SANIRE
SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ROCK ENGINEERING

ROCK talk

Volume 12, Issue 1 | April 2026

SANIRE
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CONTENTS

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1. SANIRE WEBSITE

- Visit www.sanire.co.za to apply for membership.

2. APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP

- On the SANIRE website click on **JOIN SANIRE** under the QUICK LINKS TAB to create a profile.

3. CREATE A PROFILE

- Complete all your personal details and click on **PROCEED**. Wait to receive your login details.

4. LOGIN DETAILS

- The login details, including your username and password will be sent to your email. Login to the **MyMembership portal** to complete your profile.

5. MYMEMBERSHIP PORTAL

- Once you have logged in, click on the **Become a Member tab** and follow the prompts to complete your application.

6. PROPOSER AND SECONDER

- For a Membership application you will be required to add the name and membership number of a proposer and seconder, who must be members of SANIRE. Contact: **prudence@sanire.co.za** if you require assistance.

7. APPLICATION FEEDBACK

- Once you have completed the application process the Administrator will review your application and provide feedback.

SANIRE Membership Application Guidelines

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Members

This being our first newsletter for 2026, I am please to give an update on SANIRE matters and issues impacting our members. SANIRE continues to implement the strategies indicated in the previous AGM which are all intended to benefit our members. In the quarter ending we have had some high and lows and endeavour to improve where we see the gaps.

In the first quarter we have launched a number of initiatives and made announcements on exciting upcoming events. The initiatives include the:

- Launch of the SANIRE Technical Nights that are rotated amongst the branches and Gauteng hosted the first successful one.
- Launch of the SANIRE Mentorship Program which has been received with excitement.
- Coal MinePillar Design workshop that occurred on the 25th and 26th of March, which is intended to give members insights into the latest design principles regarding coal pillar designs.
- The SANIRE Symposium Announcement has went and we urge members to participate by submitting abstracts to share their insights in the different areas of speciality.

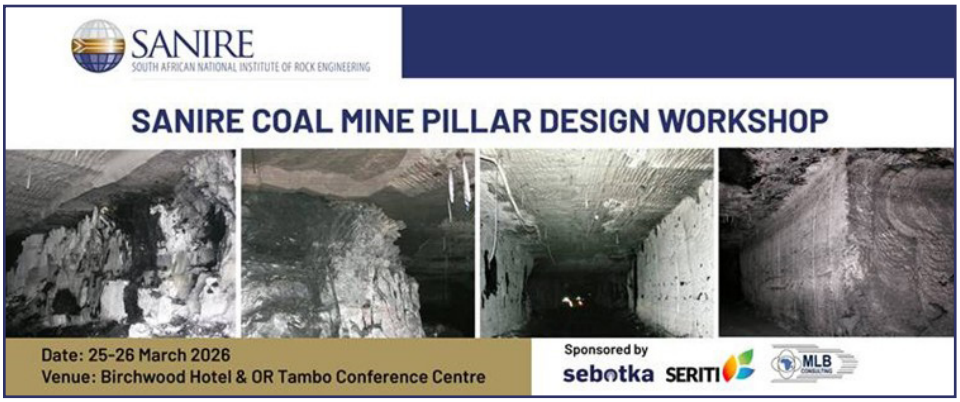
On the downside, following the postponement of the RMC exams in October 2025. The results of the subsequent exams in November were released in January by the Minerals Council South Africa. The pass rate across all exams remains a key concern for SANIRE and associated industries. In light of the concern, the MQA has also established the Candidacy, Rock Engineering and Seismology Task Team (CRESTT) aimed at establishing the challenges and possible solutions. SANIRE is an active participant in the task team and hope to contribute in improving the certification process. Furthermore, MCSA and SANIRE will also have a workshop looking the current competency certificate process and how they can be improved to the outcomes.

SANIRE's mandate to promote the rock engineering profession by offering members a platform to access information and to network with likeminded professional. The aforementioned initiatives do exactly that. I urge members to take full advantage and capitals on this platforms, where still busy with exams or looking to further enhance your rock engineering knowledge's, these platforms will assist. Be on a look out for more announcements throughout the year and make time to participate.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, The South African National Institute of Rock Engineering Symposium is happening on 7th and 8th July, focusing on the expectations of rock engineering practitioners in the current times where the art of rock engineering "judgement" need to be balanced with the application of the latest technology to deliver sustainable solutions. Let's share how we are considering human behaviour in our designs and how is IA enabling us in making sound judgement. I look forward to a exciting and interesting paper.

Obakeng Rakumakoe

SANIRE President



SANIRE HONORARY TREASURER QUARTERLY UPDATE

Dear SANIRE Members

SANIRE Treasury Update – Q3 FY 2025/2026

We are pleased to announce that the 2024/2025 audit has been successfully completed, and the recommended actions are currently being implemented. A key outcome of the audit was the identification and recovery of outstanding debtor accounts. You may have noticed correspondence issued by the President to individuals and companies with old outstanding balances. If this does not apply to you, we kindly request that you provide SANIRE with proof of payment. This will enable us to reconcile records, close any outstanding balances, and ensure that all accounts remain accurate and in good standing.

