

# DE BEERS

A DIAMOND IS FOREVER

**Media Release:** Johannesburg Tuesday 22 May 2012

## **Rescue underway following illegally excavated tunnel collapse trapping seven or more people in Namaqualand**

De Beers and Namaqualand Mines management expressed their shock today (Tuesday 22 May) following an accident that trapped seven (7) or more people in illegally excavated tunnels. The illegal diggers were working in the Bontekoe area on the northern boundary of Namaqualand Mines and State owned land. The Mine management responded as soon as they were alerted and have been at the site since early this morning.

We can confirm this evening that one person has been rescued and taken to hospital, and six or more people are being searched for. The rescue team is still carefully excavating the collapsed tunnels to investigate whether more people are trapped.

This rescue operation undertaken today was strengthened by a Rescue Brigade proto-team. At midday the South African Police Services Disaster Recovery Unit arrived from Kimberley and took charge of the site. The Department of Mineral Resources was informed of the accident and their officials were present at the operation.

The Company remains deeply concerned that people are illegally digging and thereby endangering themselves. The Mine is managing a situation where groups of people are knowingly entering mine property, destroying fences, ignoring signage, evading arrest, transporting mining equipment and undertaking the dangerous excavation of tunnels which have proven to be unsafe and have in fact cost the lives of illegal diggers in the past. The Mine has requested trespassers and illegal diggers to leave the Mine and the authorities have apprehended trespassers and illegal diggers.

As recently as last week the Mine management continued communicating the dangers and illegal nature of these mining activities on Namaqualand regional radio and in local community discussions.

A further statement will be issued if new developments occur.

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