Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

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

January 20, 2021

Objective:

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

Background:

Recent orders from the Provincial Health Officer have increased the list of restricted activities, including travel restrictions and limiting gatherings outside of family or small work cohorts.

Normally, shiftboss, blasting, and mine rescue examinations are invigilated, in-person, by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (EMLI) examiners. The certification process consists of a written exam along with an interview and for mine rescue certifications, some hands-on components.

Statement of the Chief Inspector:

In-person invigilation of shiftboss, blasting and mine rescue certifications is suspended until further notice due to the examinations' interactive nature. The Chief Inspector directs mine managers to take the following interim measures for these certifications.

Shiftboss Certifications:

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

For a provisional shiftboss certificate 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 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 s.1.13.3(4) of the Code, and
- BC mine supervisor certification number (online course).

**For the Board of Examiners to issue a shiftboss certificate under s.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 that arranging courses may be difficult while ensuring worker safety. Presently, first aid certification is not required in "acceptable training" under s.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. Supervisor certification is still available online and can be accessed at https://www.openschool.bc.ca/minessupervisor/.

Blasting Certifications:
In-person invigilation of blasting certifications is suspended until further notice. If a certificate is due to expire, the mine manager may contact an inspector and request an expiry date extension. Also, s.8.2.3 of the Code gives the mine manager the authority to issue a 90-day provisional blasting certification on a one-time-only basis.

For a provisional blasting certificate 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.

It is the mine manager's responsibility to ensure the individual is knowledgeable and competent in blasting operations prior to a provisional blasting certificate being issued.

Mine Rescue Certifications:
Any mine rescue certificate expiring before June 30, 2021, will have a grace period of six months for recertification.

Important Note: *If a holder of a mine rescue certificate is a regular, active member of a team, attending scheduled practices, their certificate will remain in good standing.*

Where mines require additional certified mine rescuers to comply with the Code, the exam process will be adapted to be invigilated through video means, such as Skype, Zoom or MS Teams.

It is acknowledged that companies invest much time and expense to have their staff properly trained in mine rescue. The examination of the candidates is the final step in the certification process that allows the examiner the opportunity to assess the instructor's effectiveness and provide added feedback to the group. Successful completion will enable the candidates to become part of a mine rescue team. Attaining the mine rescue certificate is not the end of the training but the beginning.

Having conducted multiple video certifications, EMLI is satisfied that the examination process' integrity has been maintained. Therefore, certificates attained through this video examination process will be granted the usual 5-year validity period.

Important Note: *The mine manager must ensure that all mine rescue team members practice as a team for not less than eight hours during every three months the mine operates as per the Code s.3.7.9(2).*

s.3.7.1 (1) of the Code requires mine rescue members to hold a valid "standard first aid and transportation endorsement certificate."

If a course cannot be arranged, the Chief Inspector will consider a variance application under s.1.2.1 of the Code.

Responsibility of the Mine Manager:
The manager is responsible for ensuring 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. This is granted on a one-time-only basis per individual.

Summary:

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

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.

Hermanus Henning *(20 January 2021)*

Chief Inspector of Mines