

A message from the

Department for Energy and Mining



Thursday 14 May 2020 18:00 pm

COVID-19 UPDATE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S RESOURCES SECTOR

In the early stages of the response to the pandemic, mining, oil, gas and energy companies operating in South Australia took immediate action to reduce non-essential employee movements and unnecessary COVID-19 exposure pathways. This resulted in a massive change in sector operations, including a 90 per cent reduction in inbound fly-in fly-out workers. As a consequence of difficult decisions such as these, South Australia has so far weathered the storm. There is no doubt that the early moves by the sector to coordinate its response and take swift, significant action have been material in shoring-up government and public confidence, which has allowed essential operations to continue.

The South Australian government recognises and encourages the sustained effort being made across the length and breadth of the sector in support of our shared success. While the likelihood of exposure has been reduced, the consequence of a new outbreak of infection has not. The overall success of the industry will be measured in the public's eye by the performance of each of the individual enterprises. At a sector level, in addition to the significant impact exposure to infection would have on individuals, the community, and business continuity, exposure events have the potential to jeopardise confidence in the sector, risking the conditions that have supported the continuity of essential operations.

The health advice remains clear: hygiene and social distancing measures are the primary control measures for COVID-19. It is critical momentum on these measures across your operations is maintained. With public health front of mind, and sensitive to competing community concern about worker travel and economic downturn, the Department for Energy and Mining is again looking to work with industry on measures to ensure operations are sustainable in an ongoing threat environment, and are carefully 'de-escalated' as the pandemic threat subsides.

Mineral Exploration

The following updates on the conduct of exploration in South Australia, which is consistent with South Australia's [Roadmap](#) for easing COVID-19 restrictions including advice about regional travel, are:

- Exploration activities can be undertaken across the state, other than where it would involve interaction with remote Aboriginal communities ([details available here](#)).
- Consistent with all operations across the sector, explorers in South Australia should have submitted COVID-19 management plans to SA Health and be enforcing infection prevention measures across their operations.
- Explorers should be mindful of, and adapt their operations to, ongoing sensitivities in regional centres and from landholders about potential COVID-19 exposure. The department supports industry's efforts to undertake safe practice that delivers not only exploration success, but economic benefit to our regional communities.
- Constraints on interstate travel for the purposes of mineral exploration have not changed under the Cross Border Travel Direction. Where cross-border travel is essential, companies are able to access exemption arrangements to engage specialist explorers from interstate where the requirements of the Direction are met (see further detail below).

Native Title Groups

Aboriginal communities and Native Title representatives across the state responded swiftly to the pandemic, implementing measures across their communities consistent with government advice, and tailored to their particular risk profiles. The Department for Energy and Mining has been receiving regular updates from several native title corporations regarding their COVID-19 response, including impacts on the timing and approach to work area clearances and other matters relevant to the resources sector. Whether you are at the earliest stages of exploration, or in operation, companies should remain engaged with their native title partners during this period and work collaboratively on plans for forward activities in a manner commensurate with the risk to their communities.

Update to the Cross Border Travel Direction

SAPOL have published a further update to the [Cross Border Travel Direction](#) effective from Monday 11 May 2020. The key change in the Direction is a requirement for essential travellers to keep and retain records of close contacts for a 14-day period from the date of their arrival in South Australia. However, FIFO workers employed in the sector **are exempt** from this



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requirement, reflecting the fact that all operations are already maintaining detailed records of movements to and from site and are in a position to readily support contact-tracing.

However, the [new requirement](#) does apply to anyone travelling on an ad hoc basis into South Australia to work in the sector.

These employees must record:

- the name and phone number or other contact details of all close contacts and the location at which the close contact occurred; or
- if these details are not known and it is not reasonably practicable to obtain those details—the time during which and location at which the close contact occurred.

Copies of the forms [are available for download](#) or are available from DEM.industryenquiries@sa.gov.au

Testing

As foreshadowed in DEM's previous industry update, DEM has partnered with SA Pathology, SA Health and several operations across SA to conduct a trial in the coming month of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for inbound FIFO workers. The trial, which will be conducted at Adelaide Airport, Port Augusta and South Australia's metropolitan drive-through testing facilities, will not only further reduce the likelihood of exposure at some of our key operations, but also explore future arrangements that could support employee wellbeing and roster flexibility. DEM will continue to pursue opportunities for testing arrangements that will protect our State's critical resource and energy operations.

South Australia's infrastructure strategy

Infrastructure South Australia has released a [20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy](#), which sets the long-term strategic direction and initial priorities for infrastructure development in South Australia. With a prioritisation focus, the Strategy articulates seven key principles and 38 long-term priorities spanning a range of sectors across the State including the resources and energy sector. The strategy has an increased focus on resilience and flexibility in light of the bushfires of 2019/20 and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the impacts of COVID-19 will be significant, having a long-term infrastructure strategy that identifies the areas where investment can best catalyse growth in an economically efficient way will be important for the recovery of the state and support pursuit of the government's ambition to accelerate annual growth of gross state product (GSP) to 3 per cent.

COVID Legislation – Energy

A COVID-19 omnibus bill was introduced into the South Australian Parliament on 12 May 2020, which includes temporary amendments to the *Emergency Management Act (Electricity Supply Emergencies)* and to the *National Electricity (South Australia) Act*. The EMA amendments introduce the ability in an energy emergency to issue directions to a network business. The amendments also clarify who can be directed and who else they can lawfully direct under the Act.

The amendments were introduced as protection measures for low demand risks should a second wave of COVID-19 occur and South Australia experience demand destruction as has been experienced internationally in significantly impacted regions. The amendments, if passed, are only valid for six months.

I encourage all companies to engage with their industry associations to plan for a structured approach to 'de-escalation', and to work closely with service providers across the METS sector to assist them through this difficult period. As always, your emailed suggestions or concerns are welcome at DEM.industryenquiries@sa.gov.au

Stay well

Paul Heithersay

Chief Executive

Department for Energy and Mining

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