

Open Cut Examiner interview questions

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What to expect

Open Cut Examiner interviews are technical, statutory and safety focused. You will be tested on your knowledge of mining legislation, your ability to make judgement calls in the pit, and how you lead crews under pressure. Expect a panel that includes a mining manager, a safety superintendent and a technical expert.

- **Technical and statutory knowledge:** Questions about the specific regulations, codes of practice and inspection requirements that govern open cut mining in your state.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypothetical situations that test how you would respond to a hazard, a blast misfire or a crew refusing to follow a direction.
- **Behavioural and leadership:** Past examples of how you have directed crews, resolved conflict or led a safety initiative.
- **Safety and risk management:** How you conduct risk assessments, incident investigations and maintain a safe pit environment.
- **Process and compliance:** How you maintain inspection records, prepare for audits and keep your statutory knowledge current.

The interview is typically a structured panel session lasting about an hour. It may begin with a safety-focused introduction, then move through technical questions, scenario-based problems and behavioural examples. Some employers include a site walk-through or a written scenario exercise. You may also be asked to explain how you keep your statutory ticket current and how you work with regulators.

1. Walk me through how you conduct a daily pit inspection, from start to finish.

Why they ask

This tests your process discipline, knowledge of inspection points and ability to prioritise hazards.

How to structure your answer

Use a clear walk-through: pre-start preparation, route or zone order, what you look for, how you record findings, how you assign and verify corrective actions.

Example answer

"I start with a pre-start briefing with the crew to understand any overnight changes and planned activities. Then I follow a set route that covers high wall and low wall stability, benches, haul roads, dumps, ramps and water management. I look for tension cracks, crest loss, loose material, adequate berms and windrows, and signs of movement. I record everything in SafetyCulture on my tablet, take photos and assign actions to the relevant supervisor. Before end of shift I verify that critical hazards have been fixed, and I log any outstanding items in the shift report. If I see something that cannot be corrected immediately, I stop the job and escalate to the mining manager."

2. Tell me about a time you identified a significant geotechnical hazard and how you managed it.

Why they ask

This probes your ability to spot a serious pit stability issue and coordinate a response.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Be specific about the hazard, the actions you took and the outcome.

Example answer

"On a night shift at a coal mine, I noticed a series of fresh tension cracks behind the crest of a 30-metre high wall after heavy rain. I immediately stopped work in that area and moved the crew to a safe location. I notified the geotechnical engineer and the mining manager, and we used Deswik and prism monitoring to confirm movement. I put an exclusion zone in place and directed the crew to install additional monitoring and pull back the dragline. Over the next two shifts the crack widened, but because we had stopped work early, no one was exposed. The area was later re-designed with a smaller batter angle, and I documented the whole event in an incident report that was used as a learning tool across the site."

3. You are on night shift and you see a shotfiring crew prepare to blast without adequate exclusion zone. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to act decisively on a critical safety breach.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: immediate action to stop the unsafe act, then escalate, then document, then follow up.

Example answer

"I would immediately use the two-way radio to call a cease-fire and stop the blast. I would physically go to the shotfirer and confirm that no initiation has occurred. Then I would check that all personnel and equipment are clear of the exclusion zone, and if not, I would direct them to move to a safe distance. I would notify the mining manager and the safety superintendent straight away. After the area is secure, I would review the blast plan and the exclusion zone requirements with the shotfiring crew, and only allow the blast to proceed once I am satisfied it is safe. I would then document the incident in the site's hazard reporting system and follow up with a toolbox talk for all shift crews."

4. What statutory instruments and regulations apply to your role as an Open Cut Examiner, and how do you keep current?

Why they ask

This confirms you understand your legal obligations and maintain your ticket.

How to structure your answer

List the main instruments, then explain your methods for staying up to date. Keep it specific to your state.

Example answer

"In Queensland, the key instruments are the Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999 and the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999, along with their regulations and relevant recognised standards. In New South Wales, it is the Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013 and Regulation 2014. I keep current by subscribing to RSHQ or Resources Regulator updates, attending mine safety seminars, and completing refresher training before my ticket is due. I also read safety alerts and bulletins, and I share learnings with my crew during weekly safety meetings. I maintain a personal log of my inspection hours and competencies so I can demonstrate ongoing practice when I renew my statutory ticket."

5. Describe a time you had to issue a direction to a crew that pushed back. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This probes your leadership and communication skills, especially when you need to enforce compliance without damaging relationships.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, but focus on the conversation and the outcome. Show empathy and firmness.

Example answer

"A crew was loading a bench without adequate windrows, and the leading hand argued that it was slowing production. I listened to his concerns, then explained the specific risk: if a truck reversed over the edge, there would be no barrier. I pointed to the site procedure and the regulation that requires edge protection. I gave him two options: stop and do it now, or I would issue a formal direction and escalate to the mining manager. He chose to fix it. I stayed to help and we completed the windrows in under an hour. Afterwards I thanked him for acting quickly, and I made sure to acknowledge the production pressure in my shift report. The crew complied without further issue."

6. How do you investigate an incident in the pit? Give an example of an investigation you led.

Why they ask

This tests your investigative methodology and your ability to find root causes rather than blame.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the process: secure the scene, gather evidence, interview, analyse, report, recommend actions. Then give a specific example.

Example answer

"My process is to first ensure the scene is safe and secure, then preserve evidence such as equipment positions, marks and photos. I interview witnesses separately, using open questions, and I review relevant procedures, training records and maintenance logs. I use ICAM or a similar method to identify root causes, not just immediate causes. I write a report with findings and recommendations, and I track actions to completion. For example, I investigated a near miss where a light vehicle drove into an active loading area. I found that the traffic management plan had not been updated after a ramp change. I recommended a review of the plan, additional signage and a pre-start briefing on the new layout. The site implemented all three within a week, and there were no further traffic incidents in that area during my time on site."