As we begin the third quarter of the 2025/2026 financial year, we would like to provide an update on membership invoicing and payments. To date 365 members have been invoiced. A total of 159 members has paid for the membership fees. Below Is the outstanding payments per branch.

We plead and urge members to settle their fees. We extend our sincere thanks to those who have already renewed their membership for their continued support and contribution.

We remind all members that, in line with the SANIRE Constitution, membership fees are due by **31 December** each year. Members whose subscriptions remain unpaid beyond this date were considered not in good standing and received notices in the month **of March 2026.** Should there be queries regarding the notices received, please contact the office.

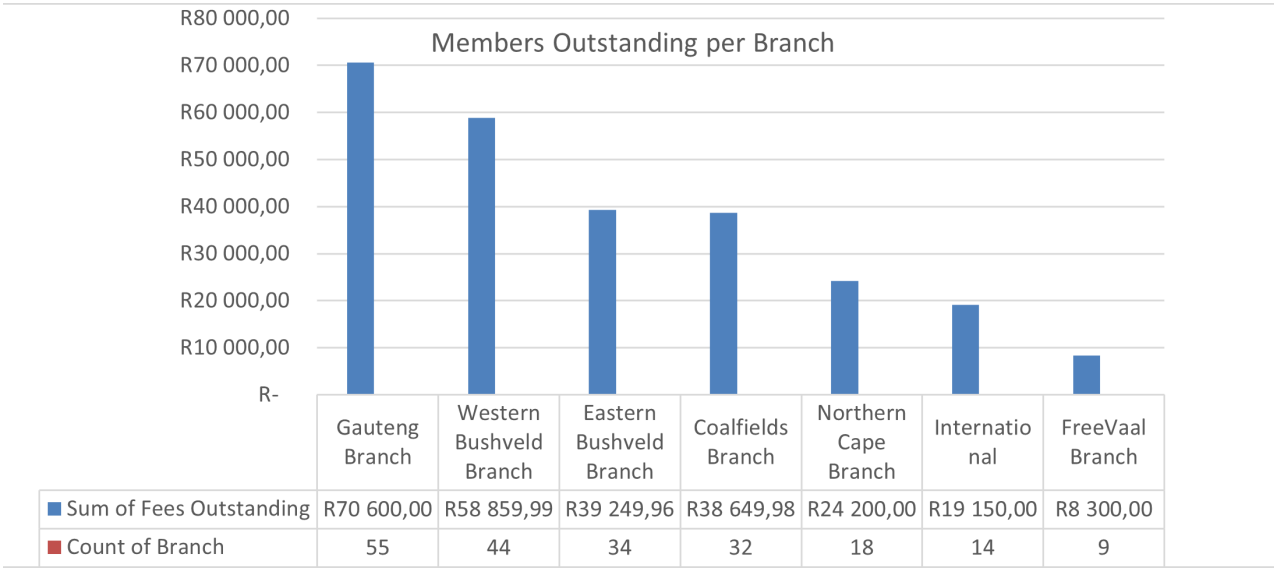
Your commitment to paying fees on time is vital in sustaining SANIRE's mission to serve the Rock Engineering community. Thank you once again to all who have renewed promptly, and we encourage those with outstanding balances to settle them to remain in good standing.

Glorious Nkosi

SANIRE Honorary Treasure

Treasury Tips:

Enhance Financial Communication with Members:
Transparent and empathetic communication is key. Acknowledge the economic challenges faced by members while reinforcing the importance of maintaining healthy accounts for the sustainability of the organization.



	Gauteng Branch	Western Bushveld Branch	Eastern Bushveld Branch	Coalfields Branch	Northern Cape Branch	International	FreeVaal Branch
Sum of Fees Outstanding	R70 600,00	R58 859,99	R39 249,96	R38 649,98	R24 200,00	R19 150,00	R8 300,00
Count of Branch	55	44	34	32	18	14	9

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EDUCATION BLOG

The November 2025 examinations presented a challenging assessment, reflected in the low overall pass rate. While this outcome is understandably disappointing for many candidates, it is important to recognise that the standard of the examination remains aligned with the expectations of the profession. Such results should not be viewed as a setback, but rather as an indication of the level of preparation and depth of understanding required.

Candidates are encouraged to use this experience constructively—identify gaps in knowledge, refine study approaches, and engage more thoroughly with the prescribed syllabi. With the May 2026 examinations approaching, there is sufficient time to prepare effectively and approach the next sitting with renewed focus and confidence. Consistent effort, disciplined preparation, and a clear understanding of examiner expectations will be key to success.

SANIRE FoGAP Education Program – Latest Updates

The Fall of Ground Action Plan (FoGAP) Education Program, a collaboration between SANIRE, the Minerals Council South Africa, and Flex Online, continues to drive progress in digital skills development for Rock Engineering professionals.

