

Derelict mines to cost R1.5bn

[miningmx.com] -- THE cost to "rehabilitate" South Africa's about 6000 ownerless and derelict mines would be almost R1.5bn, excluding inflation, the department of mineral resources said on Wednesday.

"Following extensive research, the department now has a comprehensive database of ownerless and derelict mines, allowing for systematic management of the problem," it said in a statement.

The department's short- to medium-term plan would be to focus on those abandoned mines that posed an immediate threat to communities.

"These include asbestos sites, as well as open mines. A total of 48 asbestos mines in the Northern Cape and Limpopo have ... been rehabilitated since 1994, while 108 dangerous gold mine trenches and shafts have been rehabilitated over the same period."

In the medium- to long-term, the department would be "rolling out a plan to rehabilitate as many of the 6000 ownerless and derelict mines as possible".

But this depended on the availability of funds to do so. The estimated cost for a 10-year rehabilitation plan was R1.46bn, excluding inflation.

The department did not have this money.

In cases where owners of abandoned mines could be traced, they would be help responsible, in terms of the law, for their rehabilitation.

"We will be hosting a summit in the next two months or so to bring all relevant role-players together so that, collectively, we find ways to deal with the challenges posed by ownerless and derelict mines," it said.

Earlier on Wednesday, department director-general Sandile Nogxina briefed Parliament's mining portfolio committee on the matter.

"Those abandoned mines whose owners can be traced will be held responsible in terms of the law," the DMR said.

Nogxina said the DMR would be hosting a summit in the next two months or so to bring all relevant role-players together so that, collectively, they can find ways to deal with the challenges posed by ownerless and derelict mines.

"It is important to note that mining has been taking place in South Africa for more than a century and we are now having to deal with the legacy of this mining," said Nogxina.

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