



A message from the Department for Energy and Mining



Friday 1 May 2020 17:00 pm

COVID-19 INDUSTRY UPDATE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA’S RESOURCES SECTOR

Feedback from industry since the Department for Energy and Mining’s previous update indicates that while constraints continue to have significant impacts, the environment has settled and the systems established by companies to maintain core operations within the COVID-19 restrictions are working well. Excellent health outcomes in South Australia and across the nation have shifted attention to supporting the economic recovery and consideration of options for easing some constraints. Caution must be taken in designing a transitional path and that has been reflected in the messages from state, national and business leaders. Rest assured DEM will continue to carefully articulate the merits of supporting the resources and energy sectors as arrangements are developed. The social licence to operate that has been maintained through this period needs to be preserved as the state and the nation transitions to what will inevitably be ‘a new normal’ post the pandemic response.

Maintenance shutdowns

Ongoing risk assessment across the sector has focussed some attention on planning for maintenance shutdowns in an environment with COVID-19 constraints on personnel movements and international freight, and social licence concerns arising from mass employee movements into and through population areas. In consultation with DEM, the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy (SACOME) has prepared [guidance](#) for its members, which could assist DEM to work with SAPOL and SA Health to smooth the path for industry’s significant plant maintenance programs. DEM can assist to facilitate this important work for companies across the mining, oil, gas and energy sectors, while recognising the commercial-in-confidence status of any forward plans.

Emergency management

In much the same vein as maintenance shutdowns, the potential for difficulties in responding to emergencies while travel restrictions are in place has been acknowledged by companies and the state and Commonwealth governments. DEM has been working with the Commonwealth and other states to bring clarity to the process of importing international expertise if it is required. This involves liaising with both the Australian Border Force and Department of Home Affairs. As part of ongoing review of business continuity and incident response plans, if there is potential for requiring international intervention in the event of an emergency, email DEM.industryenquiries@sa.gov.au for further advice on the steps that could be taken in preparation of such a request.

Swab testing

Several companies have indicated an interest in swab testing for their FIFO workforces. Asymptomatic testing, when and under what scenarios it could and should be rolled out are vexed issues. DEM is working closely with SA Health and SA Pathology to consider opportunities for testing arrangements that will ensure continuity of safe operations across the sector.

CovidSafe

As you are aware, the Australian Government this week launched the COVID SAFE smart phone application as a tool to assist in contact tracing should a person test positive for COVID-19. After weighing the privacy and public health issues as well as the safeguards imposed to protect personal information, I decided to download the app to my phone. Given the importance of containing outbreaks quickly to continuity of commercial operations, I encourage companies and individuals across the sector to consider whether they wish to participate in the scheme for the duration of the pandemic emergency.

Economic recovery

Companies and governments across the country have a shared interest in the post-pandemic environment, and how Australian positions itself to recover from this unforeseen economic shock. Your thoughts on practical measures that will position the resources and energy sector to rebound are welcome. Any ideas can be emailed to DEM.industryenquiries@sa.gov.au for consideration as part of an Energy and Mining Strategy to support the recovery through the South Australian Government’s Growth State – Our Plan for Prosperity.

Stay well
Paul Heithersay
Chief Executive, Department for Energy and Mining



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Department for Energy and Mining

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