

NSW Department of Primary Industries Investigation Unit

The Investigation Unit

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Investigation Unit (IU) was established by the New South Wales Government to improve mine safety in the State. It does this by investigating the nature, cause and circumstance of accidents and incidents.

The IU uses the outcomes of the investigation to help industry learn about accident causes so that mines can take steps to prevent similar occurrences.

What are the main functions of the IU?

The Unit is concerned with improving mine safety by:

- Conducting major investigations into significant mine events
- Taking part in inquests and legal proceedings
- Liaising with accident victims, families and other relevant stakeholders
- Providing information and feedback to industry
- Proposing new standards for safety protocols and procedures
- Providing specialist training to departmental staff

Why was the IU established?

The Unit was established, in response to a recommendation by the Mine Safety Review 1997 and the Gretley Inquiry, as a discrete accident and incident investigation unit in the department to improve mine safety and to promote changes in the safety culture in the mining industry.

What will the IU investigate?

The Unit investigates major accidents, deaths, serious incidents and certain 'prescribed matters' which include gas and dust explosions and in-rushes of water.

The Unit can investigate an accident or incident in any part of the mining industry in New South Wales. Investigators have the power to examine the nature, cause and circumstances surrounding an accident or incident. The Unit can investigate matters at the mine site and, when appropriate, off the site, including equipment suppliers, manufacturers and any other people relevant to the accident.

Is the Investigation Unit autonomous?

The Unit is autonomous within the DPI and reports to the Director-General on all matters relating to investigation. It is separate from the department's inspectorate and the normal operational matters of the department, and is not involved with the day-to-day inspection of mines.

The Unit reports to the Director, Mine and Forest Safety Performance for administrative and management matters.

Who calls in the Investigation Unit?

NSW DPI Inspectors or Area Managers from the Mine Safety Operations Branch report the occurrence of serious accidents and incidents to the Investigations Unit. The Minister can direct the Unit to provide a special report on particular safety matters.

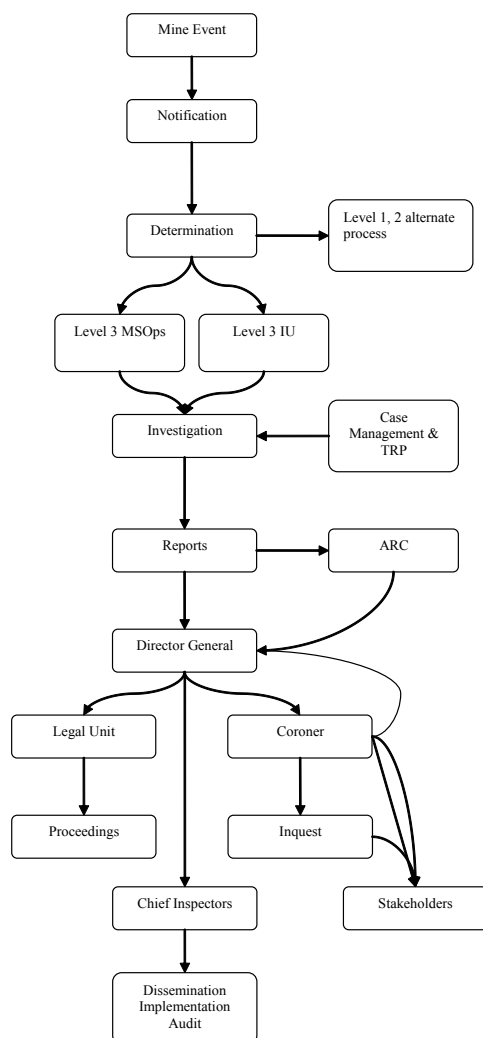


What is the role of the Mine Operator?

Under legislation, the Mine Operator must inform the Chief Inspector of a notifiable incident using a prescribed form. For certain serious events the department also needs particular information listed on a Preliminary Notification Checklist. The checklist and the prescribed forms can be obtained from any office of the department, or downloaded from the mine safety area of the DPI website: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/resources/notifications>

Who decides if legal action will follow?

Investigation reports prepared by the Unit are submitted to the department's Assessment Review Committee. The Committee makes recommendations based on the enforcement policy and advises the Director-General on legal proceedings and further action.



Contacts

Investigators are situated at NSW DPI facilities at Thornton and West Pennant Hills.

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