- 13.5 Consideration of guarding the scene may be necessary. Decisions regarding guarding the scene will be negotiated between officers from NSW DPI and the Senior NSW Police Force Officer.
- 13.6 Each agency needs to ensure that the investigation requirements of other agencies are satisfied prior to releasing the scene (hand-over of the scene).
- 13.7 The controlled area may contain hazards associated with biological and medical waste, sharps and the like (see Appendix A).
- 13.8 These hazards should be recognised and controlled by any procedures developed by mine management for the purpose of clean up and site restoration during the process of releasing the scene to the mine.
- 13.9 Particular issues that should be addressed in the procedures include training and competence, appropriate equipment and PPE, and means of storage, transport and disposal of waste.

## **14 TRAINING FOR CERTAIN AGENCY PERSONNEL**

- 14.1 Underground mines, especially underground coal mines, are unique environments that can present multiple hazards not generally encountered in normal surface environments. Allowing untrained personal into underground emergency or post emergency situations poses risks to their health and safety.
- 14.2 It is highly desirable that all non-mining agency personnel who have to attend the underground workings of a mine, have had prior special induction training to educate them in basic safety requirements and to orientate them with the mine environment.
- 14.3 Such training should be conducted in a controlled environment and as part of a structural training regime. The training must be regular and on-going.

## **15 EQUIPMENT PERMITTED UNDERGROUND – Coal Mines.**

- 15.1 Because of the potential for the presence of methane the use of electrical apparatus and the use of light metal alloys is regulated in underground coal mines.
- 15.2 Portable electrical apparatus such as cameras and light metal alloys such as aluminium tripods can only be taken underground in accordance with the portable apparatus arrangements contained within the mine electrical engineering management plan.
- 15.3 Every underground coal mine must make provision within the mine electrical engineering management plan for the introduction of suitable equipment used in the forensic examination of an accident scene. Because of the unique nature of such a situation it will be necessary to apply higher than usual standards of supervision and inspection by mine officials to ensure that forensic investigators are able to use equipment that would not normally be permitted on a routine basis.
- 15.4 A NSW Police Force officer or other investigator who attends an underground coal mine with portable electrical apparatus or light metal alloy equipment needs to contact the electrical staff of the mine. The electrical staff of the mine will guide the officer through the process that will enable most equipment to be used in a controlled manner underground.
- 15.5 It is possible that there will be conditions or circumstances underground that prohibit the use of such equipment. Mine officials are responsible for detecting and supervising these. The Government Mine Inspector can be contacted to verify conditions encountered.
- 15.6 Battery powered portable apparatus will have a seal attached over the battery compartment. This seal must remain intact and the battery compartment must not be opened underground. Spare or loose batteries must not be taken underground.
- 15.7 If circumstances arise that are outside the scope of these arrangements then the Government Mine Inspector can be contacted regarding the introduction of equipment under an exemption.
- 15.8 Firearms are not permitted underground at any time.

## 16 DOCUMENT CONTROL

### 16.1 Participation

This document was developed through the co-operative effort of a development committee, consisting of:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Organisation.</b>
Ian Anderson	NSW Department of Mineral Resources
Murray Bird	( <i>Chief Executive</i> ) Newcastle Mines Rescue Service
Brian Carr	NSW Police
Seamus Devlin	Newcastle Mines Rescue Service
Commander Sam Findley	Newcastle City NSW Police ( <i>Local Area Command</i> )
Senior Constable Tim Hockey	NSW Police ( <i>Forensic Services Group - Newcastle</i> )
Bob Mc Gregor Skinner	Hunter District Emergency Management
David Nichols	NSW Department of Mineral Resources
Ian Parker Jim Simpson	NSW Police ( <i>Forensic Services Group</i> ) NSW Minerals Council
A/ Superintendent Ron Smith	Ambulance Service of NSW
Daniel Sullivan	Prosecuting Services Newcastle
Superintendent Leah Wright	Ambulance Service of NSW
Les Yates	CFMEU ( <i>Northern District</i> )
Tim Lyons / Kevin Lee (Appendix A)	Dept. Forensic Medicine (Newcastle)

Review of version 2 (2007) of the guidelines was undertaken with the co operative effort of:

