

From strategy to spills

AWARDS, BOOKS AND SPILLS KITS HELP IDENTIFY SOME OF THE MINERALS SECTOR'S KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS.

■ Rio banks Nedbank

Rio Tinto has won the 2009 Nedbank Environmental Award for its QIT Madagascar Minerals project in Madagascar. The Nedbank Awards honour companies that have made a significant effort in terms of protecting or improving the biophysical environment they operate in.

QMM was recognised for its groundbreaking biodiversity program, which included identifying opportunities to enhance biodiversity conservation and promote fast-growing plantations for community use, biodiversity conservation, rehabilitation and dune stabilisation.

QMM head of community affairs, biodiversity and sustainable development Manon Vincelette said active engagement with local, national international stakeholders helped the program.

"We engaged extensively with aid agencies and international institutions to build capability in the areas of communities, education and health," Vincelette said.

"An independent biodiversity advisory committee was formed in 2001 to review the biodiversity strategy and on-the-ground conservation action, which consists of biodiversity experts in various fields of longstanding experience and globally renowned research credentials in Madagascar."

Closer to home, Rio Tinto has signed on with the Western Australian Government's town redevelopment plans for the Pilbara.

Rio Tinto subsidiaries built the Pilbara towns of Dampier, Wickham, Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica in the 1960s and '70s. The company continues to play a role, but the memorandum of understanding will lead to the formalisation of a cooperative partnership with the government.

Rio Tinto Iron Ore chief executive Sam Walsh said the company was committed to providing the Pilbara with opportunities to have a sustainable future and to plan for the long term.

"Together with the state and local governments we will examine opportunities to plan, develop and implement a town and community development strategy for the Pilbara with an initial focus on the

redevelopment of Dampier."

Part of the MoU involves investigations into the scope for a marina and tourism precinct in Dampier.

■ CSR in mining

Research and Markets has released a book, 'Corporate Social Responsibility in Mining', that analyses modern approaches by mining companies to minimise impacts on mining and bring benefits to corporate stakeholders.

Using a case study of two mining sectors – gold and diamond mining – the book evaluates company policies and practices within the four key CSR areas of environmental protection, health and safety, employee relations and community development.

The guide includes an assessment of three models for community development in mining: the company-led approach; establishment of corporate foundations; and tri-sector partnerships.

Key topics covered include CSR in mining, mining towards sustainable development, sector specifics of CSR in mining, geographical specifics of CSR in mining, CSR strategies in growing and declining mining sectors, and models for community development.

■ No crying over spills

Environmental spill control has become an important part of risk management. Absorb Environmental Solutions managing director Phil Abernethy said that safety had become integral to everything companies did, and environmental performance needed the same level of attention.

Noise, dust, vapour and wastewater are generally controlled using engineering methods. Spills, however, present a different challenge, being emergency events. Abernethy pointed to key steps companies needed to take to manage spills.

The first is to survey the site to identify where spills could occur. These include things such as hydraulic hose failure, accidental spills during decanting and accidents such as a drum being punctured by a forklift.

Following that, a risk assessment of each area should be conducted. This should include an action plan that spells out specific measures and a timetable for implementation.

Specific areas identified in the survey need to be addressed, which may include upgrading bunding of fuel or dangerous goods and installing emergency drain seals close to vulnerable storm water gates.

Spill kits with sufficient capacity to deal with the maximum credible spill need to be provided near high-risk areas. Abernethy recommended establishing a system that ensured these kits were used for emergencies only.

The final step in the process is a spill response training program.

"All staff, in fact all citizens, have a duty of care to the environment," he said. "As a result, your staff should be capable of responding to liquid spills that may cause an environmental incident. To safely and effectively use a spill kit, your staff must be trained to do so."

"I always recommend to people considering training to look for a course that includes basic legislation background, step-by-step spill response procedure, and practical training in spill kit use."

■ Recycled protection

Global Spill Control's DB1150 Bulk Container Bund has been released.

Manufactured in Australia from recycled polyethylene, the DB1150 joins the four-drum bund DB4 and two-drum bund DB2 range of portable spill control products.

The DB1150 has an 1150-litre sump capacity, exceeding the 110% spill capture minimum allowance when storing 1000-litre intermediate bulk containers. IBCs can be loaded directly onto the DB1150's six internal pillars or a standard timber or plastic pallet.

The DB1150's large footprint and rounded ends allow for decanting within the bund. This reduces the risk of drips and spills caused by faulty valves.

Bund covers and discharge filters are available for outdoor storage.

LTO