



MINE DUST NETWORK

Technical session summary

The GCRF Mine Dust and Health Network technical session, held under the topic “Mine Dust: Recent developments and future trends”, was convened virtually on Tuesday, 17 November 2020 at the NACA 2020 conference. The session, which attracted 130 people from Southern Africa, Australia, and the United Kingdom, was an interactive platform where participants and speakers engaged on the presentations given on the signature themes. The speakers and their respective themes were Mr Fanus van Wyk (Mitigation and rehabilitation), Mr Brown Motsau (Community awareness and education), Prof. Tracy-Lynn Field (Policy and law), Prof. Stuart Piketh (Monitoring and measurement) and Mr. Brian Mongoma (Exposure and health effects)

The mitigation and rehabilitation theme discussion concluded that there was a greater need for dust fallout information in order to improve dust management, whilst operations needed to include air quality considerations during mine rehabilitation and closure as well as the cost of dust control and design, with a focus on reducing dust fallout. The community awareness and education theme showed how South African history played a role in settling black communities near mine tailings facilities and how this has given rise to stigma, new chronic illnesses, and a greater need to bring awareness into those impacted communities.

The emphasis placed by legislation on treating mine dust as an occupational work issue, rather than a public health or environmental health issue, was highlighted under the policy and law theme. Regulations have been formulated under the different acts but enforcement, through criminal action against the proponents, is yet to be realized although some landmark litigation is in progress. Monitoring and measurement discussed how the approach being used was to be re-examined so that objectives could be clear. A harmony between data from conventional methods, such as dust buckets, and new technologies, such as Real time monitors, needed to be established. Government-industry engagements and their role in mine dust mitigation were highlighted under the exposure and health effects theme. The efforts being made to ensure timely and reliable evaluation of data coming from the mines, through milestones set by the Minerals Council which are based on specific air pollutants, were mentioned. The vigorous question-and-answer session showed that there is still much to be discussed and debated, highlighting the need for more regular forums on the different theme.

A copy of the technical session is available here: (<https://youtu.be/1ZVGfpUAHLo>)