

Press release

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Queensland mines take out top Rio Tinto global safety awards

Two Queensland coal mines have taken out Rio Tinto's top global safety awards.

The Hail Creek Mine, near Mackay, has been presented with a Chief Executive Safety Award for 2010, following one of its best years in safety performance since operations started in 2003. The award recognises sites for their past two year's safety performance, focusing on innovative safety systems, effective communication and a strong safety culture.

Meanwhile the Blair Athol Mine, near Clermont, has been awarded one of two Chief Executive Safety Awards for the most improved sites in Rio Tinto's global portfolio over the 2008 and 2009 period.

The Queensland mine sites were selected ahead of the many operations within the Rio Tinto Group, which encompasses aluminum, copper, diamonds, energy products, gold, industrial minerals and iron ore businesses around the world.

Rio Tinto Chief Executive Tom Albanese, has congratulated the operations and their teams for their commitment to building a zero harm culture.

In relation to Hail Creek Mine, Mr Albanese said a number of characteristics common to Rio Tinto's best safety performers were noted.

"These include the visible and passionate commitment of the team to develop a sustainable safety culture in which employees actively participate, and an overwhelming attitude amongst employees and contractors that all work can and will be done safely," Mr Albanese said.

In relation to Blair Athol Mine, Mr Albanese said the operation had demonstrated 'outstanding improvement in safety culture and overall performance' that is valued and supported by all employees and contractors.

"The presence of world class performers within the Group is very important in highlighting that excellent safety performance is achievable in the mining industry and is independent of local culture, economic conditions and past practices," Mr Albanese said.

General manager operations Andrew Woodley thanked Hail Creek Mine's 680 permanent employees and 200 contractors on their continued efforts to improve safety standards.

"Well done to the team at Hail Creek - this is a significant award within the Rio Tinto Group and is well-deserved recognition for the commitment of the team at Hail Creek to working safely," Mr Woodley said.

"This award provides us with an even greater challenge - to not only maintain this standard, but to continue to seek more opportunities to improve safety across site and keep up the momentum towards our goal of zero injuries. Excellent safety performance only comes about when the workforce holds safety as a core value."

The award win for Hail Creek Mine follows its presentation of a 'Commended Award' at the Queensland Mining Industry Health and Safety Innovation Awards in 2007.

Meanwhile, General manager operations Clermont Region, Andrew Cole, said Blair Athol Mine's award win is a "tremendous achievement and recognition of the team's focus and commitment to valuing safety".

"Let us use this award and past good performances of both the Blair Athol and Clermont sites as encouragement to further reduce incidents by improving our safety processes and culture as we strive to deliver zero harm," Mr Cole said.

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