

At mines, security is about people

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In the mining sector, security is increasingly complex. High value assets, sensitive equipment and a hazardous work environment make meeting workplace rules and policy requirements pivotal to safety and security. Advanced access control systems are, surprisingly, providing many of the workforce management controls needed.

Mines have large multifaceted workforces. In addition to their large core workforce that provides physical labour at the mine face, economic realities are compelling mines to make greater use of contractors to manage specialised and non-core tasks. To manage the resulting complexity, mines are turning to technology.

Johnson Controls' access control solution is in use at over a dozen mines in South Africa and Africa. It is an advanced platform that is continually being enhanced. However, what makes it so useful to mines is its ability to integrate with other systems, its configurability and its ability to raise flags. These features together provide significant value.

In mines, safety is a priority. This makes strong access control capabilities non-negotiable. While it's easy enough to record the entry of individuals, access control solutions must today also be capable of supporting more sophisticated decisions.

To properly control access and meet security, and health and safety policy requirements, the access control solution needs to be configured to apply certain rules, interrogate live databases and raise alerts. This enables the system to, for example, prohibit blacklisted individuals from entry onto the mine for example, or prohibit entry of personnel into certain areas. However, it also adds other valuable controls.

For example, mine policies may:

- Require that workers attend induction sessions at regular intervals to ensure awareness of policy and other work-related issues.
- Put strict limits to the number of hours that an individual can work within a given period, helping to ensure safety for all in hazardous working environments where human error can be deadly.
- Need to control exposure to x-ray searches.

Because it is linked into HR and other live databases, the access control system can immediately deny access to individuals who do not meet requirements. In addition, it provides alerts to the relevant systems and mine authorities, and initiates processes to correct issues. It also helps inform important systems, such as payroll.

Clearly, access control is no longer just a low grade security solution that opens and closes doors; it helps mines enforce rules that are instrumental in ensuring the safety and security of their entire workforce and their operations.