Key highlights over the last few weeks include:

- **SANIRE Academy Platform** – The platform is live, offering structured learning pathways for Rock Engineering practitioners.
- **Pathways for Learning** – Depending on your Rock Engineer education level, you can browse and select the appropriate "learning pathway" that you would like to embark on. Currently, there are three pathways available:
  - Strata Control Observer
  - Strata Control Practitioner
  - Geotechnical Engineering Practitioner
- **Accredited Training Proof of Concept**
  - SANIRE is currently in the development of a proof of concept (PoC), whereby the training, assessments/examinations and portfolio of evidence will be managed digitally through the SANIRE Academy platform.
  - The PoC is about to go through a robust Beta-testing phase, where a group of SANIRE member volunteers will be actively working with the SANIRE Academy platform, testing the qualification course work and the digital examinations for objective feedback.
- **Upcoming Learning Pathways** – Apart from the structured learning pathways currently on the Academy, curriculum development work is progressing on the following pathways:
  - Frontline Supervisor / Production Personnel
  - Hydrogeology
  - Drilling & Blasting
  - Data Analysis

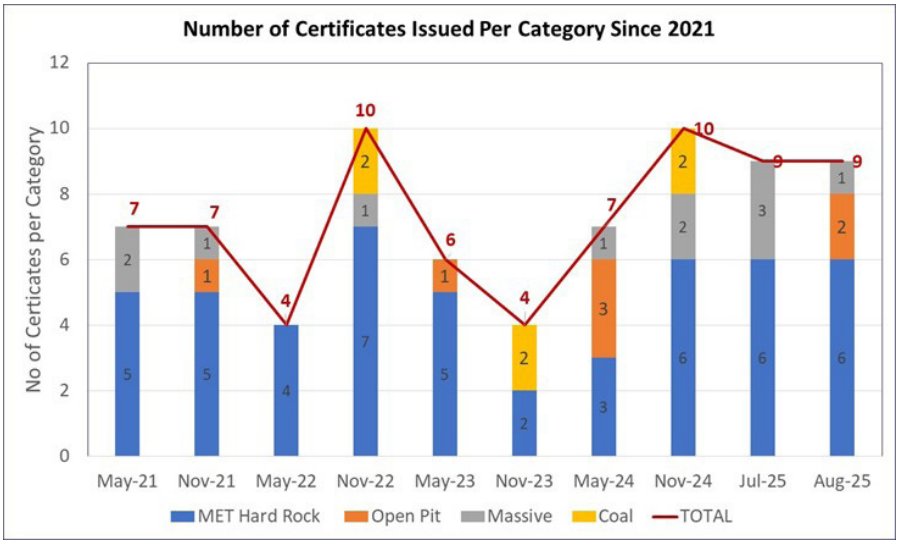
With 84% of registered SANIRE Members now being registered and active on the SANIRE Academy platform, our strong focus on scalability and accessibility to quality Rock Engineering education is taking shape!

Petrie Wessels
Education

Rock Engineering Certificate Practical Examination

A total of **52 candidates** participated in the Planning and/or Portfolio Practical Examinations in November/December 2025, reflecting an increase from 46 candidates in July 2025 and an all-time record. I'm also pleased to share that **9 Rock Mechanics Certificates** were awarded following the latest examinations, consistent with the number issued in July 2025. Congratulations to all the new Ticket Holders, including:

- 6 Met Hard Rock
- 2 Open Pit
- 1 Massive Mining



Reflection, Challenges & Risks

Despite the achievements outlined above, the pass rate for the Practical Examinations remains persistently low at 26% **(Table 1**), a figure that has shown little improvement over the past five years. This consistently low success rate is a concern, as it continues to limit the progression from Candidacy to qualified Rock Engineering Certificate Holders.

An **emerging and concerning** challenge is the low participation rate of Examiners, coupled with the growing number of candidates entering the examination process. This imbalance places significant pressure on the limited pool of Examiners, who are required to assess an increasing number of candidates while simultaneously managing their regular professional responsibilities. This situation presents a substantial risk to the sustainability and quality of the examination process and will be escalated to the SANIRE Council for urgent attention.

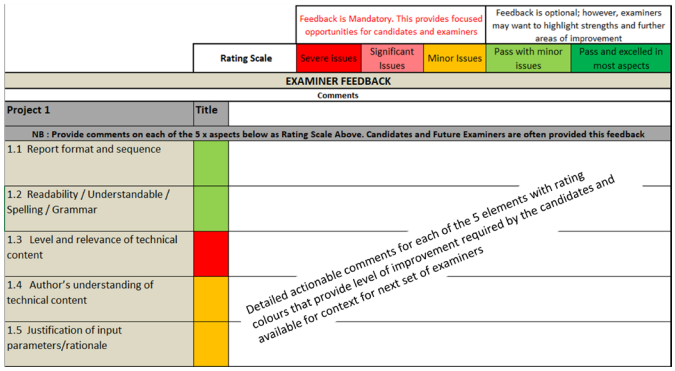
Table 1: Summary of Planning and Portfolio Results for the Nov/Dec 2025 Practical Examination

