

# Challenges in achieving zero harm: lessons from past incidents in mining

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## **ABSTRACT**

Fatality prevention and zero harm are key focus areas for resource companies. However, they remain an ongoing challenge for high hazard industries, including the mining sector.

While every fatal incident brings significant pain and suffering to the colleagues, friends and family of those involved, the failures and causal factors leading to each incident are frequently very familiar to people working in the industry, particularly those tasked with managing risk and safety. In the words of Dame Judith Hackitt, Grenfell Tower Fire Investigator, 'There are no new accidents – just different people making the same mistakes because they haven't learned'. The recurring themes in terms of the nature of fatal hazards and their associated causes across the mining sector show that, despite improvements evidenced by favourable declining fatality trends over the long-term (in general and outside of catastrophic multiple fatality events), changes are required to achieve fatality elimination and the zero harm aspiration.

This paper applies a mining frame of reference to the idea that there are no new accidents, examining how it applies within the industry and why the lessons from past failures are not always well understood or applied to prevent the reoccurrence of material unwanted events.

Many contemporary mining and resources organisations have extensive internal incident history data, and a wide variety of information on fatality incidents is publicly available, including the annual International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) Safety Performance Report. This paper explores how this existing data can be used effectively to learn from the past and develops practical ideas regarding strategies for successfully communicating these lessons to the workforce as a key component of preventing history repeating and improving safety performance across the industry. As noted by ICMM, 'sharing lessons from failure is vital to improving health and safety, but it's not enough'.