

SAFETY RELATED PROBLEMS AND THE MILLENNIUM BUG OR 'Y2K PROBLEM'



The millennium bug will affect all software in equipment that contains embedded systems that use dates with the year determined by two digits only. When the software encounters certain specific dates, what happens will depend on the idiosyncrasies of the software. There is a potential that the affected equipment will cause systems, plant and equipment to malfunction or fail in a manner that has implications for health and safety. These problems could range from near misses to catastrophes.

Employers should conduct a thorough review of suspect systems, plant and equipment at the mine in a systematic and planned manner, to ensure the Y2K problem will not have safety implications at the mine. As part of the planning process, contingency plans should be formulated for malfunctions and failures of equipment at the mine and for failures and malfunction of services, such as electricity, to the mine. Advice from manufacturers should be sought to clarify Y2K impact on various products.

Manufacturers and suppliers of equipment to mines should conduct a thorough review, in a systematic and planned manner, of ALL of their systems, plant and equipment used at mines, to ensure the Y2K problem will not have safety implications.

The implication of duty of care legislative requirements for mine employers and manufacturers/suppliers of systems, plant and equipment need to be effectively recognised. Initially it would be expected that each mining operation would be able to demonstrate as a minimum that a plan of corrective action is in place by 1 November 1998 and that all corrective action required will be completed within 6 months of that date.

The following information is to assist in accessing the extent of the problem at your site:

- The Federal Government has set up a hotline to provide guidance and information – Tel 1800 11 2000; also see website <www.y2k.gov.au>.
- Information is also available in two United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive documents titled: "**Health and safety and the year 2000 problem - Guidance on year 2000 issues as they affect safety-related control systems**", and; "**Testing safety related control systems for year 2000 compliance.**" Both these publications can be requested from HSE Books, P.O. Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, United Kingdom. CO10 6FS (website: www.hsebooks.co.uk/static/order1st.htm)

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