

# A message from the

## Department for Energy and Mining



Saturday 4 April 2020 9:13 am

### UPDATE FOR THE MINING, QUARRYING, OIL, GAS AND ENERGY SECTORS

Thank you all for your continued cooperation and support during this challenging time.

#### Critical work and reduced staff movements

Most pressing for this update is the continued necessity nationally to limit the total number of FIFO and DIDO movements to essential staff and to minimise the frequency of those movements.

While the focus now is on interstate traffic, there is increasing pressure to broaden the scope to capture intrastate movements. Western Australia, for instance, decided to establish regions within that State to further limit intrastate traffic. The State Controller has not directed that South Australia adopt a similar approach. However, the dynamic around the country is clear: companies must review total workforce movements, restrict operations to critical\* work, and wherever possible locally source their workforce.

These are foremost public health measures to respond to a pandemic. For your industries, they are also commercial risk mitigation measures that contribute directly to sustaining a social licence at a critical time in the nation's history.

I appreciate that many companies have been through significant upheaval to make these changes. For businesses with a significant mobile workforce, particularly interstate, that have not yet made those changes, I implore you to take steps immediately to dramatically reduce employee movements, both the number of employees and the frequency.

The time to act is now.

*\*Critical work is work and workers without which an operation will cease OR production will reduce by more than 50 per cent OR where priority statutory requirements will be unable to be met. With few exceptions, this includes operations (including well-operations essential to supply chains), major projects under construction and ongoing provision of power to the grid.*

#### Submission of plans to SA Health

There has been some confusion about who should be submitting COVID-19 management plans. My advice is that ALL companies operating in the mining, quarrying, oil, gas and energy sectors across South Australia – irrespective of a FIFO workforce – should prepare, implement and submit to SA Health by email to [angela.lee@sa.gov.au](mailto:angela.lee@sa.gov.au)

- detailed transmission prevention control measures in accordance with SA Health advice and the Appea or MCA response protocols.
- evidence that strategies have been put in place to reduce the movement of workers to essential staff only
- detailed measures that will support isolation and contact tracing in the event it is necessary.

#### Fee relief under the Mining and Petroleum Acts

Minister for Energy and Mining Dan van Holst Pellekaan yesterday announced the immediate deferral of mineral exploration licence fees and annual petroleum and geothermal licence fees due in the next six months. These licence fees will now not be due until 31 December 2020.

In addition, there is a 12-month waiver of committed expenditure for all mineral exploration licence holders as well as an expansion of allowable expenditures towards minimum Petroleum Retention Licence requirements during a period of low oil prices.



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### FIFO/DIDO workers returning to SA

DEM is aware that in the past week there have been some instances where workers returning to South Australia after completing their swings have been directed to quarantine, instead of receiving an exemption. We have worked closely with SAPOL to resolve this matter and ensure predictability for industry. The handful of employees DEM was tracking have now been personally contacted by SAPOL to have their quarantine directions lifted.

If you are aware of any further instances of this issue arising, or any other challenges with cross-border arrangements, please advise [martin.reid@sa.gov.au](mailto:martin.reid@sa.gov.au). Importantly, if your staff receive a direction from a border officer it must be followed, whether or not they consider it consistent with the rules. Fines apply.

### Evidence for workers in transit

Previous updates have included advice on the evidence companies should provide employees in support of them seeking exemption as 'essential travellers' when arriving in SA. Building on that advice (that companies should provide transiting employees a letter on letterhead stating their name, working dates, direct transit path, work location and travel protocols), I confirm this should be done for both directions of travel, **and** where your company is a primary contractor or sub-contractor to an operation, you should seek a personalised letter for your staff member from that operation substantiating them as an 'Essential Traveller' under the [Direction](#) Schedule 1 part (5), and in accordance with the 'critical work' definition above.

### Quarantine for inbound workers

Measures for reducing the risk of bringing COVID-19 to worksites during shift changeover is front-of-mind for all companies, and is being carefully considered by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments as part of national virus control measures. At this time there is no move in South Australia to mandate quarantine arrangements for inbound workers to swing-based sites. However, to maintain the current operating exemptions, DEM strongly recommends that all companies demonstrate that targeted mitigation strategies suitable for your specific operations are in place. In some instances this might include a direction to staff to self-isolate before mounting, close control of transit paths, staff relocation, segregation of shifts, or on-site isolation of inbound employees.

### Adelaide Airport exposures

The cluster of COVID-19 cases among baggage-handlers at Adelaide Airport has highlighted the risk to FIFO operations from all aspects of employee transit paths, as well as the importance of site access to COVID-19 test kits. DEM is working with SA Health to assist in securing further test kits for use in the event of a significant incident; all companies should be considering opportunities for reducing transmission exposures from end-to-end of their operations.

### Clarity for mineral explorers

My earlier updates included advice that exploration activities do not satisfy the criteria for exemption for interstate FIFO/DIDO workers other than in exceptional circumstances. For clarity, this relates to the engagement of staff who reside interstate. For operations with SA-based staff, per the advice above, explorers in SA should be submitting their COVID-19 management plans to SA Health, enforcing strict protocols and minimising total staff interactions with regional communities, deferring non-critical work, and preventing interaction with remote aboriginal communities in accordance with the Biosecurity Act Determination (details at <https://www.niaa.gov.au/covid19-remote-communities>). As usual, explorers should also be in regular contact with landholders to discuss their activities.

On a positive note, in addition to the agility being shown across our own sectors, I am really pleased to see stories emerging this week from Detmold and Bickfords, showing other South Australian businesses adapting to community need.

Again, thanks for your continued efforts to sustain operations in our critical sectors at this time. Please continue to let me know about any issues with COVID-19 business continuity matters via [martin.reid@sa.gov.au](mailto:martin.reid@sa.gov.au)

Stay well and limit your movements,

Paul Heithersay  
Chief Executive, Department for Energy and Mining



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