



Protecting against airborne dust exposure in coal mines

Hunter Valley (Australia), 29 September 2016 —

In a bid to promote a better understanding of airborne dust-related health effects and control measures in NSW coal mines, Coal Services has released the 7th edition of its highly regarded 'dust book'.

Long-term exposure to some dusts, including coal dust and crystalline silica, can cause lung diseases such as pneumoconiosis (black lung disease). The '*Protecting against airborne dust exposure in coal mines*' booklet was developed by Coal Services' Standing Dust Committee and details how workers within a mine environment can best protect their health and wellbeing by minimising the effects of exposure.

Originally published in 1966, the booklet is a staple source of information for the industry and its workers. Coal Services CEO/Managing Director, Lucy Flemming, said the latest version would provide the NSW coal mining industry with up-to-date knowledge and guidance to help ensure a safe workplace and healthy workforce.

'Education is vital in ensuring every worker within our industry is empowered to make informed decisions at the coal face that allow them to protect their health and perform their role in the safest possible way,' Ms Flemming said.

'The devastating re-emergence of pneumoconiosis in Queensland has highlighted the importance of our continued vigilance in safeguarding against occupational disease. This booklet is a key educational tool designed to inform and support the industry in its efforts to minimise the effects of airborne dust exposure.'

Dust control measures originally implemented by the Joint Coal Board, such as the enforced regulation of independent dust monitoring and workforce health surveillance, continue today as statutory obligations fulfilled by Coal Services.

NSW Government Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, Anthony Roberts, said the protection of workers was at the core of all decision-making, policy and actions.

'Our superior health and safety track record in NSW is a testament to the NSW Government's stringent regulations and ongoing commitment to ensuring workplace health and safety,' Minister Roberts said.

'It also demonstrates the effectiveness of Coal Services' unique collaborative model, which unites industry stakeholders to prevent, detect, enforce and educate about occupational

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disease. This booklet exemplifies how medical and occupational hygiene specialists can effectively work together with government, industry and union representatives to deliver significant outcomes for the state's coal mine workers.'

NSW Minerals Council CEO, Stephen Galilee, supported the booklet's release and applauded Coal Services' work in assisting employers and their workforce by providing advice and education.

'The release of this valuable guide's 7th edition demonstrates the commitment of the Coal Services team to continuous improvement in education and management of airborne dust exposure and other important safe work practices,' Mr Galilee said.

General President of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), Tony Maher, agreed.

'In light of the re-emergence of black lung disease in Queensland, it is reassuring to see NSW maintain a strong prevention focus and reinforce its commitment to protecting the health and safety of the industry's most valuable asset – its workers,' Mr Maher said.

'*Protecting against airborne dust exposure in coal mines*' is available for download from the Coal Services website at www.coalservices.com.au.

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About Coal Services:

Coal Services is an industry-owned organisation committed to providing critical services and expertise to the NSW coal mining industry.

We operate a Specialised Health and Safety Scheme that provides an integrated suite of services aimed at preventing injury and illness in the workplace. These services help employers to identify, assess, monitor and control many risks inherent in the NSW coal mining industry.

Our preventative and responsive services in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation, mines rescue and training help to deliver on our purpose 'to protect'.

We are jointly owned by two shareholders, the NSW Minerals Council and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Our purpose, vision and values are aligned to focus on the safety and health of our industry and its workers.