

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS, MINERAL PROCESSING PLANTS

777. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Mines:

In relation to industrial accidents in mineral processing plants in Western Australia, for each of the last five years

- (1) How many people have been injured through accidental gas releases in the work place?
- (2) How many people have died through accidental gas releases in the work place?
- (3) In how many of these accidents was gas extraction equipment in place?
- (4) What steps has the Department of Minerals and Energy taken to -
  - (a) ensure that all mineral processing plant work places have installed gas extraction equipment; and
  - (b) ensure that all extraction equipment has dedicated emergency power backup?

Hon N.F. MOORE replied:

- (1) Over the period from January 1995 to date the number of people injured in Western Australian mineral processing plants as a result of accidental gas releases has been a total of 71 persons in 27 reported incidents.

The breakdown of this total by year is:

1995 7 people

1996 4 people

1997 4 people

1998 35 people - of which 28 were involved in one single event where extraction equipment would not have proven effective.

1999 8 people

2000 13 people

- (2) There have been no fatalities as a result of accidental gas releases in mineral processing plants in Western Australia during the five year period.
- (3) Gas extraction equipment was in place in 5 of the incidents reported.
- (4)
  - (a) The Mines Safety and Inspection Regulations 1995 contains a number of regulations that deal with the identification and control of atmospheric hazards. Periodic checks are made by inspectors to ascertain compliance with all regulations. Gas extraction systems are only one of a number of control systems identified in the regulations and are not mandatory in every case. I am also advised that neither would they necessarily prove effective in every case.
  - (b) Emergency power backup is one component that an operation may have available as part of a system for reducing exposure to hazards, and indeed many mining operations have such emergency power backup systems. However, such backup is not mandatory and other controls may be determined to be more appropriate in particular circumstances, for example, the initiation of warning alarms and the evacuation of personnel to a place of safety.