Planning Examination				Portfolio			
Category	Candidates	Passed	Pass Rate	Category	Candidates	Passed	Pass Rate
MET Hard Rock (Conv)	27	6	22%	MET Hard Rock	30	9	30%
MET Hard Rock (BP)	25	3	12%				
Open Pit	1	0	0%	Open Pit	3	2	67%
Coal	2	0	0%	Coal	2	0	0%
Massive	1	0	0%	Massive	2	1	50%
Coal	2	2	100%				
TOTAL	58	11	19%		37	12	32%
Average Pass Rate							26%

Portfolio Examination Rubric Enhancements

An **analytic rubric**, rather than holistic one, is used for assessment of three (3) portfolio reports provided by the candidates. Previously, only the final mark and consolidated examiner's feedback comments (when requested), were provided to the candidates. The process was **enhanced** in June 2025 where previous marks and comments were handed over to the next set of examiners to **improve consistency** between examinations.

Following various discussions with Candidates and Examiners during the 2025 examinations, a need was identified for **further enhancements** of the Portfolio Rubric to **provide specific actionable feedback** for candidates for each element of the portfolio that is examined. These levels tell candidates how they performed in each aspect, what they are expected to improve on.



Looking Ahead

Word of Thanks to Examiners. Moderators

I wish to acknowledge the **exceptional dedication** and hard work of the Planning and Portfolio **Examiners/ Moderators** listed below, who have invested their time and have worked with diligence and professionalism during the recent practical examinations.

In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to Mr. Jannie Maritz for providing the University of Pretoria as the location for the in-person planning examinations scheduled for 05 June 2026. I also wish to acknowledge our SANIRE Administrators, Ms. Prudence Ntumelang & Ms. Adivhaho Maphisa, for their diligent efforts in coordinating Examiners, Moderators, and Candidates, which has been crucial in ensuring the success of the Practical Examinations.

Thandile Dlokweni

SANIRE Council, Rock Engineering Practical Exams

ID	Examiner	Area	ID	Examiner	Area
1	Azwindini Makungo	Hardrock	26	Passion Pabwe	Open Pit
2	Billy Mashiatshiti	Open Pit	27	Pelonomi Gae	Massive
3	Buntu Tati	Hardrock	28	Phumza Banjwa	Massive
4	Chris Rademan	Hardrock	29	Rofhiwa Phadagi	Coal
5	Darlington Nkomo	Hardrock	30	Sampie van Buuren	Hardrock
6	Dewaldt van Rooyen	Hardrock	31	Sifiso Mashile	Hardrock
7	Fezekile Mosiane Nhlapo	Hardrock	32	Thokozani Mtshali	Massive
8	Francios van Rooyen	Hardrock	33	Trevor Walsh	Hardrock
9	Frikkie van Rooyen	Hardrock	34	Tshepo Mokele	Massive
10	Gerard Mark De Wee	Hardrock	35	Unathi Maqina	Hardrock
11	Godwin Hungwe	Hardrock	36	Yolanda Chambati	Massive
12	Herold Mohlala	Hardrock	37	Zanele Sithole	Coal
13	Hlomani Mthombeni	Hardrock			
14	Jonathan Jakata	Hardrock			
15	Kenneth Mathibela	Open Pit			
16	Kulani Makhubele	Hardrock			
17	Mandla Mazibuko	Coal			
18	Mbulelo Ngwenya	Hardrock			
19	Melusi Shongwe	Hardrock			
20	Mitch Wiggins	Hardrock			
21	Mongezi Magwaza	Massive			
22	Mqondisi Mahlangu	Hardrock			
23	Neo Ndlovu	Hardrock			
24	Nkhangweni Ratshitaka	Massive			
25	Nondumiso Nkosi	Hardrock			

SANIRE BRANCH Contributons
Gauteng Branch

Greetings from the Gauteng Branch

On 5 March 2026, the SANIRE Gauteng Branch hosted its first Technical Night of the year at the School of Mining Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand. The evening brought together members for an engaging and enjoyable session focused on professional growth, technical learning and industry connection.

The presenter for the evening was **Ms Yolanda Chambati** from Gold Fields, who delivered an insightful talk on the theme **"Becoming a Rock Engineer"**. Her presentation explored the typical career path in rock engineering, the commitment required to grow in the profession, and the courses and development route involved in becoming an Advanced Rock Engineering Certificate holder. She shared valuable reflections on the pathway to becoming a successful rock engineer, offering both guidance and encouragement to students and practitioners at different stages of their careers. The evening began with an interactive online quiz based on strata control questions, which served as an excellent icebreaker. The activity created a lively atmosphere, encouraged participation, and added an element of fun and friendly competition to the event.

In addition to the technical presentation, attendees also had the opportunity to hear from Leica, together with MDA, who shared insights into InSAR monitoring and its applications. This sponsorship contribution added further value to the evening by exposing members to current technologies and monitoring solutions relevant to the rock engineering field.

