

Safety in Mines Research Advisory Committee

Final Project Report

**Support technologies to cater for
rockbursts and falls of ground in the
immediate face area**

Volume I

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Executive summary

Statistics of accidents in South African gold and platinum mines show that rockfalls and rockbursts account for a substantial proportion of fatalities. A large number of these (56 %) occur within 2,5 m of the stope face, usually in front of the permanent support. This critical area, between the stope face and 4 m back, is known as the immediate face area and is where the main mining activities take place and where personnel are concentrated. To reduce the incidents of rockfalls and damage associated with rockbursts in the immediate stope face area and thus afford interim protection to workers while they work, appropriate temporary and face area support is required. The choice of face area support is dependent on several factors, amongst them being the stoping width, the nature and extent of the rock to be supported, the type of deformation to which the support system will be subjected, force-deformation characteristics of the support system, ease of installation, and cost effectiveness.

The aim of this project is to investigate temporary and face area support systems (with special reference to the use of tendon support). Improved face area support design methodologies are proposed, and a probability analysis is conducted to investigate excavation stability and the requirements of a temporary support system.

The project consists of the following six enabling outputs:

- EO1: Review of current face area support practice and systems.
- EO2: Identification of strata conditions which are most suitable for particular face area support systems.
- EO3: Identification of hangingwall deformation mechanisms and their impact on tendon performance requirements.
- EO4: Identification of operational constraints applicable to face area support systems.
- EO5: Identification of periods in the production cycle when face area support systems are least able to meet their performance requirements.
- EO6: Development of a methodology to determine the requirements of face area support systems for various situations.

With regard to the usage of tendon support in the immediate vicinity of the stope face, it is found that tendons are currently only used under quasi-static conditions. Typically tendons are used in shallow mines and to depths of 1600 m below surface in situations where the UCS of the hangingwall rock exceeds 170 MPa. Tendons have been successfully used in stoping widths as low as 0,9 m. The use of tendons is primarily based on the presence of at least one pronounced hangingwall parting at a reasonable distance (0,2 to 3 m) from the reef – hangingwall contact.

A detailed investigation into strata conditions, which are most suitable for particular face area support systems, was conducted. The use of tendons is generally recommended for strata conditions entailing a strong hangingwall, minimum hangingwall fracturing, but with problematic roof parallel discontinuities. In other strata conditions appropriate columnar support types with adequate areal coverage are recommended. In conditions of weak and fractured hangingwalls, high levels of areal coverage are strongly indicated. A major output of the investigation is in the form of tables giving recommended support types for various rock classes in shallow and intermediate/deep mining environments.

Underground investigations, as well as analytical and numerical models, resulted in an improved understanding of tendon interaction with a discontinuous hangingwall in quasi-static and dynamic conditions.

An engineering approach for the design of stope face support systems is proposed and facilitates the convenient evaluation of support resistance, energy absorption and spacing requirements of tendons, props and packs in the stope face area.

Consultations with production personnel led to insights into operational constraints of temporary and face area support systems. Specific constraints investigated include labour availability, time, availability of support units, transport and storage, stope width, dip of reef, effect of mine geometry, and position of marked shot holes. Various solutions to overcome the operational constraints are proposed.

The SDA II software (support design tool) was used to investigate periods in the production cycle when face area support systems are least able to meet their performance requirements. It was found that the shift, which normally enters the panel after the blast, is most vulnerable. To improve worker safety at the face, it is essential to reduce the unsupported hangingwall span before the workers enter the panel after the blast. In certain circumstances tendons are effective in meeting this requirement. Spray-on membrane support could also potentially provide this support in highly fractured conditions but the effectiveness and practicability of this type of support has yet to be evaluated in the aggressive face area environment. Practical constraints (appear to) militate against the use of coal mining type shield support in the face area of deep, narrow stoping width gold mine stopes mined by blasting.

A probabilistic study was conducted to quantify the risks of injury, depending on the type of support, condition of the rock, mechanisms of deformation of the rock and support, support installation constraints and personnel exposure. A methodology was formulated to determine the risks of injury associated with a selection of current support types and various support types recommended as optimal for representative classes of strata conditions. Detailed guidelines for applying the methodology and recommendations on the verification, calibration and expansion of the methodology are given in conclusion.

