

MTA - SETTING THE SAFETY STANDARD

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SUMMARY

Mining Technologies Australia (MTA) is out to ensure their safety record, which saw the company recently post 550 days LTI free, stays intact with the introduction of a new Safety, Environment and Training (SET) Manual for highwall mining.

Identifying a lack of consistency for their employees and management operating under different OH&S systems on different mine mining sites, MTA commissioned Australian Safety Assurance Systems to produce a guidance manual addressing all the OH&S issues likely to confront MTA and its clients in highwall mining.

The new SET Manual addresses the four essential elements of the company's health and safety management strategy - Commitment by Management, Systems, Procedures and Training. The main parts of the SET Manual include health and safety policy and responsibilities, administrative and operational arrangements, and a schedule of procedures.

MTA believe the introduction of their SET Manual will sharpen the focus of all of their employees on highwall mining safely. Company goals of zero accidents, high productivity, a skilled workforce and a safe workplace are achievable and well within reach.

INTRODUCTION

MTA has been highwall mining at BHP Coal's Moura Mine since October 1995, operating the Addcar Highwall Mining System. In that time MTA has clearly demonstrated the suitability of the system by producing record coal outputs, which included in March 1996, a world record 160,060 tonnes mined by a single continuous miner in a calendar month. The Addcar System was originally developed by the Addington company, MTA's U.S. parent. The original A1 System at Moura was moved to German Creek in November 1996 and to Yarrabee in May 1997. A new A2 System operated at Moura from September 1996 until June 1997, and at Ulan in NSW from 1 July.

During this time at Moura, German Creek and Yarrabee and Ulan the Addcar System has been

demonstrated to be an inherently safe process. Since commencing operation of the A1 System in August 1995, prior to commencing mining at Moura, MTA employees have only had one lost time injury.

In Queensland MTA's highwall miners work a 4 on 4 off rotating 12 hour shift roster. Mining operations are conducted on 363 days of the year. In NSW the highwall miners work a 3 on 4 off 12-hour shift roster. Mining is not conducted between 3PM Saturday and 7PM Sunday.

It became apparent to me when MTA began contract negotiations to place a second system in work that having to prepare a site specific OH&S plan for operating the Addcar System for each potential customer had some shortcomings. Some of these perceived shortcomings were:

The basic guidelines given to MTA by the mine owner tend to address typically open cut or underground concerns and not highwall mining.

If MTA were to have a number of systems operating, our management and staff would need to understand, administer and train employees in various differing OH&S systems.

MTA employees being transferred between sites would need to be able to cope with differing systems.

Mine site rules tend to be based on prescriptive legislation, which is not the best practice value that MTA is adopting for its safety, training and environment systems.

MTA commissioned John Jasinski of Australian Safety Assurance Systems to prepare documentation that addressed the Mines Act, embraced the Robens' style for management systems and adopted best practice values by incorporating Australian and International standards into our procedures.

I recommended Jasinski to the Board because of my involvement with him through some training and consultancy work with a previous employer. I was interested in his background of working in the Coal Mining Industry and General Industry, interpreting and applying the Mines Act and OH&S Acts in Queensland and NSW. I was also particularly impressed by his way of communicating information that was occasionally tedious, in a manner that got the message across to

participants from varied backgrounds and differing management levels. I believed that his informative teaching style would be reflected in the material that he was to prepare for MTA.

THE SET MANUAL

The manual addresses the four essential elements of the company's health and safety management strategy:

- Commitment by Management
- Systems
- Procedures
- Training.

The manual is designed to be a user-friendly resource. It is in plain English with a shortage of jargon. It is a guide to the company's OH&S philosophy. It is a reference text that consolidates Acts, Regulations and Australian Standards into one binder. It is an instrument of audit. It does not help jump tall buildings in a single bound or any other supernatural feat. But, if maintained correctly and implemented by a skilled management team, it will be a valuable business tool.

The manual is divided into four distinct parts.

PART A - HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We at MTA see commitment by management as the key to the success of the planning function. Without this commitment, any management plan is doomed from the outset. It is not enough for managers and supervisors to rely on employees using their commonsense in safety. MTA's senior staff understand this and play an integral role in setting and maintaining safety standards. Information provided in this section includes:

- Company Policy Statements
 - Health and Safety
 - Rehabilitation
 - Environmental
- Specific Responsibility and Accountability Statements
 - Managing Director
 - Executive Officers
 - Site Highwall Mining Managers
 - Safety and Human Resource Manager
 - Site Safety and Training Coordinators
 - Supervisors

- Employees
- Sub-Contractors
- Workers' Health and Safety Representative
- Health and Safety Committee
- Mine Officials

- Safety Organisation
 - General
 - Corporate Organisational Chart
 - Site Highwall Mining Organisational Chart
- Health, Safety and Environmental System Description
 - Structure of System
 - Document Security
 - Document Control
 - Authority for Change

PART B - ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Systems to prevent and document accidents are gathered together in this section. These are identified and incorporated in the plan so as to be the information given by the employer to ensure compliance with the Act and the general duty of care. These are:

Accident investigation
Toolbox meetings

Communications
Vehicle and plant inspections

Emergency procedures
Housekeeping and hygiene

First Aid procedure
Control of contractors

Joint consultation
Access to highwall mining sites

Safety staff
Rehabilitation

Inductions and authorisations
Development of site-specific safety plans

Risk management
Disciplinary procedures

Site inspections and audits

PART C - OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

These procedures are the detailed instructions or rules aimed at specific persons in the workplace and range from general rules for workers to specific safe work procedures. These vary from a one-page procedure on access provisions to a detailed 24-page procedure on accident investigation, reporting and notification. Areas covered are:

Access provisions
Detailed Procedures

Confined space safety
Accident investigation, reporting and notification

Cranes, hoists and lifting gear
Health and safety committee constitution

Electrical equipment safety
Emergency response procedures

Fire protection
Authorisations and training

Guardrails and edge protection
Entry into confined spaces

Ladder safety
Procedure for hot work

Laser safety
Energy isolation procedures

Lighting
Working at heights

Lock out and tagging
Hazardous substances management

Manual handling
Risk management

Noise and hearing conservation
Development of safe work procedures

Pressure equipment

Protective clothing and equipment

Signs

Traffic rules

Welding safety

Working at heights

Hazardous substances

PART D - OUTLINE OF SITE-SPECIFIC HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

This part describes the format of a Site Specific Health and Safety Plan taking into consideration the MTA SET Manual and the relevant Mine Manager's Rules and Schemes. The intention is to ensure best practices are maintained and all legal and client requirements are met. This plan will be read in conjunction with referenced parts of the SET Manual and Mine Manager's Rules and Schemes.

TRAINING

Seven training packages have been produced to educate management and employees in the philosophy and implementation of the SET Manual. Each package requires about 1 1/2 hours to deliver and will be presented on-site by MTA's Safety and Training Coordinators.

MTA's training strategy is built about identifying the skills and knowledge that employees require to perform their daily tasks at the highest level in a safe manner. This training program contributes to that strategy.

CONCLUSION

The SET Manual will be the hub of OH&S activity for MTA. If it is left on the shelf unused and out of date it will contribute nothing. This will not be allowed to happen. The manual will be a working document during contract negotiations and will be especially well used in the start up phase of new contracts. As more people work with the system I expect critical comment on the manual content. I look forward to that. This manual is not the whole answer by a long shot. Management and employees need and welcome guidance and assistance in specialist areas. An OH&S management system is one of those areas.