



News Release – SafeWork SA

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WMC Pty. Ltd. pleads guilty over Olympic Dam mine death

The BHP-owned company which runs the Olympic Dam mine in South Australia's north, has pleaded guilty to charges relating to the death of a mine worker, last year.

34 year old father of two, Karl Eibl, died on 19 July 2005, after explosives were prematurely detonated as he worked 600-metres underground at the Olympic Dam uranium, copper and gold mine.

SafeWork SA laid a complaint against WMC (Olympic Dam Corp.) Pty Ltd, involving three counts of breaching section 19 of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act, which relates to a failure to provide a safe work environment.

These counts relate to two other employees who were also placed at risk, besides the deceased.

Following today's plea, sentencing submissions were heard before Industrial Magistrate Ardlie in the Industrial Relations Court in Adelaide.

As the corporate holding entity, BHP-Billiton acknowledged a breakdown in communication between the miners underground as well as a systems failure in tracking the progress of tunnelling, which led to the tragedy.

BHP-Billiton said the shortcomings have been addressed, and new safety procedures in place are in line with recommendations from SafeWork SA.

Despite the government's announcement of proposed higher penalties for such offences, this matter will be subject to the current penalty regime, under which the maximum fine under s19 for a first offence is \$100,000 and \$200,000 for subsequent offences.

Magistrate Ardlie's decision on penalties is scheduled to be delivered on Friday 25 August 2006.

[ends]