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Table of contents

Executive Summary	2
Acknowledgements	4
Table of contents	5
List of figures	11
List of tables	19
Glossary of abbreviations, symbols and terms	20
1 Introduction	23
1.1 Problem statement.....	23
1.2 Scope of research.....	24
2 Review of temporary support practice and systems	27
2.1 Literature review.....	27
2.1.1 Immediate face area support requirements	27
2.1.2 Support resistance required to control rockfalls in the stope face	27
2.1.3 Determination of the rockburst energy absorption criteria for the stope face area.....	28
2.1.4 Current estimate of support resistance and energy absorption requirements..	28
2.2 Classification of immediate face area support systems	29
2.2.1 Classification of external support systems used in the immediate face area....	29
2.2.1.1 Timber props	29
2.2.1.2 Mechanical props	30
2.2.1.3 Hydraulic props	31
2.2.2 Classification of rock tendons	31
2.2.2.1 Introduction.....	31
2.2.2.2 Continuous mechanically coupled (CMC) tendons	32
2.2.2.3 Continuous friction coupled (CFC) tendons.....	33
2.2.2.4 Describe mechanically and friction coupled (CMFC) tendons	33
2.3 Overview of currently available temporary support systems.....	34
2.3.1 Introduction	34
2.3.1.1 Design criteria.....	35
2.3.1.2 Factors influencing choice.....	35
2.3.1.3 Temporary support types	35
2.3.1.4 Support density and areal coverage.....	36
2.3.1.5 Installation and removal	37
2.3.2 Current application of rockbolting in the immediate face area.....	38
2.3.2.1 Evander Mine (Kinross)	38
2.3.2.2 Western Platinum mine.....	41
2.3.2.3 Vaal Reefs	44
2.3.2.4 Randfontein Estates	45
2.3.2.5 Amandebult mine.....	45
2.3.2.6 Other in-stope applications of rockbolt.....	45
2.3.2.7 Conclusion.....	46

2.4 Temporary support in high stoping width	47
2.4.1 Introduction	47
2.4.2 Hydraulic props.....	48
2.4.3 Mechanical props	49
2.4.4 Elongates.....	51
2.4.5 Corrections for high stoping widths	52
2.5 Load-deformation behaviour of commonly used temporary support types ..	55
2.5.1 Introduction	55
2.5.2 Behaviour of elongates.....	55
2.5.3 Behaviour of mechanical props.....	57
2.5.4 Tendon behaviour	58
3 Identification and classification of strata conditions and quantification of their temporary support requirements	61
3.1 Introduction	61
3.1.1 Defination of the face area	61
3.1.2 Methodology.....	62
3.2 Mining environments/conditions	63
3.2.1 Introduction	63
3.2.2 Shallow mining environments	65
3.2.3 Intermediate and deep mining environments	65
3.3 Parameters influencing strata conditions in shallow mining environments ..	65
3.3.1 Introduction	65
3.3.2 Rock types and UCS	66
3.3.3 Reef parallel structures	69
3.3.3.1 Introduction.....	69
3.3.3.2 Bedding and lithological contacts	69
3.3.3.3 Bedding parallel faults and joints	71
3.3.3.4 Parting potential.....	71
3.3.3 Reef perpendicular structures.....	72
3.3.3.1 Introduction.....	72
3.3.3.2 Joints	72
3.3.3.3 Strike slip faults	74
3.3.3.4 Summary of reef parallel and perpendicular structures	74
3.4 Strata conditions and support requirements for shallow mining environments	75
3.4.1 Support types.....	75
3.4.2 Recommended support types for various classes of strata conditions	76
3.5 Parameters influencing strata conditions in immediate and deep mining environments	77
3.5.1 Introduction	77
3.5.2 Rock types and UCS	77
3.5.3 Mining induced fracturing	77