The event was rounded off with food, drinks and plenty of conversation and laughter, creating a warm and welcoming environment for networking and engagement. It was a fitting start to the Gauteng Branch calendar and reflected the strong sense of community within SANIRE.

We extend our sincere thanks to Ms Yolanda Chambati for sharing her experience and knowledge, and to Leica and MDA for their valued sponsorship and contribution to the evening's programme.

Ohveshlan Pillay
Gauteng Branch Chairperson

BRANCH COMMITTEES 2025 - 2026

Coalfields Branch

Chairperson: Zanele Sithole
Vice Chairperson: Mandlenkosi Mazibuko
Treasurer: Mamokete Mokoena and Willem Liebenberg
Secretary: Uzi Makhode
Technical Events Coordinator: Khathutshelo Sigwadi
Education, Research and Development Officer: Katekani Mohlabe

Eastern Bushveld Branch

Chairperson: Narisha Siriram
Vice Chairperson: Melusi Shongwe
Treasurer: Vhutshilo Nemalili
Secretary: Karabo Phala
Youth Development Representative: Olebogeng Tshikane
Suppliers Representative: Daniel Tshwene

Free-Vaal Branch

Chairperson: Louis Lochner
Vice Chairperson: Thapelo Mangali
Secretary: Sekete Maketekete
Treasurer: Pierre Spies
Young Members: Tumi Moyake
Supplier Representative: Jacques Lubbe

Gauteng Branch

Chairperson: Yolanda Chambati
Vice Chairperson: Gerald Gainsford
Secretary/Treasurer: Akshay Sewcharan
Education: Dr Richard Masethe
Technical Events Coordinator: Katinka Cartes
Supplier Representative: Wynand Greyling

Northern Cape Branch

Chairperson: Vuma Nokwe
Vice Chairperson: Asivhanga Malovhel
Treasurer: Mosa Makwela
Administrator: Eveline Kekana
Youth Development Representative: Naledi Letlape
Supplier Representative: Ikaneng Marungwana

Western Bushveld Branch

Chairperson: Unathi Maqina
Vice Chairperson: Moses Modika
Treasurer: Annie van Niekerk
Secretary: Kelebogile Phologane
Vice Secretary: Neil Kruger
Supplier Representative: Stefan Nel
Young Member Representative: Renard Pretorius
Technical Visits Representative: Neil Kruger

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2026 Mentoring Programme: Bridging the Gap

The South African National Institute of Rock Engineering (SANIRE) is excited to introduce the 2026 Mentoring Programme. As a cornerstone of the SANIRE CARES initiative, this programme is designed to foster a supportive community within the institute and accelerate the professional growth of our junior members.

The Challenge: Moving from SCO to RE

Many Strata Control Officers (SCOs) and Graduates find themselves "stuck" in operational roles, “counting sticks and bolts”, lacking the Geotechnical design experience necessary to attain the Rock Mechanics Certificate. The 2026 programme bridges this gap by providing consistent, one-to-one guidance from experienced rock Engineering professionals.

Key Benefits to Participants

- **Knowledge Transfer:** Learn to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world application, with focused help on technical reports and exam preparation.
- **Career Navigation:** Gain strategic insights into career progression and how to transition into strategic rock engineering design.
- **Networking:** Expand your professional reach by connecting with senior industry leaders and peers

Who Can Apply?	
The programme is open to dedicated professionals in good standing within the industry.	
For Mentees (The Driver)	**For Mentors (The Guide)**
Graduates & SCOs (< 35 years old).	Holder of a Rock Mechanic or Advanced Rock Mechanics Certificate.
Currently working in the mining industry and in position of the SCO Certificate recently qualified for RMC	Minimum of 7 years' working experience.
Clear desire to become a Rock Engineer.	At least 3 years in a management or influential role.
For Mentees (The Driver)	**For Mentors (The Guide)**
Willingness to lead their own development and receive feedback.	Genuine interest in coaching and growing others

1. **Registration (Jan - Feb 2026):** Online application period.
2. **Matching (Feb 2026):** Selection and pairing by the committee.
3. **Orientation (31 Mar 2026):** Official kick-off and training session.
4. **Mentorship (Apr - Nov 2026):** A minimum of 4 formal mentoring interactions.
5. **Graduation (Dec 2026):** Final certification and recognition.

