

Strategies for Driving in Open Cut Mines

- When driving in open cut mines, most drivers will be confronted with conditions and issues never before experienced and great care needs to be taken to avoid being involved in a dangerous situation. Only vehicles with 4 Wheel Drive (4WD) or All Wheel Drive (AWD) capability will be permitted into the mine area. It is most important for the safety of the crew and the vehicle that all personnel listen closely to briefings that are given to assist whilst operating in this environment.
- Before entering the open cut mine, all drivers must engage the vehicles 4WD/AWD systems and ensure that the correct engagement has been followed. The surface may be soft so it is therefore important to ensure 4WD is engaged and functioning. Seatbelts shall be worn at all times, except when directly involved in pump and roll fire-fighting operations.
- A Traffic Management Plan may be in place and needs to be adhered to. This will ensure a co-ordinated traffic flow of vehicles in the mine. Deviating from the traffic plan could endanger both crews and vehicles and shall not be tolerated. These plans are put in place to ensure the safety of the vehicles and crews. All vehicles must follow and remain on existing tracks, even when laying hose to extinguish areas that are away from the track unless otherwise directed. Under no circumstances is the vehicle to leave the track for even the smallest distance.
- Because of the nature of the operation, the vehicles will be working hard and the driver needs to constantly monitor the vehicles condition by checking the gauges and listening to tell-tale warning sounds of any problem developing in the vehicle. Drivers must be aware of areas where the clearances are reduced, both to the sides and overhead. If there is a situation with reduced clearances, then a guide must be used to ensure that no damage is caused to the vehicle or the structure.
- As the area the vehicle is operating in, is a flammable area, all sources of ignition must be left in a safe location and not carried by personnel in the open cut mine. This includes any matches, cigarette lighters or like equipment used by fire fighters or carried into the vehicle.
- Strike Team Leaders and Crew Leaders must ensure that the Incident Action Plan is followed and only those operations set out in the plan are carried out.
- Prior to the vehicles being released from the Staging Area and returned to their home location, it is essential that the District Mechanical Officer (DMO) is consulted. The vehicle has been working hard and the mechanics may need to check the vehicle to ensure that there are no mechanical issues with the vehicle.
- As there are many vehicles operating in a confined area it is essential to follow the speed limits relevant for the area operating in or the speed limits set out in the traffic Management Plan. Great care must be taken by drivers to ensure a safe operations area for everyone. If unsure about the appropriate speed, seek clarification or use the suggested speed limit of 15 kph.
- In the event that a vehicle becomes disabled, notify the Incident Controller who will comply with CFA SOP's and/ or local mine arrangement.
- Caution needs to be exercised after rainfall. Even small amounts of rain will produce very slippery surfaces.