SAFETY ALERT

MACHINE MOUNTED METHANE MONITORS

INCIDENT:

Departmental officers have found several instances of automatic methane monitors in bypass mode or unlocked.

CIRCUMSTANCES:

- An unlocked methane monitor was found on a continuous miner with the bypass switch held in the bypass position with a piece of string.
- An unlocked methane monitor was found on a mobile roof bolter in a place change unit with a piece of cardboard wedged in the bypass switch.
- A methane monitor was found on a mobile roof bolter in a place change unit with no means available to lock it.
- An unlocked and bypassed methane monitor was found on a mobile roof bolter in a place change unit.

INVESTIGATION

Chapter 2 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 details requirements for identifying hazards, assessing risks and implementing risk controls. Where automatic methane monitors are installed as risk controls on mobile apparatus, they should meet the requirements of AS/NZS 4871.4:2002 Electrical equipment for coal mines for use underground.

These include:

- automatic isolation of power
- prevention of restoration without a reset
- visual indication of gas level
- an override to allow safe withdrawal of the machine, which also prevents normal operations from occurring
- restricted access to the reset and override mechanism.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the actions required in Chapter 2 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* have been carried out.

- In particular, in any place where there is a risk that a flammable mixture of methane and air could occur, a risk control equivalent to, or better than, an automatic methane monitor must be implemented on mobile machines operating in the immediate face area.

- All mines review major hazard management plans to determine whether the risk associated with operating mobile machines in a flammable atmosphere has been adequately addressed, and adequately identified the use of automatic methane monitors as a risk control.

- Review existing methane monitors to ensure that the requirements of *AS/NZS 4871.4:2002* have been met.

- Conduct reviews in association with workforce consultation highlighting the necessity to properly inspect, test, maintain and operate automatic methane monitoring equipment.

R Regan
DIRECTOR MINE SAFETY OPERATIONS


Receive safety alerts by email
Email your details (name, title, any company details and email address) to safetyalert@minerals.nsw.gov.au