3.5.4 Reef parallel structures	78
3.5.5 Reef perpendicular structures.....	79
3.6 Strata conditions and support requirements for immediate/deep mining environments.....	79
3.7 Possible alternative support technologies in concept that may assist in alleviating rockfall and rockburst problems.....	81
3.7.1 Introduction	81
3.7.2 Twin beam support system.....	81
3.7.2.1 Introduction.....	81
3.7.2.2 Discussion	81
3.7.3 Powered support for hard rock mining.....	84
3.7.3.1 Introduction.....	84
3.7.3.2 Discussion	85
3.7.3.3 Performance of powered supports.....	88
3.7.4 Evermine.....	90
3.7.4.1 Discussion	90
3.7.5 Wire mesh and lace for stope support.....	92
3.7.6 Strapping between tendon support	93
3.7.7 Large headboards and base plates.....	94
3.7.7.1 Introduction.....	94
3.7.7.2 Discussion	94
3.7.8 Safety net.....	96
3.7.8.1 Introduction.....	96
3.7.8.2 Discussion	96
3.7.9 Fortrac Geogrids	100
3.7.9.1 Introduction.....	100
3.7.9.1 Discussion	101
3.7.10 Modified stope support system using hydraulic props	103
3.7.10.1 Introduction.....	103
3.7.10.2 Discussion	103
3.7.11 Rock tendons support system.....	104
3.7.11.1 Introduction.....	104
3.7.12 Inflatables	105
3.7.12.1 Introduction.....	105
3.7.12.2 Discussion	105
3.8 Discussion and recommendations	108
4 Identifying hangingwall deformation mechanisms and their impact on rockbolt performance requirements	109
4.1 Introduction	109
4.2 Rockbolting at the stope face.....	109
4.2.1 Introduction	109
4.2.2 Rock mass instability and mechanisms of rock bolt interaction	110
4.2.3 Envisaged evaluation and design process	111
4.2.4 Numerical modelling evaluation	112
4.2.4.1 Rockbolt reinforcement parameters	113

4.2.4.2 Rock mass structure parameters.....	117
4.2.5 Considerations and conclusions.....	120
4.3 Identifying hangingwall deformation and mechanisms and their impact on rockbolting	122
4.3.1 Introduction	122
4.3.2 Effect of deadweight on rockbolt	125
4.3.3 Effect of shear movement on rockbolt	126
4.3.4 Effect of bending momemnts on rockbolt	127
4.3.5 Determination of support spacing using tributary area theory.....	127
4.3.5.1 Introduction.....	127
4.3.5.2 Discussion	127
4.3.6 Effect of bending moments on rockbolt	131
4.4 Zones of influence of rockbolts support units.....	135
4.4.1 Introduction	135
4.4.2 Review of numerical and analytical methods to quantify zones of support influence	135
4.4.2.1 Review of SIMRAC Project GAP 335 (Haile <i>et al.</i> , 1998)	135
4.4.2.2 Review of SIMRAC Project GAP 627 (Deahnke <i>et al.</i> , 1999)	140
4.4.2.3 Applicability of SIMRAC Project GAP 627 results to tendon support.....	148
4.5 Quantifying stable hangingwall span between support units	152
4.5.1 Hangingwall beam buckling	152
4.5.2 Shear and rotational failur by slip at the abutments	154
4.6 Rockbolts support design	160
4.6.1 Proposed rockbolt design guidelines.....	160
4.7 Numerical Analysis	162
4.7.1 Dynamic Analysis in UDEC	162
4.7.1.1 UDEC Model.....	162
4.7.2 Elastic analysis	164
4.7.3 Influence of cracks	166
4.7.3.1 Influence of vertical cracks on the travel time of a P-wave	166
4.7.3.2 Influence of joint spacing on the peak particle velocities measured at the free surface and the travel time of the wave	168
4.7.3.3 Influence of horizontal joints on the wave travel time and peak particle velocities at the free surface.....	170
4.7.3.4 Influence of joint orientation on the P-wave propagation	171
4.7.3.5 Influence of tendon support-comparison to underground.....	171
4.7.4 Summary of numerical results.....	177
4.8 An engineering approach to the design of stope support.....	178
4.8.1 Introduction	178
4.8.2 Support Design Graphs	178
4.8.2.1 Fundamental tributary area requirements for rockfall conditions	178
4.8.2.2 Fundamental tributary area requirements for rockburst conditions	181
4.8.2.3 Support spacing requirements for rockfall conditions and hangingwalls	183
4.8.2.4 Support spacing requirements for rockburst conditions and hangingwalls.....	183

