MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA

Good morning colleagues,

Today marks another important milestone in our collective journey towards achieving Zero Harm in the South African Mining Industry.

We gather not merely to launch a new technology or operational improvement, but to reaffirm a commitment that sits at the heart of our industry's future: every employee must return home healthy, safe, and unharmed.

This commitment is embodied in the Minerals Council's Khumbula'ekhaya 2.0 Strategy, which reminds us that behind every exposure, every incident, every occupational disease statistic, there is a person, a family, and a future that depends on our actions.

Today we launch a leading practice that demonstrates what is possible when innovation, leadership, engineering excellence, and occupational health come together to solve a longstanding challenge: the prevention of Noise-Induced Hearing Loss associated with pneumatic handheld tools.

The reality is that while our industry has made significant progress in reducing occupational diseases, Noise-Induced Hearing Loss remains one of the most persistent occupational health challenges facing mining today.

Current industry data indicates that Noise-Induced Hearing Loss continues to account for approximately 38% of all occupational diseases reported in the South African Mining Industry. Annual cases have stabilised at approximately 700 cases per year, despite significant improvements from the peak levels experienced a decade ago. More concerning is that engineering-related occupations continue to feature prominently within these statistics, particularly supervisors, artisans, engineering workers, machine operators, and employees regularly exposed to high-noise maintenance activities.

These are not merely numbers.

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These are colleagues whose hearing has been permanently altered.

These are employees who may struggle to hear their families, participate in conversations, or detect warning signals that protect them from harm.

The challenge before us is therefore clear.

If we are serious about achieving the industry's 2024 Noise Milestones, then we must move beyond compliance-driven monitoring and embrace the systematic elimination and control of noise hazards at source.

This is precisely why the MOSH Leading Practice Adoption System exists.

The MOSH philosophy has always been simple yet powerful: identify what works, prove its value, and accelerate adoption across the industry. The launch of this leading practice represents exactly this type of intervention.

We would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Sishen Iron Ore team and its leadership, under the stewardship of CEO, Mpumelelo Zikalala, for their outstanding commitment to advancing Noise Risk Management within the mining industry. Sishen Iron Ore has consistently demonstrated industry leadership in the implementation of innovative noise control initiatives, this commitment was previously showcased through the successful documentation of the Leading Practice on Tyre Deflation. Building on this achievement, the mine has now successfully documented and implemented a Leading Practice on the Muffling of Pneumatic Handheld Tools through the installation of mufflers on pressure testing guns and impact wrenches. The intervention has resulted in significant noise reduction, whereby Pressure-testing gun noise was reduced from approximately 105 dB(A) to below 68 dB(A), while impact wrench noise was reduced from more than 112 dB(A) to as low as 94 dB(A) depending on the configuration applied. These reductions were achieved with negligible impact on productivity and delivered additional safety and operational benefits.

Of particular significance is the mine's successful internalization of the Actionable Strategies for Senior Mining Executives to Achieve the 2024 Noise Milestones. Sishen Iron Ore has demonstrated exceptional commitment to the implementation of these strategies, particularly

in the areas of OEM Engagement and Acoustic Engineering in Workplace Design and Redesign. Through proactive collaboration with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and the integration of noise control principles into equipment selection, workplace design, and engineering modifications, the mine has embedded sustainable noise management practices into its operational framework.

What makes this achievement particularly important is that it reflects the hierarchy of controls in action.

For too long, hearing conservation programmes have relied heavily on personal protective equipment as the primary defence against hazardous noise exposure.

While hearing protection remains important, PPE should never be our first line of defence.

The true measure of leadership is our willingness to eliminate or reduce risk at source.

Engineering controls such as muffling directly address the hazard before it reaches the employee.

That is where sustainable risk reduction occurs.

That is where lasting change happens.

And that is where executive leadership must focus its energy.

As we launch this leading practice today, I would like to challenge senior leaders across the industry to consider the following actions that will accelerate progress toward achieving and sustaining the noise milestones.

Firstly, elevate noise management from a compliance issue to a strategic business risk.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss should be discussed in the same boardrooms where production, safety, and operational performance are reviewed. Executive teams should receive routine reports on exposure trends, critical controls, and leading indicators associated with hearing conservation.

Secondly, embed noise controls into Critical Control Management Systems.

Where handheld pneumatic tools present material exposure risks, the installed muffler must be formally recognised as a Critical Control. This requires clear performance standards, ownership, verification activities, maintenance requirements, and escalation protocols whenever control effectiveness is compromised.

Thirdly, invest in source-based engineering solutions.

Every operation should conduct a systematic review of high-noise tasks and identify opportunities to retrofit equipment with proven noise-reduction technologies. The most effective hearing conservation programme is one that prevents exposure from occurring in the first place.

Fourthly, strengthen MOSH adoption and sustainability.

The success of this practice will not be measured by today's launch but by how effectively it is embedded into daily operations. Leadership visibility, workforce engagement, training, Planned Task Observations, verification audits, and contractor alignment are all essential elements of sustainable adoption.

Fifthly, use data to drive decision-making.

Exposure monitoring, medical surveillance outcomes, PTO findings, and critical control verification results must be integrated into operational decision-making processes. What gets measured gets managed, but what gets acted upon gets improved.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The significance of this leading practice extends beyond hearing conservation alone. This leading practice is applicable across various mining process, and is not limited to handheld tools, it can be implemented wherever compressed air systems and pressure-release activities are prominent. I encourage mining houses to register for and adopt this leading practice, actively participate in the regional formed interest groups.

The Sishen implementation demonstrated improvements in operational efficiency, reduced equipment downtime, enhanced protection against projectile hazards, reduced dust exposure, and lower risk during tyre maintenance activities. It showed that occupational health interventions can simultaneously improve safety, reliability, productivity, and cost performance.

The future of mining health and safety will not be built through isolated initiatives.

It will be built through the integration of occupational health, operational excellence, risk management, technology, and leadership.

As executives, our responsibility is not simply to approve budgets or endorse programmes.

Our responsibility is to create environments where innovation is encouraged, risks are systematically managed, and every employee has confidence that their health matters as much as production.

The muffling of pneumatic handheld tools demonstrates that effective solutions already exist.

The question is no longer whether we can reduce noise exposure.

The question is whether we are prepared to accelerate adoption across the industry with the urgency that the challenge demands.

Let this launch serve as a catalyst for action.

Let it strengthen our commitment to Critical Control Management.

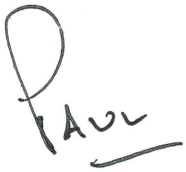
Let it accelerate our progress toward achieving the industry's noise milestones.

And most importantly, let it bring us closer to a future where no employee suffers preventable hearing loss because of their work.

Together, through leadership, innovation, and disciplined execution, we can transform occupational health outcomes across our industry.

Because when we protect hearing, we protect lives.

And when we protect lives, we honour the true meaning of Khumbula'ekhaya, remembering that every worker deserves to return home healthy, whole, and safe.



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