

# Green Topics\*

## Spotlight on the EMEM Awards

The EMEM Awards of the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) were formally launched on 3 March 2000 by Ms Susan Shabangu, Deputy Minister at the Department's Mineralia Centre in Pretoria. The launch was attended by invited guests from the mining and aggregate industries, representatives of the Patron Organisations (see below), non-government and scientific organizations, the media, other government departments involved with mining environmental management and members of staff of the DME both nationally and regionally.

The EMEM (pronounced em-em) Awards System has been developed by the DME to promote Excellence in Mining Environmental Management. In this the Department has been, and continues to be advised and assisted by the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), the South African Chapter of the International Association for Impact Assessment, and the Mine Water Division of the Water Institute of South Africa (WISA) as invited patrons. Other important players are the Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of South Africa (ASPASA) who have had the experience of setting up their own environmental awards, non-government organizations (NGOs) such as the Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM), scientific organizations as above and those government departments having a major interest in the impact of mining on the environment—namely the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAFF), the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and the National Department of Agriculture.

### Background

Quoting from the DME's EMEM Awards brochure:-

Mining is an essential part of development and is an activity of primary economic importance in South Africa. However, it has an unfortunate image of being a destructive activity. Many mine operators have however adopted a more positive and pro-active approach to environmental management. As a result there are many operators whose mining operations not only reflect environmental responsibility but excel in this regard. There is a need to stimulate and promote such performance in a manner that is not dependent on the command and control regulatory approach.

Mining legislation in South Africa incorporates binding obligations relevant to environmental management and the requirements for effective environmental management are continually being reviewed to ensure improvement. In particular through the Minerals Act, 1991, a mining operator is required to submit and to comply with the conditions specified in an approved environmental management programme (EMP) until closure is granted. The

EMP must be based on a thorough understanding of the environmental impacts of the project and must incorporate the requirements of all other laws pertaining to the environment.

Awards for excellence in environmental management in the mining industry have been implemented successfully in other countries and it has undoubtedly assisted in raising public awareness of what today's mining industry can do to ensure the integrity of the environment within which it operates. Although other organizations have presented environmental awards in South Africa, these either do not cater exclusively for the mining industry or for the total mining industry. Certain award systems focus primarily on safety and health. The environmental award system required for the mining industry in South Africa needs to be more specifically and generally orientated to suit the requirements of the whole of the mining industry.

Through discussions with various role-players including the mining industry, other government departments and professional institutions the development and implementation of the EMEM Awards system for excellence in environmental management has been accepted and agreed upon. The Department of Minerals and Energy is appropriately structured to implement and manage the system.

### Emblem

At the culmination of her keynote address, the Deputy Minister unveiled the emblem of the EMEM Awards to the accompaniment of photographs taken for publicity and for television broadcast on 50/50. The awards emblem which is reproduced here is a composite wherein the triangle represents the aim of balanced and sustainable development and the circle, encompassing the leaf (environment), the headgear (mining) and the swallow in upward flight, conservation and the strive for excellence.

### Award categories

There are four award categories covering:-

- ▶ large open-cast operations (more than 500 000 tons moved per annum)
- ▶ small open-cast operations (less than 500 000 tons moved per annum)
- ▶ underground operations
- ▶ offshore operations.

Awards will be made at regional and national levels. Both will be on a biennial basis alternating with one another.

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This year nominations for Regional Awards will close on 31 August at each Regional Office. Nominations will be adjudicated and awards will be made to the winners of each category on dates towards the end of the year set by each Regional Office.

The winning entry in each category from each region will be sent forward in the following and each succeeding alternate year (i.e. 2001, 2003 .. etc) for adjudication for National EMEM Awards.

Presentation of the National Awards is planned to take place at a prestigious event towards the end of each of those years.

### Nominations

Nominations can be made by individuals, interested and affected parties, mining companies, professional bodies, consultants or government officials. Nominations must be made on the printed nomination form available together with a brochure on the awards from the DME offices countrywide. Nominations for Regional Awards this year will close on 31 August at Regional Offices.

### Management structure

The DME has set up an EMEM Awards Steering Committee on which all the organizations discussed above are represented and to which the Regional and National Adjudication Panels will report. On account of its size, its members have elected a smaller Executive Committee to make recommendations and to draft documentation for approval by the Steering Committee. At this stage the basics have been implemented but the Executive Committee involving the DME, representatives of the Patron Organisations and of ASPASA is still finalizing the adjudication criteria in time for the closing date at the end of August.

In addition, and this is an area of specific responsibility for our Institute, an Administrative and Financial Control Subcommittee of the Steering Committee has been set up with the responsibility of organizing and funding, through sponsorship, the award ceremonies with particular emphasis on the national event at the end of next year and each alternate year thereafter.

The SAIMM office is well positioned to offer his service. It has the administrative resources and the experience of organizing and financing prestigious events. It also can provide a repository for funds to be used for such events, separate from those budgeted and administered by the DME.

The launch of the EMEM Awards is a major step forward in encouraging excellence in mining environmental management and deserves the full support of Institute members and full participation by the mining industry.

For further information contact Mr Willie van Zyl or Ms Elize Swart at the DME's office at Private Bag X59, Pretoria, 0001 or Telephone (012) 317-9190 or Fax (012) 320-6786.

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