Chief Inspector Rob Regan	NSW Department of Primary Industries ( <i>Mine Safety Operations</i> )
Superintendent Mark Sweeney	NSW Police Force ( <i>Forensic Services Group</i> )
Murray Bird	General Manager NSW Mines Rescue Service
Senior Constable Tim Hockey	NSW Police Force ( <i>Forensic Services Group - Newcastle</i> )
Inspector David Nichols	NSW Department of Primary Industries ( <i>Mine Safety Operations</i> )
Senior Sargeant Ian Parker	NSW Police Force ( <i>Forensic Services Group</i> )
Senior Investigator Tony Smith	NSW Department of Primary Industries ( <i>Investigation Unit</i> )

## 16.2 Review and Alteration

16.2.1 It is recommended that a formal review of this document be considered after any fatality in a mine in NSW where it is perceived that the provisions of this document, could be improved or were not followed.

16.2.2 It is recommended that a formal review of this document be considered every three years.

16.2.3 Review and alteration of this document can only be conducted by a group that has representation of duly authorised persons from each of the relevant organisations. That group should initially be composed substantially of the original members of the development committee if possible. In addition they will need to have access to key persons involved in any event under review.

## 16.3 Distribution

To be effected through all the relevant response agencies to each of their relevant organisational elements and clients.

## 17 APPENDIX A PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT

### 17.1 Introduction

The information presented in this appendix is aimed at establishing an appropriate standard for the safe and efficient recovery of victims of fatal mining accidents. A correct recovery is dependant on competent persons using suitable procedures and equipment. That equipment must be available when needed.

### 17.2 Disaster Kit Specification

This specification sets a minimum standard of equipment that needs to be provided to a Body Recovery Team required to recover a single victim from a mining environment.

One, heavy duty NT, disaster victim identification body bag.  
Six pairs, protective disposable overalls.  
Six pairs, leather gloves ( medium, large & extra large).  
One box of each size, surgical gloves (medium, large & extra large).  
Two, heavy duty sealable plastic bags.  
Crayon marker.  
Povidone Iodine/ chlorhexidene/ triclosan hand scrubber.  
Disposable towels.  
Masks.  
Odour masking product.  
Two, yellow contaminated waste bags.  
One page instruction sheet.

### 17.3 Disaster Kit Distribution

Each mine has a responsibility to ensure that sufficient numbers of Disaster Kits can be assembled at the mine for a timely initial response to an event that involves one or more fatalities. The equipment required should be determined from an evaluation of the circumstances of the mine and the lead times of various response agencies. It is not the aim that the Disaster Kits be stored at the mine, although this is an option, but that the Disaster Kits can be provided in a sufficient quantity and timely fashion when required. It is recommended on several mines and emergency response organisations in a local area co-ordinate their activities and share their resources.

### 17.4 Disaster Kit Utilisation

The products in the kit are to be encouraged to be used and therefore the majority of the kit contents should be disposed of after use. This kit is not intended as a first aid kit or a disaster management tool to rank the severity of injuries in a rescue

## 17.5 Disaster Kit Training

The instruction and training should be modelled on the national DVI guidelines.

### 17.5.1 Biological protection

Pads inside body bag allow fluid absorption and are placed underneath the body. Before commencing work, all members to wear disposable overalls, two pairs of gloves – rubber under, leather over – size to suit Mask worn over mouth and nose – clip over nose bridge Odour masking fluid used over scene as required.

### 17.5.2 Lifting and carrying

Preferably four persons to lift, front and back helpers to stabilise, drag only if necessary.

### 17.5.3 Identification labelling of body bag

Zip shut and place ID in front pocket (use marker pen). If Disaster Victim Identification procedures are being utilised then Crime Scene will provide unique DVI tags. Seal with ID tags (ex Crime Scene).

### 17.5.4 Decontamination

Personal protective equipment removed only after finishing contact with contaminated surfaces/objects. Contaminated personal protective equipment to be placed in marked yellow contaminated waste bag, for later disposal. After removal, hand scrubbing fluid and disposable towels are provided and must be used. Other waste material from scene not intended for forensic examination to be placed in other marked yellow contaminated waste bag for later disposal.

### 17.5.5 Safe disposal of contaminated waste

Prior to any victim recovery event, each mine needs to arrange for the correct disposal of medically contaminated waste. It is noted that such arrangements should already be in place for contaminated waste generated by the first aid given at the mine.



*Contents of a typical disaster kit*

*Typical disaster kit carry bag*

