

Does your emergency control room meet the law?

The nine minimum requirements that regulation 16.5(1)(j) places on **every underground mine** — and the question to ask about each.

On **28 March 2025**, Chapter 16 of the Mine Health and Safety Regulations was replaced in full by Notice 6052, *Government Gazette* No. 52388. It commenced the day it was gazetted, with no transition period. For the first time it prescribes **minimum requirements for an underground mine's emergency control room**, and it names the holder of the **Mine Manager's certificate** as the person who must control that room at all times. The nine requirements below sit under regulation 16.5(1), which opens: "*The employer at every underground mine must—*".

Nothing in Chapter 16 obliges you to buy a screen. It obliges you to be able to run a rescue from a room — under a certificated manager, with two independent communication paths and a defensible log. Score yourself honestly below: not what your code of practice says, but what is in the room right now.

REGULATION 16.5(1)(J) — EMERGENCY CONTROL ROOM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS · UNDERGROUND MINES

#	WHAT THE REGULATION REQUIRES	THE QUESTION TO ASK	YES	NO
i	An up-to-date copy of the mine ventilation and rescue plan (reg 17.19) for any area that could be affected by a possible emergency.	Is it current, and is it physically in the room?	☐	☐
ii	A communication system enabling effective communication from the control room to a potential fresh air base.	When was it last tested end to end?	☐	☐
iii	A communication system independent of the one used to the emergency or fresh air base, from which the mine can communicate to outside parties.	Independent of what, exactly? Same PABX or same power is not independent.	☐	☐
iv	An emergency communication system with a different ring tone to any other system, so the operator immediately identifies an emergency call.	Can your controller tell, in the first half-second, that this call is the one that matters?	☐	☐
v	The room under the control, at all times, of a competent person holding the Mine Manager's certificate (reg 2.5(2)(1)), trained by a mines rescue service provider.	Who is that at 02:00 on a Sunday? Is the control room management certificate current — it expires every three years.	☐	☐
vi	An appointed competent person who records all sequence of events and all instructions given by the person in control.	What does the room produce at 04:00 that an inspector could rely on at an inquiry? A logbook completed afterwards is not a record of a sequence.	☐	☐
vii	All relevant mine personnel for the area in which the emergency exists available for consultation if required.	Reachable, or actually in the room?	☐	☐
viii	A written list of all known and anticipated hazards and risks in and around the emergency area, with ways of addressing them, given to everyone assisting before operations commence.	Pre-compiled, or written during the emergency?	☐	☐
ix	Only persons authorised by the person in control, and directly involved with the emergency, present in the control room.	Who controls the door when senior visitors arrive?	☐	☐

ALSO NEW IN CHAPTER 16 — INCLUDING THE ONE THAT REACHES SURFACE OPERATIONS

16.7	Missing Person Locator System — no person may go underground without an intrinsically safe device giving their last known location. The system must have a data logging facility, and the device must always be worn on the body.	Where is that data displayed, and who is watching it?	☐	☐
16.5	(2)(i)–(j) — a mines rescue service provider must run a control room management course and issue a certificate, renewable every three years.	Whose certificate expires first, and is a successor trained?	☐	☐
16.5	SURFACE AND OPEN-PIT OPERATIONS: (7)(iii) — every works, mine or surface mining operation other than underground mining must contract a mines rescue service provider to run a control room management course and issue a certificate, also renewable every three years. The nine requirements above do not apply to you; this one does.	Open pit? You are outside 16.5(1)(j) — but not outside Chapter 16.	☐	☐

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Strong. Validate the gaps, keep the certificates current, and document what you have so it survives an inspection.

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Typical. Most rooms we assess land here. The gaps are usually items iii, iv and vi — comms independence, ring tone, and the event log.

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Address now. You have a designated room rather than a compliant one, and the exposure sits with the certificate holder.