

Call on Govt for mining, quarrying to be essential services – Straterra

Bernie Napp - Mon, 23 Mar 2020

Straterra CEO Chris Baker is calling on Government to classify mining is an essential industry, and to keep export businesses alive, where it makes sense to do so, as New Zealand moves to Alert Level 3.

“Coal is essential for food and electricity generation as well as hospitals. Gold is our biggest export to Australia and a large gold mine like Macraes or Waihi cannot be ‘turned off’ like an aeroplane, or a café.”

WorkSafe chief extractives inspector Paul Hunt is making enquiries into which extractives industries are essential services, he told *Inside Resources* today.

“My assumption is some parts of the industry will fall under essential services. It would seem to me if you are supplying coal into a hospital that we meet the criteria.”

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern addressed the nation today, urging people to stay home and reduce contact, and for all non-essential businesses to close, with further economic measures foreshadowed.

Community transmission of the virus is now occurring in New Zealand, with Covid-19 cases now standing at 102, up on 66 cases yesterday evening, and 52 on Saturday. No deaths have occurred to date.

New Zealand will be on [Alert Level 4](#) from Wednesday afternoon.

More from WorkSafe

Hunt said WorkSafe has stopped a large proportion of the planned proactive inspections, however, will still inspect sites where there is knowledge of serious risk of harm.

“We will probably ring ahead to sites. We will comply with what the Government is suggesting we do with regard to the rules for each alert level. We will be very selective about when we are going to sites.”

WorkSafe has been receiving notifications from companies, for example, from remote Certificate of Competency holders, who cannot always be on site, as working practices evolve in response to Government directives.

MinEx to advise on business continuity

Wayne Scott, CEO of MinEx, spent the weekend on google translate adapting a Spanish directive for New Zealand use on business continuity for the extractives sector in the face of Covid-19, due shortly.

“The Spanish are still mining and quarrying,” he told *Inside Resources*.

[As at yesterday](#) Spain was approaching 30,000 cases, and more than 5,000 deaths.

“In terms of economic activity, you maintain essential services, until you can’t,” Scott says. “You obviously have procedures in place; there is a balance between being too blasé and too extreme.”

“The advice from the health authorities is don’t just shut down the country. Until the experts say you just shut down the country there has to be a sensible continuation of business.”

Measures for the quarrying and mining industry include: discontinuing morning toolbox meetings, communicating among smaller groups of people, not congregating in crib rooms, splitting the workforce, and reducing working hours.

“You may just crush with one crew on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; you are cutting down your exposure but you are still producing product.”

Scott says a 2009 Canadian Report on the effects of a severe Avian Flu pandemic predicted there would be a 10 per cent decrease in construction and extractives activities.

“The predictors are that there will be a drop in the level of activity; but there is going to be ongoing demand for aggregates.”

Road construction and maintenance are the largest consumer of aggregates in New Zealand, around half total supply, he says.

“There is still going to be a need to get food around; you need to maintain the roads to do that. If we get a natural event – say, floods closing West Coast roads - we are going to have to keep supplying material.”