Get in Touch with Your Branch Representative

Programme Manager: Thovhedzo Gcuda
thovhedzo@drtglobalcons.com

Coalfields: Katekani Mohlabe
katekani.mohlabe@overlooked.co.za

Northern Cape: Naledi Letlape
naledi.letlape@angloamerican.com

Free Vaal: Tumi Moyake
tumi.moyake@harmony.co.za

Western Bushveld: Renard Pretorius
Renard.Pretorius@sibanyestillwater.com

Eastern Bushveld: Olebogengeng Tshikane olebogeng
tshikane@norplats.co.za

General Inquiries:
Programme Manager: Thovhedzo Gcuda
thovhedzo@drtglobalcons.com

SANIRE Administrator: Prudence Ntumelang
prudence@sanire.co.za

ROCK talk

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Members are encouraged to send their comments to be added on this blog

Full Names: Jeanne Walls

Company: Principal Geotechnical Engineer, AMC Consultants (Pvt) Ltd

ROCK TALK – A Perspective or An Opinion

It crossed my thinking, when considering a theme to submit for the newsletter, that the name of this bulletin, which is excellent and remains a testament to our rock engineering industry network, carries in its very title, the essence by which we develop our knowledge and baseline for what we do as rock mechanics engineers (geotechnical engineers for hard rock extraction – call it what you will).

If we can indulge a little semantic rabbit hole for a moment: "Rock Talk" – talking about all things "rocky", starting with ourselves, i.e. the "rockies" : this is definitely a contributor to why we love reading this bulletin; people. We love ourselves and each other – in a good way, of course! And we should, we are people, we network, we have positive constructive objectives to working together. There is no other way to function, to put it simply.

Also, "Rock Talk" – talking about the stuff that gives us the substance for what we do. Talking about rocks. We love rocks (even if we don't, we say we do, and that's fine). We share our knowledge, we build our understanding and develop new insights this way. And we must do this.

But there is a third semantic that seems to have become drowned out in the sound of our own talking: "Rock Talk" – when the rock does the talking. We've all heard the phrase in some form or other, "the rock is talking", i.e. a warning sign before it responds in a way that requires our urgent attention – back break collapse, seismic activity, dust trickling before a wedge or roof failure.

But the rock "talks" much more than this. It seems, perhaps, that in the imminent moments, when the rock "talks" in a way that portents failure, this is when the rock has been talking for a long time already, and no one has listened or responded, or responded appropriately, and now it is shouting. It's the last line of "rock talking" before it goes into failure.

To stress the point, how have we not realised that the "rock talk" that we refer to, i.e. the "spitting", the audible crackling, the dust precursor indications, is not "talk" at all, it's the moment when the rock is screaming so loudly that we can't help but hear it, and if we're smart, listen to it.

So what kind of "rock talking" is there for us to listen to? And why are we so bad at listening to the rock long before it has to start screaming and shouting at us for us to listen? Certainly this opinion piece will only offer a few bits of food for thought – it's a scope of discussion that fits into textbooks and more.

We've learned that listening to each other, letting each other talk, hearing what we have to say, is how we build relationships, how we build teams, trust, how we live and work together, without screaming and shouting and dropping rocks (metaphorically) on each other. And of course, if we don't listen to each other, we may end up dropping rocks onto each other in a more real sense. And so, we've learned that listening, listening when we are talking, not shouting, is how we learn to understand, anticipate and positively, constructively respond interactively, become engaged and work together for our collective wellbeing.

How, then, is it not equally material to be as diligently invested in hearing what the rocks have to say, even – especially – when they're not shouting?

Of course, all of that leads to what we know, and the smart ones reading this will have got there three paragraphs

back already , i.e. monitoring.

And here is where it gets so very nuanced. “Monitoring” – the catch-all for passive listening. Get some monitoring in and we’re done, sorted. The relationship equivalent of the “yes, dear”. But just like you’re probably going to blow it if you give your partner or colleague a dismissive “yes, dear”, i.e. meaning, “I’ve heard you now, given you what you want, can you just shut up and stop hassling me so that I can go back to my big important job”, or whatever it is that’s so important to us that we’d rather the rock just shut up and behave itself so that we can go on with whatever we think we need to do to make the job run.

But listening is so much more than that. First off, it’s silence from us, when we’re used to doing the talking. But second off, and this is the true value of listening, it’s knowing how and when to respond. Listening is so much more than just shutting up so that the rock can do its talking and then we give it a nice green tick to say, “heard”, job done. It’s about responding. How to respond, and when to respond.

The action and the timing are separate, and only work when they come together. And no one can act timeously if they don’t stop to listen.

We’ve become quite good at proactively reducing rock fall accidents over the last few decades, since the value of workers’ lives has driven a step up in mining and rock mechanics strategies for prevention rather than emergency reaction. We’ve similarly become quite good at bolstering the rigour of ground support to ensure reliable rock mass stability both short-term (leading face advance) and long-term (permanent accessways and infrastructure).

But the trade-off for inadequate listening (to the rock) is inefficient ground support and inefficient or ineffective ground stability management practices, including timeous proactive responsiveness instead of reactive measures. This means that conservativism may be impeding optimisation, and the opportunity to reduce material costs and increase productivity is only partially realised. Safety is effectively guaranteed because the support system is robust and reliable, and this is unquestionably given as a good thing; but we’re using double the fuel simply because we’re not aware of the best way to drive this road. Similarly, the inverse may be happening, i.e. actual conditions creeping closer and closer to critical threshold, being unaware that the overall functioning may be at, say, FOS $\leq$ 1.3, instead of FOS $\geq$ 1.5 (for example), i.e. less tolerance for variance in conditions, and less buffer between maintaining current practices and encountering a failure. Response capability is diminished, and we all know what that means for accidents.

