



## NSW Mines Rescue chooses to enter PFAS program

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**Newcastle (Australia), 9 August 2017 —**

NSW Mines Rescue (Mines Rescue) has voluntarily entered the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) investigation program assessing the legacy of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) use across NSW.

Although Mines Rescue had ceased use of PFAS-containing products by 2002 and was a relatively low level user of PFAS, they have chosen to enter the program to quickly identify or discount any contamination concerns.

The investigations commenced with a preliminary soil and sediment sampling plan around the Hunter Valley and Newcastle facilities. Traces of PFAS in the soil were expected due to the historic usage of PFAS-containing fire fighting foam in essential fire fighting training programs. The programs were provided to local mines rescue brigades and a small number of other emergency response teams.

Despite the relatively low levels present, and the preliminary assessment by the EPA indicating the likelihood of risk to human health is low, the EPA requires further investigation in line with its PFAS testing methodology guidelines.

GHD has been appointed as Mines Rescue's environmental consultant to conduct the upcoming investigations which will examine the possible migration of any local contamination to any sensitive environmental receptors. This would be via surface and/or groundwater flows. Presence of PFAS in the soil alone does not pose a health risk.

Matthew Fellowes, General Manager of Mines Rescue and Regulation & Compliance said 'Although initial indicators say the risk is low, we are fully supportive of the EPA's recommendation to look into this further. It is important for us to gain clarity and certainty of the situation so that all the appropriate actions can be taken.'

'We will continue to work closely with the EPA and keep the community informed throughout the process.'

The Lithgow Mines Rescue station has had limited exposure to PFAS-containing products but is undergoing a preliminary investigation as a further precautionary step.

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The Woonona station will not be part of the program as Mines Rescue was not operating from the site during the time these products were in use.

Advice from the EPA and NSW Department of Health continues to be that there is no evidence that exposure to PFAS causes adverse human health effects. However, based on the evidence from animal studies potential adverse health effects cannot be excluded and for this reason a precautionary principle approach has been adopted.

Mines Rescue is working closely with the EPA to undertake these investigations and determine any necessary actions.

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## **For further facts and information on use of PFAS at NSW Mines Rescue please visit:**

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<http://www.minesrescueservices.com/PFAS-at-nsw-mines-rescue.aspx>

## **About NSW Mines Rescue:**

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NSW Mines Rescue (Mines Rescue Pty Limited), a subsidiary company within the Coal Services Group, is a nationally recognised Registered Training Organisation, with more than 90 years of experience assisting the NSW coal mining industry to manage risk and operate safely.

The primary role of Mines Rescue is to provide emergency and incident response to underground mines throughout NSW. Mines Rescue are also a primary provider of specialist training to industry, which assists in supporting continuous improvements in safety standards. These critical services support NSW coal mine workers, employers and communities and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe workplace and a healthy workforce.

With offices providing services throughout NSW, Mines Rescue maintain an international reputation for excellence, to which they credit the expert training team, in addition to maintaining the most modern equipment and training facilities.

Visit [www.coalservices.com.au](http://www.coalservices.com.au) for more information

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