

Driving to Conditions – Surface & Underground

When driving on a mine site, whether surface or underground, compliance with traffic rules is not enough - drivers must look ahead and drive to the conditions.

One thing all mining methods and mine types have in common is moving vehicles. In unexpected circumstances on the road, drivers need to make rapid decisions to avoid accidents. The more time they've allowed themselves to make these decisions and avoid unexpected obstacles, the more likely they are to avoid incident.

This Safety Tip's Topic, we will focus on people's behaviours while driving, and particularly while driving light vehicles or vehicles that are able to move at or above designated speed limits.

Driving to Rules

It's important to make sure that the person operating a vehicle is driving to the rules. This includes the following:

- ✓ Posted speed limits
- ✓ Give way rules and road signs
- ✓ Use of seatbelts and other safety devices (i.e. flashing lights)
- ✓ Safe loading and restraint of any equipment or material being carried
- ✓ Pre-start checks completed on the vehicle
- ✓ Correct communication with other vehicles

Driving to Conditions

While compliance with road and vehicle rules is vital to safe traffic on site, in many circumstances just complying is not enough to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.

Mining traffic is impacted by the following things that mean people's hazard awareness and driving behaviours need to go beyond rule compliance:

- Varying surface conditions
- Varying road layouts and traffic flows
- People and vehicles working on roads
- Interaction with heavy vehicles or vehicles with low visibility

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Vehicle operators need to ensure their behaviours demonstrate good hazard awareness. The most likely evidence of this will be a driver operating a vehicle below the posted or required speed limit due to one or some of the following:

- Poor road conditions (bumps, holes, water, mud, wheel ruts)
- Reduced visibility (rain, fog, dust, driving only using headlights for lighting)
- Reduced length of line-of-sight - i.e. at intersections (particularly underground), or when moving around a large object that prevent vision of the travelling path (i.e. other equipment, buildings, tight underground corners)
- Following or approaching another vehicle
- Reversing
- Passing or approaching pedestrians

The inability to stop a vehicle in time is one of the major reasons that hazards become accidents. The key is to maintain a good line of sight which allows adequate time to react and to stop the vehicle when something unexpected happens.

Driving Distracted

Despite being caught time and time again, driver distraction is fast becoming one of the most prevalent risks on Australian roads.

Driving Distracted includes;

1. Physical: Taking hands off the wheel
2. Visual: Looking away from the road
3. Auditory: Concentrating on sound other than the road environment
4. Cognitive: Thinking about a task other than driving

As a society we've become far too relaxed and confident behind the wheel, blissfully unaware of how a seemingly simple action - like changing the music and using mobile phones - this is so incredibly dangerous; not only for the driver of the car, but all other road users they put in harm's way when they take eyes off the road for even a split second.

Safe Work Observations

It is common to perform Safe Work Observations (SWO) whilst undertaking tasks at the tyre bay, it would also be a good idea to conduct a SWO on a person driving. Klinge TSP's can spend a lot of time in vehicles driving on the surface or underground and it is essential we display good driving behaviours at all times and one way to reinforce this is through the use of such a tool.

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