with face-parallel fractures (FPFs).....	185
4.8.2.5 Support requirements for rockfall conditions and blocky hangingwalls	186
4.8.2.6 Support requirements for rockburst conditions and blocky hangingwalls	189
4.8.2.7 Support spacing calculation procedure.....	190
4.8.3 Support Design Procedures.....	191
4.8.4 Conclusions.....	203
5 Operational constraints	204
5.1 Introduction	204
5.2 Operational constraints applicable to temporary support	204
5.2.1 Drilling and charging.....	204
5.2.1.1 Labour availability.....	204
5.2.1.2 Time constraints	205
5.2.1.3 Availability of support units.....	206
5.2.1.4 Transport mechanism and in-stope storage facilities for support units.....	206
5.2.1.5 Stope width.....	206
5.2.1.6 Dip of reef	206
5.2.1.7 Effect of mine geometry	207
5.2.1.8 Position of marked shot holes	207
5.2.2 Blasting.....	207
5.2.3 Cleaning operation.....	208
5.2.4 Other constraints.....	208
5.3 Solution to overcome operational constraints applicable to temporary support	209
5.3.1 Drilling and charging.....	209
5.3.1.1 Labour availability.....	209
5.3.1.2 Time.....	209
5.3.1.3 Availability of support units.....	210
5.3.1.4 Stope width.....	210
5.3.1.5 Dip of reef	211
5.3.1.6 Marking and drilling of shot holes	211
5.3.2 Blasting.....	211
5.3.3 Cleaning operation.....	211
5.3.4 Other recommendations	212
6 Stability of unsupported span in the production cycle	213
6.1 Introduction	213
6.2 Production cycle	213
6.2.1 Entry examination.....	214
6.2.2 Temporary support installation.....	214
6.2.3 Drilling.....	214
6.2.4 Permanent support installation	214
6.2.5 Charging up and blasting operation	214
6.2.6 Cleaning period	215
6.3 Analysis of the effect of increasing unsupported span stability	215
6.3.1 Rockfall conditions-discontinuum.....	215

6.3.2 Rockfall conditions-continuum analysis	218
6.3.3 Rockburst conditions-continuum analysis.....	221
6.4 Conclusions	224
7 Development of a design methodology to determine the requirements of temporary and face area support systems.....	225
7.1 Introduction	225
7.2 Summary	225
7.3 Principal findings.....	226
8 Review of principal findings and recommendations.....	227
8.1 Review of current face area support practice and systems.....	227
8.1.1 Summary.....	227
8.1.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	228
8.1.3 Recommendations.....	229
8.2 Identification of strata conditions which are most suitable for particular face area support systems.....	230
8.2.1 Summary.....	230
8.2.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	230
8.2.3 Recommendations for further work.....	232
8.3 Identification of hangingwall deformation mechanisms and their impact on tendon performance requirements	232
8.3.1 Summary.....	232
8.3.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	232
8.3.3 Recommendations for further work.....	234
8.4 Identification of operational constraints applicable to face area support systems	234
8.4.1 Summary.....	234
8.4.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	235
8.4.3 Recommendations for further work.....	237
8.5 Identification of periods in the production cycle when face area support systems are least able to meet their performance requirements.....	237
8.5.1 Summary.....	237
8.5.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	237
8.5.3 Recommendations for further work.....	237
8.6 Development of a methodology determine the requirements of face area support systems for various situations	238
8.6.1 Summary.....	238
8.6.2 Principal findings and conclusions.....	238
8.6.3 Recommendations for further work.....	239
9 References	240

