

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1720

asked on Wednesday 12 November 2008

MR MOORHEAD ASKED THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY (MR WILSON)—

QUESTION:

Will he advise the House of recent initiatives to put mine emergency response skills to the test?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question.

With reference to mine emergency response skills I have been advised by the Chief Inspector of Coal Mines that a Level 1 Emergency Exercise was recently carried out at the Newlands Northern underground coal mine which is located near the town of Glenden.

- (1) A Level 1 Mine Emergency Exercise is an annual event that was set up in response to the tragic Moura Number 2 explosion in August 1994 where eleven miners lost their lives. The exercise is designed to test a mine's response to an emergency incident and tests the capabilities of the mine in many facets of emergency response. In addition, the exercise also tests the response capability of the Queensland Mines Rescue Service (QMRS), the Mines Inspectorate and Simtars (Safety in Mines Training and Research Station) who provide vital gas and chemical analysis of the gasses that evolve from a fire or explosion. The call out capability of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), the local and regional hospital and medical facilities can also be tested.
- (2) The most recent exercise, which was conducted on Friday 7 November 2008, simulated a fuel tanker losing its brakes and careering out of control down a steep gradient into mine portals. The subsequent conflagration, when the fuel ignited, filled the mine with smoke and toxic gasses.
- (3) The exercise was to recognise and identify the incident and to mobilise the correct assistance. The fire fighting capability of the adjoining open cut mine was called upon to deal with the fire and the emergency evacuation plan for the underground was put into play. This plan called for the formation of an incident team and the aided self escape of the underground miners. These miners were equipped with self contained oxygen-based self rescuers and compressed air breathing apparatus. The mine's own underground mines rescue teams were called upon and the QMRS was activated to attend.
- (4) The planning of these exercises is undertaken by subject matter experts, senior mines inspectors and an industry safety and health representative. During the exercise, the planning team, along with senior industry managers from other

mines, audit the different responses to the incident against the mine's emergency response plan.

- (5) The planning of the exercise is as realistic as can be achieved without endangering persons. The most up to date emergency response techniques are incorporated in each of these trial.
- (6) In relation to the 7 November exercise, I am informed that the surface emergency response team that fought the fire and the underground mine workers who escaped the mine using breathing apparatus were exemplary in their professional conduct and readiness to participate.
- (7) A comprehensive report on the exercise will be released prior to the end of December this year and disseminated across the industry. The report will highlight the positive factors and those areas where improvement can be achieved. The recommendations will then be expected to be implemented across the industry and the Mines Inspectorate will audit to ensure these learnings are introduced at each operation.