

SA reports safest year in mining, government urges more

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1 Feb 2023

South Africa is coming off its safest year on record in mining, with accident-related deaths falling to 49 from 74 the previous year, a government report showed on Tuesday, 31 January.



Minister of mineral resources and energy Gwede Mantashe speaking at the Africa Energy Week conference in Cape Town, 2022. Source: Reuters/Esra Alexander

A total of 1,946 serious injuries were reported in 2022, down from 2,123 a year earlier, the report showed, prompting mines minister Gwede Mantashe to say more needed to be done to improve safety.

"We are improving in fatalities, we are improving in injuries, but the numbers remain high. An incident is a pointer that there was a potential fatality," Mantashe said during the report's release in Pretoria.

Mine fatalities have declined since 309 lives were lost in 1999, though 2020 and 2021 saw deaths rise again, industry data shows.

"The industry will build on the momentum we achieved during 2022 when we halted and significantly reversed the regression in safety during the previous two years in which 74 and 60 of our colleagues died in 2021 and 2020, respectively," said Lerato Tsele, acting head of safety and sustainable development at the Minerals Council of South Africa.



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In a statement, the Minerals Council said industry-wide safety initiatives were helping, including a push to eliminate accidents involving falling rocks.

These, which once accounted for about half of all deaths in the sector, fell to six last year from 20 in 2021, the report showed.

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