List of figures

Figure 1.2.1	Distance of fatalities from the stope face for Carbon Leader, VCR, Vaal Reef and Basal Reef rockbursts	26
Figure 1.2.2	Distance of fatalities from the stope face for Carbon Leader, VCR, Vaal Reef and Basal Reef rockfalls	26
Figure 2.2.1	Force-compression curve for yielding timber props as determined in laboratory tests and underground	30
Figure 2.2.2	Typical force-deformation curve for an SS7 mechanical prop	31
Figure 2.2.3	Resin grouted rebar - tensile loading across a joint	32
Figure 2.2.4	Split set type SS 39 – tensile loading across a joint.	33
Figure 2.2.5	Expansion shell anchored rockbolt – tensile loading across a joint	34
Figure 2.3.1	Temporary support spaced as per mine standards but without areal coverage under blocky ground conditions on a mine	37
Figure 2.3.2	Inclination of rockbolts with respect to orientation of parting planes and extension fractures, Kinross mine	38
Figure 2.3.3	Variability in hanging wall thickness (Kinross Mine)	39
Figure 2.3.4	Rockbolt used successfully in undercutting	40
Figure 2.3.5	Lose of grip of rockbolt after blasting	40
Figure 2.3.6	Hangingwall layering ideal for rock bolting.....	41
Figure 2.3.7	Layers of roof being bolted together	42
Figure 2.3.8	Drill rig ideal for bolting in narrow stoping width stopes.....	42
Figure 2.3.9	(a) Application of rockbolt as an immediate face support. (b) An expansion shell rockbolt used in the stope	43
Figure 2.3.10	Improper tensioning of rockbolt at stope face.....	43
Figure 2.3.11	Rockbolting of the undulating fault, VCR Klerksdorp and a geological section through UG2 Western Platinum Mine indicating application of rockbolt.	44
Figure 2.4.1	Frontline props blast out versus stoping width, 80 kN props	48
Figure 2.4.2	Frontline props blast out rate versus distance to stope face (80 kN props).....	49
Figure 2.4.3	The force-length relationship for two types of mechanical props	50
Figure 2.4.4	Roc props used as a face area support in a 4.5 m high stope at Beatrix Mine	50
Figure 2.4.5	Buckling potential of yielding timber elongate (200 mm diameter profile prop) as a function of increasing length and stope closure.....	51

Figure 2.4.6	Buckling adjustments versus stoping width	53
Figure 2.4.7	Normalised σ_{crit} versus slenderness ratio based on the Johnson and Euler column buckling theories.....	54
Figure 2.5.1	Comparison of laboratory slow test results with underground performance of Ebenhaeser props.....	56
Figure 2.5.2	Comparison of laboratory slow test results with underground performance of Loadmaster props.	56
Figure 2.5.3	The force-deformation curve of a 1,5 m long medium duty mechanical prop.....	57
Figure 2.5.4	Force deformation curve for a yieldable Camlock prop.....	58
Figure 2.5.5	Shear characteristic of typical rockbolt installations under static laboratory shear loading.....	59
Figure 2.5.6	Direct tensile tests of support units	59
Figure 3.1.1	Diagram illustrating the face area.....	62
Figure 3.2.1	Flowchart determining mining environments and conditions.....	64
Figure 3.3.1	Punching of the support unit into the weak argillaceous hangingwall (face to the right).....	67
Figure 3.3.2	Weak hangingwall - Westonia Formation lava (face to the right).....	68
Figure 3.3.3	Strong hangingwall – silicious quartzite (face to the right)	69
Figure 3.3.4	Ripple-marked bedding plane defining fallout.....	70
Figure 3.3.5	Fallout along a shaly bedding plane.....	71
Figure 3.3.6	Influence of joint characteristics on the degree of discontinuity	73
Figure 3.3.7	The effect of reef parallel and reef perpendicular structures on hangingwall condition.....	75
Figure 3.7.1	Twin beam support system	82
Figure 3.7.2	Mobile Stope Support System (MSSS).....	83
Figure 3.7.3	Layout of Frame support (Mining Progress, Inc.)	85
Figure 3.7.4	Chock support	86
Figure 3.7.5	(a) $2F_r/420_{0.75}$ shield and (b) $4V/500_{0.8}$ shield.....	87
Figure 3.7.6	$4V/600_{0.85}$ chock shield.....	87
Figure 3.7.7	Setting load versus roof convergence.....	88
Figure 3.7.8	Typical form of variations in support resistance (Peng <i>et al.</i> , 1982).....	89
Figure 3.7.9	Photo showing cured Evermine on brick after dynamic load test.....	90

