



MHSC

Mine Health and Safety Council

SOUTH AFRICAN MINING INDUSTRY

Safety Performance

Special focus: Scraper Winches and Rail-bound Equipment

Fleckson Magweregwe

MOSH Transport & Machinery Day of Learning

Every mine worker returning from work unharmed every day. Striving for zero harm in our lifetime.

Industry performance: 1 January – 27 July 2026

Provisional SAMRASS statistics, all mines, compared with the same period in 2025

38

Fatalities
32 in 2025

+18.8%

30

Fatal accidents
27 in 2025

+11.1%

996

Injuries
1 171 in 2025

-14.9%

181

Non-casualty incidents
219 in 2025

-17.4%

Why should we be concerned by the numbers

- Injuries and non-casualty incidents have declined by 14.9% and 17.4% respectively. However, fatalities have increased by 18.8%.
- This indicates that while fewer incidents are occurring, those that do occur are more severe and more likely to result in fatalities.
- The trend highlights the need to strengthen critical controls that prevent exposure to high-energy hazards and other fatal risks: Higher energy exposure → Higher consequence events → More fatalities
- Fewer incidents do not necessarily mean lower risk. Our greatest challenge remains preventing high-consequence events through effective critical controls.

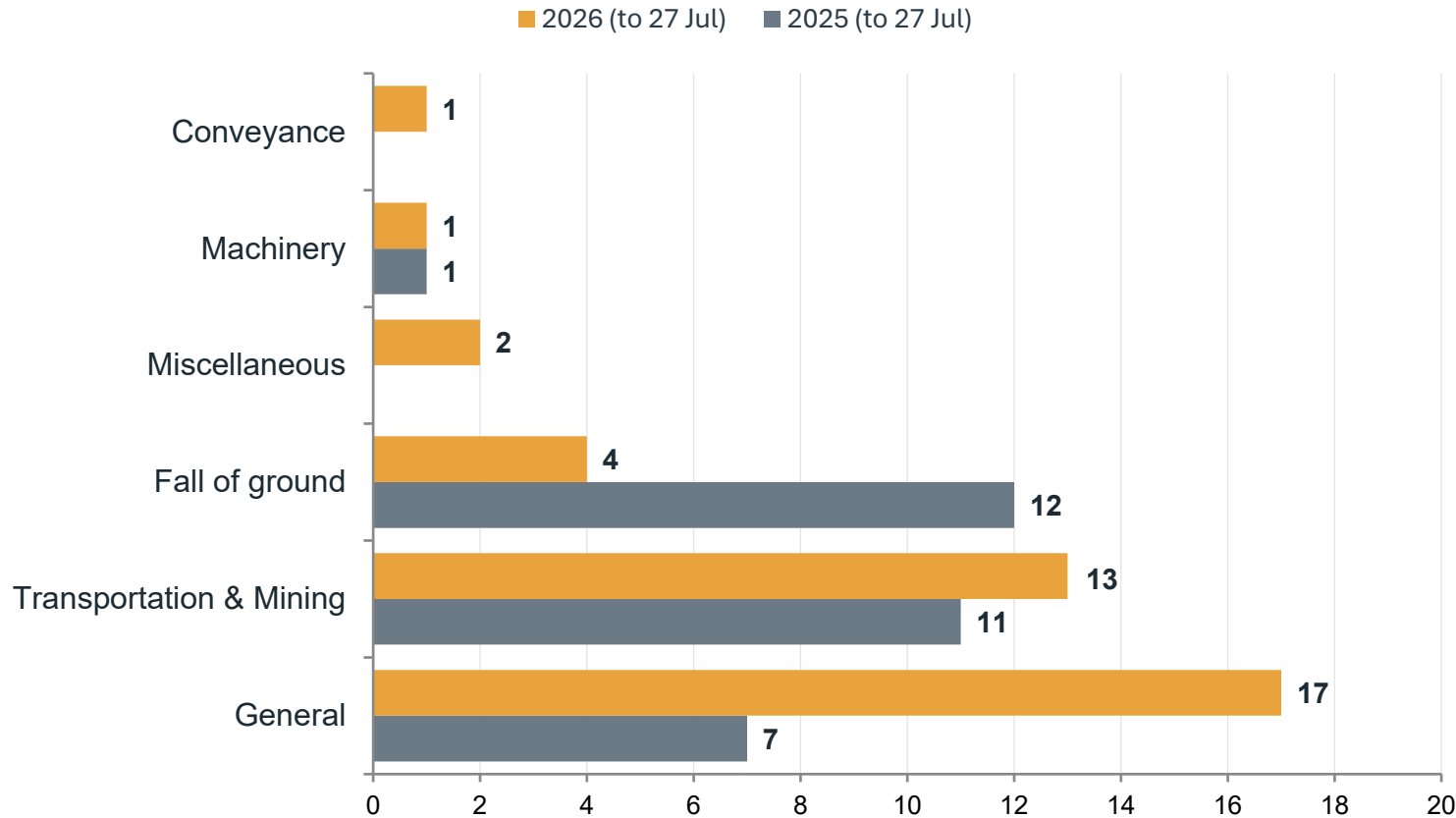
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Fatalities by classification

