



Coal Services

News Release

Coal Services and NSW coal mining industry continue to protect mine workers from 'black lung' disease.

Sydney (Australia), 22 August 2012 – Recent figures from the NSW coal mining industry show that enforced regulation of dust monitoring and health surveillance continue to protect mine workers from 'black lung disease', with no new cases being reported for over twenty years.

Pneumoconiosis, commonly referred to as 'black lung disease', is associated with long exposure to airborne coal dust. While other countries report high incidences of new cases and significant numbers of deaths annually from this disease (as high as 6000 per annum in China and 1000 per annum in the United States), the NSW coal mining industry has had no new cases since 1972.

This has been achieved through ongoing and regular health testing of employees and stringent dust monitoring at and around mine sites; services that are provided by Coal Services Pty Limited (Coal Services) by statute under the *NSW Coal Industry Act (2001)*. It is also a result of industry coming together under the Standing Dust Committee to effect improvements to health and safety.

"By retaining the legislated dust monitoring and environmental standards in NSW coal mines, including current monitoring practices which may have been lost due to national harmonisation of safety legislation, we have been able to continue to protect mine workers' health by maintaining the optimal health standards which have helped to keep lung diseases such as pneumoconiosis at bay", said Mr Paul Healey, General Manager Mines Rescue and Regulation and Compliance.

"The introduction of Order 42 in February 2011 further cemented the critical role we play in protecting workers' health. The Order requires that Coal Services undertake airborne dust monitoring, which includes collection and analysis of samples at all NSW coal mine operations to a prescribed standard, including location and frequency. Coal mine operators must grant access to Coal Services Inspectors to perform this task." Mr Healey explained.

The Standing Committee on Dust Research and Control has been instrumental in effecting the decrease in pneumoconiosis cases. Compromising of representatives from mine operators, mining unions, government departments and Coal Services personnel, the Standing Dust Committee has initiated a number of innovative and important changes in dust control techniques within the industry and has produced publications which have been widely circulated.

By working together with industry to meet statutory obligations, the number of incidents where the prescribed inhalable dust levels have been exceeded have dropped by 19% since the introduction of the Order. There has also been a corresponding reduction in airborne dust levels.

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About Coal Services:

Coal Services Pty Limited is an industry-owned, workplace focused, specialist organisation providing best practice occupational health, safety, worker's compensation insurance, mines rescue emergency response and innovative training solutions to New South Wales coal mining and heavy industries.

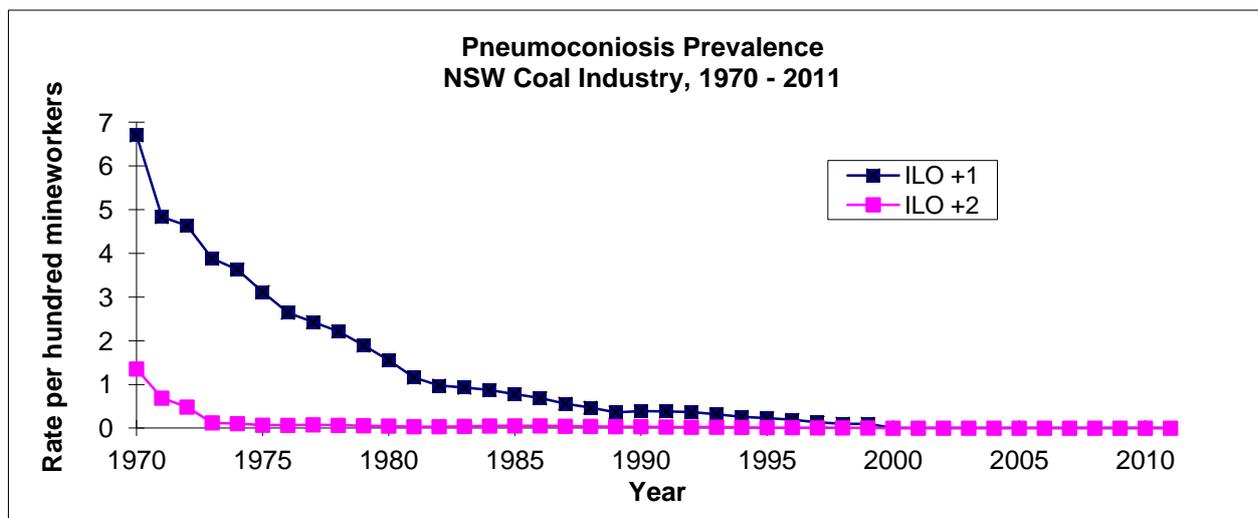
Coal Services Pty Limited has statutory functions as outlined within the NSW Coal Industry Act 2001. These functions include, but are not limited to the provision of workers compensation, occupational health and rehabilitation services for workers engaged in the coal industry; collection, collation and dissemination of statistics relating to the health and safety of workers engaged the coal industry; and the provision of mines rescue services and training to the NSW coal industry.

Please visit: coalservices.com.au for further information



About black lung disease

- Pneumoconiosis (new-mo-cone-ee-oh-sis) is commonly referred to as 'black lung disease'.
- It is generally associated with long exposure to airborne coal dust at coal mines.
- Inhaled coal dust progressively builds up in the lungs and is unable to be removed by the body.
- Symptoms may remain undetected for years, therefore regular medical checkups are recommended for coal mine workers.
- Dust collections and scarring may show up as small round shadows on a chest x-ray.
- Coal Services Pty Limited (Coal Services) and its predecessor the Joint Coal Board (JCB) have been responsible for monitoring dust in coal mines since 1948. Over this time, the incidence of pneumoconiosis has been eliminated completely from the NSW coal mining industry.
- Unlike other coal-rich countries around the world, NSW Australia has had no reported cases of mine workers' Pneumoconiosis for over twenty years.



The ILO classification of x-rays is a method of grading based on x-ray appearance and may be, in practical terms, interpreted as the following:
ILO+1 = people with diagnostic features of dust exposure but no clinical symptoms
ILO +2 = People with more severe dust exposure than above and likely to have symptoms

What regulations are in place in NSW to protect workers?

- The aim of preventative measures in NSW coal mines is to stop pneumoconiosis occurring or at worst stop any progression beyond the very early stages of the disease.
- In February 2011, the NSW Government gazetted Order 41 and Order 42 under the NSW Coal Industry Act (2001). The Orders, governing the health surveillance requirements of coal miners in NSW and the monitoring of airborne dust at coal operations across NSW, are fundamental to improving the work environment of the tens of thousands of employees in the sector.



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- Order No. 41 covers health surveillance requirements for NSW coal mine workers and regulates both pre-placement medicals and periodic health assessments. The periodic health surveillance medical assessment is used to monitor workers for any adverse health effects as a result of exposure in the workplace. As most occupational illnesses take many years to develop, regular health surveillance allows for early detection and intervention.
- Order 42 covers the monitoring of airborne dust at mining operations in NSW. The Order has been introduced for the continued protection of coal mine workers' health by retaining current legislated dust monitoring standards and current monitoring practices. Under the Order, monitoring airborne dust involves the frequent collection and analysis of samples of airborne dust from the breathing zone of mine workers at coal mine operations whose health may be affected by the dust.
- Under Order No. 42, an operator of a coal operation must allow inspectors appointed by Coal Services to enter the mine site in order to monitor airborne dust.