



Aspasa launches a Mining Charter Audit

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Following the gazettelement of the Mining Charter's Implementation Guidelines and Amendments, Aspasa has extended its service to mining operations with a charter audit.

After a seven-month engagement process with stakeholders, the new mining charter was developed to boost sustainable growth, enforce procurement of local goods, and to further support broad-based, meaningful black economic empowerment in our mining and minerals sector.

South African mines are cautioned to work strictly within the expanded regulations and guidelines of the charter.

While its main function is to secure one's license to operate, it now has a stronger focus on socio-economic development. Communities living on the fringes of mining operations are also increasingly becoming aware of their rights and holding mining companies to account. Overall the new charter's message is clear: if a mine strays from implementing and maintaining its duty to society, it runs the risk of having its operations suspended or its license withdrawn.

This means all mining operations will need to become more rigorous about their practices and processes. They've also been given six months (from the charter's 13 December publication date) to get their houses in order and to submit a five-year plan indicating progressive implementation of employment equity targets and goods procurement targets.

In light of these developments, Aspasa is extending its strategic support role with a mining charter audit – and besides the compulsory health, safety and environment audits it already offers.

The biggest risk facing any operator is to be suspended because of non-compliance, and this can now be avoided. For Aspasa members, and particularly for smaller mining operations with limited budgets and administrative challenges, the audit can only come as a relief.

It places operations managers in a position to assess their compliance status and take rectifying steps before the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) do their inspections – the outcome of which can be punitive, costly and time-consuming.

The audit can further assist operators in a policy environment that's fragmented and mutable.

Besides the Mining Charter and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) codes still not being aligned, constant policy amendments make it even more challenging to keep up with this always-evolving sector. Leastways, with the audit mines will stay abreast of any new changes and how they affect operations.

The audit takes about two to four days, depending on the size of the operation and amount of data gathered. Inter alia, it will look at a mine's current commitments regarding the Social and Labour Plan and its extent of compliance. The mine will then be provided with a report identifying areas in which they're falling short as well as suggested mitigation measures.

As with the HSE audits, Aspasa members are charged a discounted rate, so if you're not already a member now's a good time to consider becoming one.

To find out more, please visit <http://aspasa.co.za/>

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Aspasa is a surface mining body corporate representing those companies that produce aggregate and sand through quarries, sand pits and crushing operations. Although a member of South Africa's Chamber of Mines, the association functions entirely independently.

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