The spectrum of monitoring is wide. Data gathering, interpretation and reporting takes many forms. Instrumented continuous monitoring through the use of installed electronic and communication networks, and analysis of visual rock mass characterisation from advancing headings. These all form components of monitoring.

Real listening never stops. Real listening is both hearing and responding. All the time. The only way to be “in tune” with the people around you is to listen and respond, interact, learn to understand each other by asking questions, provide some insights according to your own interpretation and knowledge, determine where you might have gone wrong, misunderstood your colleague or your partner, and adapt and adjust your interaction with that person, or team.

The rock is exactly the same. For those of us who understand the Earth, and thereby the bones of the Earth, to be the same living beings as the universe, the concept of listening and building a relationship with the rock is easy.

For those that are less esoterically connected to the concept of a living breathing Earth with rocks for bones, speak to the data. Let the data do the work for you. Watch, learn, listen, using your eyes, your instruments, technology; interpret and understand. Trial solutions, test responses, and adapt to what the rock is telling you. It requires investment, real investment. Time, money and work to monitor, listen and obtain data, interpret the data, test the data, and build a bespoke solution, is an investment. Just like any real relationship, mistakes may be made but functional longevity is only achieved by investment.

Long before the rock needs to start shouting, spitting high stress relief fragments, showering dust, cracking and crackling, there is a whole conversation to be had just if we listen to where we hear the rock whisper. Well-defined precursor behaviour to damaging events is an area that remains open with great scope to determine patterns and indications to intercept and prevent large failures, if we monitor and listen more.

“Rock Talk” may begin to mean so much more.

Stay safe, mine safe.

ROCK talk

THE NEXT ROCK Star

Full Names: Akshay Sewcharan

Company: Goldfields South Africa

Designation: Supervisor Strata Control Officer

Date of Birth: 1st of February 1995

Educational Qualification: BSc (Honours) Engineering Geology

First Job: Young Graduate Geotech

1. **What would you consider as your biggest career faux pas to date and what lesson/s have you learned from it?** Coming on too strong as a fresh graduate. When one is young and recently qualified, one may push ideas or ideals that are theoretical, not practical. The lesson learned is to respect the experience of others and if you listen, you will definitely learn something. Remain humble and open to learning.
2. **What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning?** My South Deep team. We rely upon each other, so to show up, shows care. This duty as an SCO given to me is not something to be taken lightly. I have a role to play in keeping my fellow workers safe and discharging my role to the best of my ability contributes to the safety of others.
3. **What is your favourite quote (why)?** "A wounded lion does not fear death; it just makes him more lethal" -Matshona Dhliwayo. It symbolizes that despite suffering injuries, losses, or extreme fatigue, one's fundamental strength and identity remain. The resilience of the human spirit is unbreakable.
4. **What is your personal song (why)?** A personal song/mantra of mine is a verse from the Bhagavad Gita where the Lord says: "You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action." Meaning that you cannot always control the outcome of your endeavours, hence, perform your duty to the best of your ability and leave the rest to God.
5. **What is your favourite movie?** The Dark Knight Rises. Philanthropist billionaire Bruce Wayne becomes the Dark Knight. A crime fighting vigilante with deeply seated moral values. He has dropped quotes such as "The night is darkest before dawn" and "It is not who I am under the mask, but what I do that defines me." He shows that even in the darkest of times, hope springs eternal. The movie also shows one that anyone can be a hero, by doing the little things that matter.
6. **If the story of your life were to become a biopic, what would the title be?** Seismic Ascent: Rising from the Deep.
7. **If the story of your life were to become a biopic, which famous actor or actress would play you?** The one and only, Leonardo DiCaprio. The man oozes intensity, realism, and emotional depth.
8. **What is the best vacation you have been to or plan on going to?** The best Vacation I have been on was to Bali. Such a beautiful island, with epic scenery, a tropical climate, and a vibrant culture. The people of the land are warm and hospitable.
9. **Do you have a favourite newspaper, blog?** A Vlogger by the name of Veritasium. He uncovers the world of mathematics and physics with a curious mind, showing how far humanity has progressed as a result of paradigm shifting discoveries.
10. **How do you unwind?** In this industry, it is difficult to shut off. However, one has to calm the mind to think clearly. Some of my favourite activities include hiking, Mantra Meditation and Gaming.
11. **What is your greatest fear?** Being in a position in which I could have done something to help someone or save a life but not doing so and hearing about it later.
12. **What is your hidden talent?** I play a traditional percussion instrument which has a rich ancient history.
13. **What is the one thing that very few people know about you?** I am an introverted extrovert. I may come across as shy and reserved until the ice is broken.
14. **If you could interview one person (dead or alive) who would that be (why)?** I would interview Elon Musk because he consistently pushes the boundaries of what is possible. His ability to think beyond conventional limits and create disruptive, 'earth-shaking' innovations aligns with my interest in impactful problem-solving. I would want to learn how he approaches risk, failure, and long-term

vision.

