Message from the Office of the Chief Inspector of Mines:
Code Certifications during COVID-19

April 06, 2020

Objective:
- To protect the health and safety of workers and the inspectors;
- To comply with orders and direction issued by the Provincial Health Officer in response to COVID-19; and
- To ensure compliance the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia (Code) regarding shift boss, blasting mine rescue, and supervisor certifications.

Background:
One of the protective measures recommended by the Centre of Disease Control is social distancing, which requires two meters between individuals. Normally, shiftboss, blasting and mine rescue examinations are invigilated by MEMPR examiners in person. The exams contain written, hands-on and interview components. Due to the interactive nature of the examinations, MEMPR will cease to administer in person exams until further notice.

Statement of the Chief Inspector
The Chief Inspector directs mine managers to take the following interim measures for shiftboss, blasting, mine rescue and supervisor certifications.

Shiftboss Certifications
In person invigilation of shiftboss certification will be suspended until further notice. The manager has the authority to issue a provisional shiftboss certificate to an employee with acceptable experience and training under Part 1.13.6 of the Code. The provisional certificate may be issued for a maximum period of six months.

If a provisional shiftboss certificate is required to be compliant with the Code, the manager shall send a signed letter to their regional health and safety inspector with the following information:

- Full name, address, phone number, and date of birth of the individual;
- Effective and expiry dates of the provisional certification;
- Certification type (surface/underground);
- St. John’s standard first aid and transportation endorsement certificate numbers, and expiry dates;
- A summary of the individual’s experience which demonstrates the individual has the acceptable experience as required in Part 1.13.3 (4) of the Code; and
- BC mine supervisor certification number.

For the board of examiners to issue a shiftboss certificate under Part 1.13.3, the applicant must hold a first aid certificate to the standard required by the Chief Inspector. Due to the interactive
nature of first aid training, it is understood ensuring worker safety and arranging courses may be difficult. At this time, first aid certification is not required in “acceptable training” under Part 1.13.6, but please note if the employee does or does not hold the qualification.

Supervisor certification is required as a pre-requisite for provisional shiftboss certifications, and proof of certification must be provided to the inspector.

**Blasting Certifications**

In person invigilation of blasting certification will be suspended until further notice. Part 8.2.3 of the Code gives the manager the authority to issue a 90-day provisional blasting certification.

If a provisional blasting certificate is required to be compliant with the Code, the manager shall send a signed letter to their regional health and safety inspector with the following information:

- Full name, address, phone number, and date of birth of the individual;
- Effective and expiry dates of the provisional certification;
- Certification type (surface/underground/basic); and
- A summary of the individual’s hours of training, and experience (recertifications).

Individuals must be knowledgeable and competent in blasting operations prior to a provisional blasting certificate being issued.

**Mine Rescue Certifications**

Any Mine Rescue Certificate expiring between March 01, 2020 and June 30, 2020, will have a grace period of six months for recertification.

Mine Rescue examinations will only be provided on a strictly “as needed” basis, where mines require additional certified mine rescue personnel to be in compliance with the Code. The exams will be adapted, compressed and invigilated over Skype.

Certifications issued in this manner are temporary, and will be valid for a six-month period, after which, a full course and exam will be required to certify the individuals. Understandably, social distancing may impact a trainer’s ability to instruct hands-on skills, and online exams may impact an inspector’s ability to assess those skills. A full 5-year certification will still require hands-on instruction and invigilation. Traditional exams will be invigilated for individuals with temporary mine rescue certifications when the situation normalizes.

Please note Part 3.7.1 (1) of the Code requires mine rescue members to hold a valid St. John standard first aid and transportation endorsement certificate. If first aid courses cannot be arranged, the Chief Inspector will consider variance applications under Part 1.2.1 of the Code.

**Supervisor Certifications**

Supervisor certification is still available online and can be accessed at:

[https://www.openschool.bc.ca/minessupervisor/](https://www.openschool.bc.ca/minessupervisor/)
Responsibility of the Mine Manager

The manager is responsible to ensure provisional certificates are only issued to individuals who are competent, and possess the skills required to be blaster or shiftboss. All provisional certificates must be provided to the regional health and safety inspector along with supporting documentation.

Summary

It is expected that deferring examinations will create a demand for future examination dates. The Ministry will work to account for additional exam dates when the situation allows. This is an ever-evolving situation and adjustments will be made as the situation develops.

It is understood there are unique situations and cases. Please reach out to your regional health and safety inspector if you have any questions or require further guidance.

Regards

Hermanus Henning
Chief Inspector of Mines