

Minister Gwede Mantashe on Coronavirus COVID-19 amended regulations

16 Apr 2020

Remarks by the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Mr Gwede Mantashe (MP) on the amended regulations, 16 April 2020

The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy has been in continuous engagements with key stakeholders in the Mining and Energy Industries to give effect to the direction by President Ramaphosa that government should -among others - “evaluate how we will embark on risk-adjusted measures that can enable a phased recovery of the economy...”.

In this regard we are proactively managing issues directly affecting mining and energy, in the interests of ensuring employee health and safety, as well as ensuring that these sectors we regulate are able to meet their obligations during this period, and are better positioned to ramp up production systematically once the lockdown has been lifted.

The following are the amendments to the National Disaster Management Act, specific to mining and energy:

Energy and petroleum products

To ensure the continuous supply of energy and petroleum products to society:

- (a) collieries that supply Eskom shall continue to operate at full capacity; and
- (b) refineries shall operate at full capacity to avoid shortage of fuel, and such operations shall include refineries, smelters, plants and furnaces

Mining operations

Mining operations, excluding collieries that supply Eskom, shall be conducted at a reduced capacity of 50% during the period of the lockdown, and thereafter at increasing capacity as determined by the Cabinet member responsible for mineral resources and energy. We must maintain a risk-based approach.

The following conditions apply to the starting and increasing of capacity:

- (a) A rigorous screening and testing program must be implemented as employees return to work;
- (b) the mining industry must provide quarantine facilities for employees who have tested positive for the COVID-19;
- (c) data collected during the screening and testing programme must be submitted to the relevant authority;
- (d) mining companies must make arrangements to transport their South African employees from their homes to their respective areas of operations;

(e) in accordance with these Regulations and other regulations applicable in neighbouring SADC countries, workers from these neighbouring countries will be recalled at the end of lockdown in their respective countries.

The monitoring and impact assessment of seismicity through the Council for Geoscience must be intensified with immediate effect. This will assist in monitoring ground stability.

Conclusion

I urge all stakeholders in the industries we regulate to respect the Regulations, as well as the directives guiding how we must systematically phase in a ramp-up of production. This will assist us in protecting employees by containing the pandemic, and ensuring this critical sector of the economy is able to operate safely and optimally. Furthermore, employers and labour unions must engage on a regular basis, on matters directly affecting employees.

I thank you.

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