

## **FUTURE NEEDS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS AWARENESS TRAINING AND HEARING PROTECTION DEVICE PRACTICES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINING INDUSTRY**

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### **Abstract**

Hearing Conservation Programmes (HCP) must include awareness training for workers about the risks associated with noise exposure that also motivates and trains them to use Hearing Protection Devices (HPDs) in order to prevent hearing loss. The high prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) amongst South African mine workers indicates that current HCPs are not achieving this goal which prompted the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) to investigate the current practices of awareness training and HPD management in order to identify areas for improvement and the future needs of the industry in the fight against NIHL.

An investigation of the current practices and policies at various mines of the training practices and the employees' knowledge of the risks as well as the miner's use of HPDs was initiated by the Safety in Mining Research Advisory Committee (SIMRAC) in order to identify the future needs of the industry with regards to improvement of NIHL awareness training to target audiences in the mining industry. This paper outlines the results of the study that interviewed 143 employees from a wide range of occupations and ten Training and HPD managers who represent the practices at various commodities and sizes of mining operations and affect approximately 135 000 miners.

The paper discusses the findings compared to the accepted best practices for Awareness training and HPD management and emphasises the necessary actions that the mining industry need to make in order to improve the management of Awareness training and HPD practices and to improve this aspect of HCPs. Implementation of the recommendations from the MHSC study, the use of the guidelines for optimising awareness training and the contents of the ebook on NIHL prevention resources will assist the industry in attaining the goals of the "Zero harm" to worker's hearing. Adoption of the research results will assist the industry to adhere to the Mining Charter in a meaningful way.