Transportation & Mining remains the second-largest contributor and is trending upward



13 Transportation & Mining fatalities

- Transportation & Mining accounted for 13 (34%) of the 38 fatalities recorded up to 27 July, making it the second-largest contributor to fatalities.
- While Fall of Ground fatalities have declined significantly, Transportation & Mining continues to trend upward.
- This shift highlights the growing importance of strengthening critical controls for rail-bound equipment (RBE), winches, TMM, traffic management, collision prevention, and pedestrian-equipment interactions.

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Scraper winches & rail-bound equipment (RBE)

Scraper winches and RBE accounted for more than half of all transportation & mining fatalities

7

lives lost due to scraper winches (2) and RBE (5) related accidents

53.8%

of all Transportation & Mining fatalities were due to winches and RBE related accidents

18.4%

of all mining fatalities recorded were due to winches and RBE related accidents

- Seven lives were lost in incidents involving scraper winches and RBE, accounting for 53.8% of all Transportation & Mining fatalities and 18.4% of all mining fatalities recorded.
- Five fatalities involved RBE and two involved scraper winches.
- These fatalities occurred during everyday operational tasks (tramming, rerailing, cleaning, etc) demonstrating that routine work can easily become high-risk work when critical controls are absent, ineffective or not consistently applied.
- Strengthening and verifying critical controls for RBE and scraper winches must remain an industry priority.

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Every winch and RBE fatality, 2026 to date

Date	Region · Commodity	Agency	Occupation	What Happened
20 Jan	Klerksdorp · Gold	RBE	Loco Guard	Caught between a hopper and the pier-pack while leading hoppers in the crosscut.
11 Feb	Rustenburg · Platinum	Winch	Scraper Winch Operator	Struck by a snatchblock that detached while he observed cleaning operations.
06 Mar	Rustenburg · Platinum	RBE	Loco Guard	Struck by an empty hopper that derailed while he walked ahead of the hoppers.
17 Mar	Rustenburg · Platinum	RBE*	Shiftboss acting as Loco Guard	Sustained a head injury after jumping from the caboose before two locomotives collided.
16 Apr	Rustenburg · Platinum	Winch	Winch Operator	Found on the winch drum, caught by the ropes, after walking in front of a running winch.
06 Jul	Rustenburg · Platinum	RBE	Rock Drill Operator	Struck by rail-bound equipment.
24 Jul	Rustenburg · Platinum	RBE	Locomotive Operator	Pinned against the sidewall by a derailed hopper when another locomotive collided with the derailed hopper during rerailing operations.

* Classified under General (struck by), but the agency was two colliding locomotives — included here so the true railbound burden is visible.

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Observed recurring critical control failures

1 Employees exposed to the line of fire

Five of the seven fatalities occurred because workers were positioned in the path of moving equipment or released energy: walking ahead of hoppers, in front of a running winch, or alongside RBE. Exposure to the hazard, rather than equipment failure, was the common fatal factor.

2 Uncontrolled stored energy

The detached snatchblock and the winch ropes that entrapped the operator demonstrate failures to control stored mechanical energy. Rigging integrity, inspection, guarding and energy isolation are life-critical controls: not routine housekeeping activities.

