

Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme Changes – 1st January 2017

There have been several important changes to the regulations governing coal mine safety and health which have come into effect as of **1st January 2017**. To help further explain these changes and what impact they will have on your business, we have prepared this overview article.

Health Assessments for Workers

All coal mine workers must have a health assessment. This assessment must include the following tests:

- Respiratory Function (i.e. Spirometry Test)
- Chest X-Ray Examination

Because of these requirements, section 1 of the health assessment form now includes two new sections:

- 1.2 - Reasons for health assessment and matters to be addressed*
- 1.3 - Requirement for respiratory function and chest x-ray*

Section 1 of the health assessment paperwork must be completed by the employer, prior to the applicant undergoing their health assessment.

Respiratory Function Tests + Chest X-Rays for Surface Workers

All coal miners who are surface workers and have not previously been employed in an underground role, must now have a chest x-ray and respiratory function test every 10 years. If you are unsure about when the employee last had either a chest x-ray or a lung function test, you can obtain this information by contacting the Department of Natural Resources and Mines Health Surveillance Unit on 07 3818 4520.

Respiratory Function Tests + Chest X-Rays for Surface Workers who previously Worked Underground

If an employee is working in a surface role but has previously worked underground, they must now have a chest x-ray and respiratory function test every 5 years. If you are unsure about when the employee last had either a chest x-ray or a lung function test, you can obtain this information by contacting the Department of Natural Resources and Mines Health Surveillance Unit on 07 3818 4520.

Additional Changes to the Health Assessment

- Inclusion of a standardised respiratory questionnaire
- Inclusion of comparative respiratory assessments when assessment undertaken as part of a periodic health assessment



- Chest X-rays are to be performed in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Guidelines for the use of the ILO International Classification of Radiographs of Pneumoconiosis.
- Personnel performing respiratory function and chest x-rays must be competent and qualified to perform such tests.

Timing of Assessments

Workers employed at a Coal Mine Site as of 1st January 2017 are expected to have had a health assessment within the last 5 years. The frequency for workers to undertake health assessments has not changed and remains as:

- Before being employed at a coal mine site
- If the NMA considers it necessary after being given a notice by the employer of an appreciable increase in the level of risk to coal mine worker pursuant to section 49
- Periodically, as decided by the NMA, but at least every 5 years.

Retirement Examinations

Coal mine workers retiring permanently from the industry are now able to request a retirement examination from their employer. The employer is responsible for organising and funding this retirement examination. For more information about retirement examinations for coal miners, please [click here](#).

Reporting Prescribed Diseases

Site Senior Executives (SSE's) must now report the following diseases to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines:

- *Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*
- *Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis*
- *Legionellosis (and worker was exposed to legionella at the mine)*
- *Silicosis (and worker was exposed to crystalline silica dust at the mine)*

To help SSE's meet this requirement, when the NMA is completing a workers health assessment report or retirement examination they must note if any of the notifiable diseases are diagnosed. The Section 4 has been updated to include the list of notifiable diseases.

For more information about these changes and the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme, please [click here](#).