Figure 3.7.10	Evermine mixer equipment: its gearbox and pneumatic motor, stem pump, hoses and nozzle	91
Figure 3.7.11	Note ease of application and zero rebound.....	91
Figure 3.7.12	Strapping between tendons.....	93
Figure 3.7.13	Gully wing headboard in general operation and just before blasting (<i>after Spearing, 1992</i>)	95
Figure 3.7.14	Net installed with straps	96
Figure 3.7.15	Net installed with chains Net installed with chains	97
Figure 3.7.16	Straps around elongate did not slip down elongate.....	97
Figure 3.7.17	Net pulled tight by hand only	98
Figure 3.7.18	Net showing signs of wear after seven blasts	98
Figure 3.7.19	Damage to net from blast.....	98
Figure 3.7.20	Note perimeter webbing broken due to been caught by scraper	98
Figure 3.7.21	The Geogrid easily holds the goaf behind the longwall.....	100
Figure 3.7.22	Rolling up the mesh on surface at Springvale colliery.....	101
Figure 3.7.23	View along longwall showing the boat winches every second support positioning the mesh roll tightly against the canopies	102
Figure 3.7.24	Lightweight 80kN blast-on face support system (after Glisson and Roberts, 1991).....	104
Figure 3.7.25	(a) Performance characteristic of the air-filled support unit. (b) Performance characteristic of the water filled support unit.....	106
Figure 4.2.1	Rock bolt reinforcement and support schemes for stope face area stability	110
Figure 4.2.2	Conceptual design process for stope face rock bolting.....	111
Figure 4.2.3	Example of UDEC modeling of reinforced stope face hangingwall structure	113
Figure 4.2.4	Relative influence of rock bolt length (at 0.5 metre spacing) on reinforced beam capacity	114
Figure 4.2.5	Relative influence of rock bolt spacing (at 1.0 metre rock bolt length) on reinforced beam capacity.....	115
Figure 4.2.6	Relative influence of rock bolt inclination (at 1.0 metre rock bolt length) and fracture inclination on reinforced beam capacity	116
Figure 4.2.7	Relative influence of stope face area hangingwall span on reinforced beam capacity (1.0 metre bolts, 70° at 0.5 metre spacing).....	117
Figure 4.2.8	Influence of fracture angle relative to the stope hangingwall and reinforcement inclination on reinforced rock mass structure capacity.....	118

Figure 4.2.9	Influence of sub-horizontal bedding spacing on reinforced rock mass structure (70° fracture dip) capacity	118
Figure 4.2.10	Influence of fracture spacing (70°) on reinforced rock mass structure capacity.....	119
Figure 4.2.11	Shear deformation of smooth bar rock bolt.....	120
Figure 4.2.12	Relative sensitivity of reinforced rock mass structure to design variables.....	121
Figure 4.3.1	Cantilever failure of hangingwall beam.....	123
Figure 4.3.2	Gravity induced failure of block in hangingwall.....	123
Figure 4.3.3	Shear failure at the abutment.....	124
Figure 4.3.4	Buckling failure of hangingwall due to horizontal stress.....	124
Figure 4.3.5	Deadweight causing a tensile stress in the roofbolt.....	125
Figure 4.3.6	Shear stress exerted perpendicular to roofbolt along the parting plane.....	126
Figure 4.3.7	Effect of bending moment on the stability of rockbolt.	127
Figure 4.3.8	Maximum allowable support spacing for different bedding thickness and preload of tendons	128
Figure 4.3.9	Load-deformation curves for cone bolts, rockbolts and grouted ropes	129
Figure 4.3.10	Maximum allowable support spacing for different bedding thickness and preload of tendons	130
Figure 4.3.11	Maximum allowable support spacing as a function of different bedding thickness and peak load of tendons.....	131
Figure 4.3.12	Maximum allowable support spacing for a block experiencing a velocity of 3 m/s. The support spacing is a function of bedding thickness and energy absorption capabilities of the tendons	133
Figure 4.3.13	Maximum allowable support spacing for a block experiencing a velocity of 2 m/s. The support spacing is a function of bedding thickness and energy absorption capabilities of the tendons	134
Figure 4.3.14	Maximum allowable support spacing for a block experiencing a velocity of 1 m/s. The support spacing is a function of bedding thickness and energy absorption capabilities of the tendons.....	134
Figure 4.4.1	Example of numerical modelling of rock mass stability between rockbolt reinforcement	136
Figure 4.4.2	Chart of relative stability of rock mass structure between rockbolts reinforcement based on numerical modelling	136
Figure 4.4.3	Chart of the influence of rockbolt spacing, based on rock mass classification as derived from figure 4.4.2, on depth of instability between the rockbolts	137