3 Observing is not being safe

Two fatalities involved workers who were observing or inspecting work rather than operating equipment. Critical controls protected the operator but failed to protect the observer, supervisor or guard who entered the same hazard zone. Everyone inside the hazard zone requires the same level of protection.

4 People entering live operating zones

Several fatalities occurred because workers approached moving equipment during normal operations. Effective stop-before-you-approach procedures, isolation, communication and positive verification before entry remain critical control weaknesses.

- **The common denominator in most of these fatalities was not the equipment: it was uncontrolled exposure to high-energy hazards resulting from absent, ineffective or unverified critical controls.**

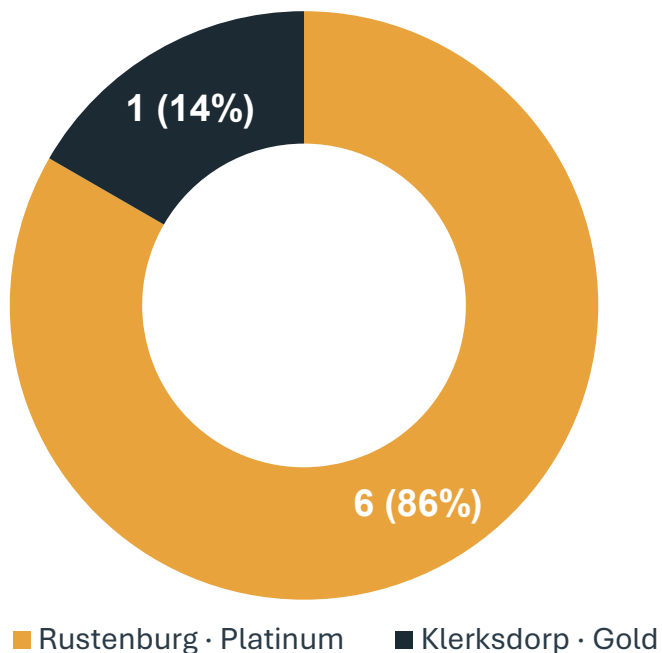
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Where intervention will have the greatest impact

The concentration of fatalities identifies where focused interventions are most likely to prevent future loss of life



Rustenburg platinum sector is the epicentre

Six of the seven scraper winch and RBE fatalities occurred at Rustenburg platinum operations. Platinum fatalities increased from 9 to 14 (+55.6%), representing the largest increase across all commodities.

Conventional mining presents the highest exposure

Scraper winches and RBE are predominantly used in labour intensive conventional narrow-reef gold and platinum mining, where employees work in close proximity to moving equipment and stored energy hazards.

The opportunity

- The concentration of fatalities in the conventional platinum and gold operations presents an opportunity for targeted interventions.
- Targeted implementation and verification of critical controls in Rustenburg's conventional platinum operations should be prioritised to address the industry's most concentrated scraper winches and RBE fatal risks.

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Priority critical control interventions: Prevent exposure, control energy, verify critical controls and learn continuously

Priority	Critical control intervention	Key actions	Desired outcome
1	Separate people from moving equipment	Physical separation of pedestrians and equipment, exclusion zones, dedicated travelling ways, and use proximity detection systems & interlocks where separation by design is not possible	Eliminate line-of-fire exposure
2	Protect everyone in the hazard zone	Apply exclusion-zone rules to operators, loco guards, supervisors, observers and contractors, effective communication before entry & controlled access to hazard zones	Protect all exposed persons
3	Control stored energy	Inspect snatchblocks, ropes and rigging before use, verify anchoring systems, install rope-path guarding & replace defective rigging immediately	Prevent stored-energy failures
4	Stop before you approach	Stop–isolate–verify before approach, lock-out/tag-out where applicable, embrace effective communication between operators and pedestrians & use permit-to-work for rerailling activities	Prevent contact with live equipment
5	Verify critical controls	Pre-task critical control verification, supervisor workplace inspections, critical control assurance audits & behavioural observations and coaching	Ensure controls are effective
6	Learn and improve	Classify incidents by primary hazard and energy source, analyse trends & share lessons learnt across operations & review critical control failures after every high-potential incident	Improve prevention and risk management

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