15. **If you could only drink one beer/cocktail for the rest of your life, what would it be?** A mango lassi. It is an Indian drink with fresh mango and yoghurt.
16. **If you were an animal, what would you be (why)?** An apex predator: The Golden Eagle. The fastest of its kind. A true hunter, built with attributes such as raw power, lightning speed, and incredible eyesight. This animal uses all of its ability to survive and thrive in an incredibly competitive environment. The lesson is to use your talents and skills to be the best version one can be.
17. **If you were on death row, what would your last meal be?** My last meal would be nothing short of spectacular: Butter paneer with basmati rice, garlic naan and a potato dish called aloo jalfrezi.
18. **What do you want to be remembered for?** For being kind. When we leave this world, few would remember the material riches that we have accumulated, but many will remember how they we treated them.
19. **If you were stuck on an island what three things would you bring?** If I were stuck on an island, I would bring a multi- tool, a satellite phone, and a reliable water purification system. The multi-tool would help me build shelter and handle basic survival tasks, the satellite phone would give me a way to call for rescue, and the water purifier would ensure I have safe drinking water. Together, these cover the essentials: safety, sustainability, and a path to getting off the island.
20. **If you were a rockstar, what would your stage name be?** The Rhyme Minister or Dr. DetoNAte.
21. **Growing up, what was your dream career?** My dream career was to be an educator. I had a close bond to my primary school teacher who always went above and beyond for us kids. She was the epitome of an excellent teacher—brilliant, patient, and genuinely caring, a model I strive to live by.
22. **Why did you choose Rock Engineering as a career?** The discipline is a fascinating one. I thoroughly enjoyed my rock mechanics modules in university as it was extremely practical with tangible real-world applications. It piqued my interest as a fresher because of it's ability to tackle really complex problems at varying magnitudes of scale. It is also a relatively young discipline which indicates that there are so many opportunities to research and discover new ways of doing things.
23. **What are 3 words to describe Rock Engineering?** Ground-breaking, Complex and Critical.
24. **What do you find the most challenging in Rock Engineering?** It is, at times, difficult to strike a balance between an ideal support regime and practicality. One has to consider the cost, the ability of mining crews as well as the ground conditions.
25. **What do you like most about Rock Engineering?** The interdisciplinary nature of this discipline. One has to interact and collaborate with other technical departments to find an appropriate solution. This allows you to see things from a different aspect and shows one how the different pieces of the puzzle fit together in order to achieve a target. Team work makes the dream work.
26. **What are some areas that you believe will become of increasing importance in the near future of the rock engineering discipline?** Seismicity. The pursuit of precious metals has led to mining at unprecedented depths. This coupled with seismically active structures poses a real threat to the health and safety to those who work in these environments. As such, the understanding of seismicity becomes critically important. Machine learning and artificial intelligence may offer a viable means to predict these events, leading to an effective early warning system. Another area to be considered is robotics/automation. If we are able to remove personnel from hazardous mining environments, we can effectively achieve zero harm.
27. **What is your view on the continued loss of critical Rock Engineering skill in South Africa?** Rock Engineering is a scarce skill. The loss of this critical skill is problematic. The brain-drain is real. With those who have pioneered and this discipline now in their retirement years, as well as foreign countries luring skilled personnel away with attractive offers, it poses a challenge in maintaining the safe operation of our mines in a rock engineering context.
28. **What solutions would you propose to abate this looming problem?** We need to cultivate and nurture young talent. Enable those who are busy with their tickets with courses and developmental programs to allow them to gain the necessary skills to become competent rock engineers. We have to also encourage young minds to take up this discipline by creating interest in the field at a high school level. We need to change the perception that the past has created about mining environments and show that this discipline has merit and has changed the landscape of the industry for the good.
29. **Who is your role model/mentor? What is the best advice you have ever been given?** Yolanda Chambati. The best advice she has given me was that an opportunity must find you prepared. She has always encouraged me to push boundaries and think big.
30. **What advice would you give to someone who wants to choose Rock Engineering as a career?** Take up this discipline formally. Study it through an institution and bring that knowledge and apply it in a real-world setting. Always be open to learning. If you are the smartest person in a room, then you are in the wrong room. This industry still has rare gems of well-experienced, subject matter experts. Find one, learn from them, grow with them, and always remain teachable.

Editors blog:

Rock engineering demands persistence, patience, and courage, and those still pursuing certification should see their struggles as part of building true mastery and intuition over time. For those already practicing, the role goes beyond applying knowledge to shaping safety, innovation, and the future of the discipline through continuous learning and contribution. Ultimately, whether learning or leading, success in rock engineering relies on round purpose,mental resilience, preparations, a commitment to growth, and a dedication to advancing knowledge for the benefit of others.

Dr Richard Masethe

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