



# SAFETY ALERT

## Opal miner injured by falling material

### INCIDENT

An opal miner suffered a spinal injury when he tried to close a hopper door with a star picket and was struck by falling mullock.

### CIRCUMSTANCES

The worker was investigating a hopper door malfunction on the surface at an opal mine. The worker used a star picket to push the door closed when material ejected from the hopper, striking him.

### INVESTIGATION

Mine Safety inspectors examined the hopper and found that the refuse material was moist and caused a build up inside the walls. This in turn caused the exit door to jam open and not seal correctly.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that a risk assessment is carried out before undertaking unfamiliar tasks.
- Assess the potential for rocks and debris to fall and cause injury.
- Where there is any potential for material to fall from a height which may result in injury, take effective means to prevent such injuries.
- Any area where materials can accidentally fall onto people should be classified as a danger zone and appropriate guards and warning signs must be provided.
- Ensure workers are trained and competent in the use of blower extraction systems.
- Ensure that equipment being used is fit for purpose.

Figure 1: The truck mounted blower and hopper involved in the incident. Photos by Mine Safety.



Figure 2: The truck mounted blower showing where the mullock fell. Photos by Mine Safety.



Figure 3: The hopper involved in the incident showing the discharge chute door which failed to seal. Photo by Mine Safety.



Figure 4: The hopper showing the discharge chute door. Photo by Mine Safety.



**NOTE:** Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

Issued by

**David McLean**

**Chief Inspector of Mines**

**Appointed pursuant to Work Health & Safety (Mines and Petroleum) Act 2013**

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