

# SA govt spending 'millions of rands' to rehabilitate abandoned mines

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JOHANNESBURG (miningweekly.com) - South Africa's Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) is spending heavily to identify and rehabilitate derelict mines across the country, an official said on Wednesday.

“Despite the economic gains that have been derived from the mining industry, the mining activities have also resulted in disastrous environmental acts,” chief director of economic analysis **Tseko Nell** said in a speech.

“Mining is the largest generator of solid waste and has direct and indirect impact on the air, water, land and biological resources...and new business is unlikely to invest in areas where pollution from old mining dumps are still threatening.”

As a result, the department is spending “millions of rands” on the rehabilitation and management of derelict and ownerless mines, he said.

Some 6 000 mines around South Africa have already been identified, and the DME has contracted the Council for Geosciences to develop a national strategy for the management of these mines.

The national strategy will look at the development and maintenance of a national data base of these mines, and would continuously update this database.

The second aim of the strategy will be to rank the mines in order of their potential impact on the health and safety of the surrounding communities, as well as the environmental implications.

The DME is also developing a draft strategy for regional mine closure in the Witwatersrand and Kosh gold mine areas, in an effort to resolve the issue of integrated and accumulative environmental impacts.

Nell said that the closure of one mine in these areas could directly affect the closure of another, and that the mines were often inter-dependent on pumping infrastructure to operate underground workings.

“Over and above this, large complexes of mines within a single catchment area may have accumulated and integrated the impact on their shared environment, in such a manner that it is difficult or even impossible to apportion liability to any particular mine.”

He added that the closure regions would be promulgated, and mines in the area would be required to amend their individual closure plans to comply with an agreed

regional strategy for the area.

“The aim of regional mine closure is to prevent or minimise adverse long-term environmental defects, and to create a self-sustaining natural ecosystem. Mine closure in these areas, without regional closure strategy, not only results in negative social and economic impacts, but would also be severely detrimental to the immediate and surrounding physical environment.”