

Safety Alert

Three recent incidents involving rising water on work parties, highlight the need for a more coordinated approach to the planning of works by our people and our contractors.

What happened?

On three separate occasions, we have had workers in waterways when water levels have risen quickly and unexpectedly. In one of these incidents, the cause was environmental, due to rainfall in another part of the catchment, forcing the work to be abandoned and plant and equipment demobilised rapidly. In the two other incidents, operational asset releases resulted in rising water levels with people having to evacuate the river urgently.

What did we learn?

These incidents indicate areas requiring greater focus when planning, managing or conducting work – the need is heightened when contractors or multiple work fronts are active. Key areas to highlight are:

- Work planning and communication
- Monitoring and alarming of water changes
- Greater consideration given for isolation controls.

We all have a part to play in the planning of work. Production staff have a great perspective on the ground, and support staff have access to information that can be a real asset in understanding the effects and outcomes of environmental conditions and operations. Contractors will need to be aware of our workplace environment and communicate their plan for safe work and response to changing conditions. We need to all operate from the same page.

Always ensure good communication across the board when planning and managing works, involving all relevant stakeholders. Account for unexpected operational and environmental effects, and address these in any emergency response or contingency planning.

Bullet point lessons

- Seek support with planning of work from the right people.
- Offer support when you know of work being planned.
- Communicate – with all relevant stakeholders and contractors regarding areas of operation, work scope, and any changes in SOP or previously agreed-upon operating parameters.
- Where necessary and appropriate, consider the weather when workers are known to be in a waterway or an area that sees the operational effect