



# Frequently asked questions on construction at mining operations

## 1. What is construction work?

Construction work includes activities such as:

- the construction, erection, installation, alteration, repair, maintenance, cleaning, painting, renewal, removal, excavation, dismantling or demolition of, or addition to, any building or structure, or any work in connection with any of those things, that is done at or adjacent to the place where the building or structure is located
- work on which a hoisting appliance or any scaffolding or shoring is used or intended to be used
- work in driving or extracting piles, sheet piles or trench sheets
- work in laying any pipe or work in lining pipes that is carried out at or adjacent to the place where the pipe is laid or is to be laid
- work in sinking, lining, altering, repairing, maintaining, renewing, removing, or dismantling a well
- roadworks, earthworks or reclamation.

## 2. How does construction work differ from mining?

There are specific Australian Standards, training and licences requirements for construction such as the “white” construction induction card and tilt up or precast training, which mining

organisations may not be aware or familiar with. Also, the safety culture at construction sites is probably not as well established as for mining operations, where the workforce is generally more permanent.

Unique safety issues and processes that can significantly increase the risk of injury to construction workers include:

- a “green” or inexperienced workforce
- longer rosters
- subcontracting and inadequate contractor management systems
- a “fast and furious” approach where workers and supervisors are working on tight completion deadlines
- large numbers of workers and machines concentrated in one area
- hazardous processes (high risk construction work) such as:
  - tilt-up and precast construction methods
  - scaffolding
  - elevated work platforms and cranes
  - rigging and dogging.

## 3. May safety obligations for construction work be delegated?

No. Some mining companies think that they can contract out their safety obligations for the construction area by engaging an engineering, procurement and construction management (EPCM) company or construction contractor

to build, maintain or construct infrastructures at the mine site. However, the mining company will, in most cases, retain the Principal Employer’s duty of care at the mine site, which includes responsibility for those doing the construction work on their mining lease.

## 4. What are the specific requirements for construction work?

A number of regulations relevant to construction work at mine sites are found in Division 2 of the Mines Safety and Inspection Regulations 1995. These include the appointment of responsible persons to manage construction work at the mine, as well as ensuring that construction work is carried out by competent persons.

The regulations ensure that construction activities follow best practice. Recent amendments to regulation 4.22 should interest those managing construction or demolition on mine sites.

This regulation now requires such work to be carried out in accordance with the following Australian Standards:

- AS/NZS 1576.1 *Scaffolding – General requirements*
- AS/NZS 1562.3 *Design and installation of sheet roof and wall cladding – Plastic*
- AS 1674 *Set Safety in welding and allied processes*

- AS/NZS 1801 *Occupational protective helmets*
- AS/NZS 1873.1 *Powder-actuated (PA) hand-held fastening tools – Selection, operation and maintenance*
- AS/NZS 18911 *Industrial fall-arrest systems and devices – Harnesses and ancillary equipment*
- AS/NZS 1892.5 *Portable ladders – Selection, safe use and care*
- AS 2601 *The demolition of structures*
- AS 2865 *Confined spaces*
- AS/NZS 3012 *Electrical installations – Construction and demolition sites.*

## 5. What is a construction PMP?

Under the *Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994*, the operator must prepare a project management plan (PMP) before any mining operation commences. This must be submitted for assessment to the State Mining Engineer, and approved prior to any construction activity at the mine site.

The plan is used to identify potential major safety risks for proposed construction and mining operations, and acts as a starting point for developing ongoing safety management strategies to address those risks.

## 6. Is a high risk work licence needed for construction work at mine sites?

Yes. The *National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work* (National Licensing Standard) commenced across the Western Australian mining industry in July 2009. The certificate of competency previously issued under the National Certification Standard has been replaced by a licence under the National Licensing Standard.

Western Australian high risk work licences are now accepted throughout Australia, valid for five years and administered by WorkSafe WA. There are 29 classes of licenses covered by the National Licensing Standard including scaffolding, rigging, crane, forklift and elevating work platform.

Further information is available at [www.dmp.wa.gov.au/8423.aspx](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/8423.aspx)

## 7. What is VOC?

Competency is an important component of any job, and even more so for construction high risk work requiring specific skills and knowledge. Regulation 4.13 has specific requirements dealing with competency assessment at mine sites. Employees and contractors must be assessed as competent before operating equipment or plant at construction projects in mine sites even if they have a high risk work licence.

The competency assessment, or verification of competency (VOC), must be completed for any plant and equipment operated at the construction site — not only where high risk work licences are required.

The assessment level is not prescribed by regulation but a simple checklist confirming an operator has the licence is not enough. It is also important to ensure the assessment is done for the specific plant or equipment that the operator is expected to operate. For example, it is not appropriate to have an assessment done with an elevated work platform if the operator is expected to operate a crane.

## 8. How can a safe design process improve construction outcomes?

Eliminating hazards is the most effective risk control measure. It is generally more practicable, more effective and cheaper to eliminate hazards at the design planning stage rather than retrofitting or redesigning when the hazards emerge.

Safe design supports a collaborative risk management approach and is particularly important for construction projects. This means that people with knowledge of each phase of the project — from design to use to demolition — should be consulted at the design stage to identify problems and solutions. Principal employers and users should provide information to designers, manufacturers and suppliers to help them achieve a safe design for the building or structure at the mine site, not only for those doing the construction, but those who will use, clean and maintain the building or structure, and, ultimately, decommission it.

Resources Safety has a code of practice for the safe design of buildings and structures available at [www.dmp.wa.gov.au/15551.aspx](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/15551.aspx)

## 9. What are instruments of declaration?

Construction work at some mine sites may be subject to an instrument of declaration under which provisions of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* apply rather than the *Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994*. Declarations are published in the Government Gazette, available from the State Law Publisher at [www.slp.wa.gov.au/gazette/gazette.nsf](http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/gazette/gazette.nsf)

Further information and a list of current instruments of declaration are available from WorkSafe at [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

For information about mining safety and health, contact:

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Comprehensive work safety and health information provided by the Department of Mines and Petroleum can be found at:

[www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety)

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