Figure 4.4.4	Proposed chart to determine tendon spacing and depth of unstable rock between tendons (a) rockfall and (b) rockburst conditions	138
Figure 4.4.5	Proposed flow chart to determine tendon spacing and depth of unstable rock between tendons based on GAP 335	140
Figure 4.4.6	Maximum extent of the zone of support influence governed by bedding plane friction angle and bedding plane height	141
Figure 4.4.7	Numerical versus analytical support resistance profile	142
Figure 4.4.8	Principal stress trajectories through a hangingwall beam discretised by 90, 75, 60, 45 and 30 degrees extension fractures	143
Figure 4.4.9	Stress trajectories through a hangingwall beam discretised by obliquely dipping extension fractures.....	145
Figure 4.4.10	Zone of influence profiles for $\alpha = 90^\circ, 60^\circ$ and 30°	146
Figure 4.4.11	Simplified model used to quantify the zone of support influence in a clamped, discontinuous hangingwall beam.....	147
Figure 4.4.12	Zone of influence within a homogeneous beam in the shape of a circular paraboloid.....	148
Figure 4.4.13	Principal stress trajectories through a homogeneous hangingwall beam loaded by a single support unit. ($b = 1,0$ m, $\phi = 40^\circ$, $F = 100$ kN, $w = 0,2$ m).....	149
Figure 4.4.14	Principal stress trajectories through a hangingwall beam discretised by 90, 60, 45 and 30 degree extension fractures (UDEC modelling results).....	151
Figure 4.5.1	Voussoir beam geometry for hangingwall beam analysis	152
Figure 4.5.2	Span versus minimum beam thickness at 10 % beam deflection for various values of in situ rock mass modulus (E').....	153
Figure 4.5.3	Buckling stability envelopes of a discontinuous hangingwall beam	154
Figure 4.5.4	Potential keyblock instability due to shear failure at the abutments	155
Figure 4.5.5	Schematic diagrams showing possible failure modes due to shear at discontinuity interfaces	156
Figure 4.5.6	Geometry parameters governing the rotational stability of hangingwall blocks.....	157
Figure 4.5.7	Maximum stable span versus discontinuity angles for $\sigma_x = 1.0$ MPa, $b = 1.0$ m and $\mu = \tan 40^\circ$. Both carpet (top) and contour (bottom) plots are given to facilitate convenient data interpretation	158
Figure 4.5.8	Stability definitions in the various parts of the α, β plane	159
Figure 4.6.1	Flow chart for the design of rockbolt support taking into account deadweight, shear movement and cantilever failure of hangingwall beam	160
Figure 4.7.1	Graphical presentation of model	163
Figure 4.7.2	Sine wave applied as a normal stress to boundary of model.....	164

Figure 4.7.3	Isochromatic wave field showing orientation of wave front	165
Figure 4.7.4	Contour plot of stresses in x-direction	165
Figure 4.7.5	Velocity seismogram showing ground motion at center of free surface	166
Figure 4.7.6	Isochromatic wave field showing the P-wave for vertical joints	167
Figure 4.7.7	Ground motion recorded at point P	168
Figure 4.7.8	Influence of stress amplitude and vertical cracks.....	168
Figure 4.7.9	Influence of joint spacing on the travel time of the wave.....	169
Figure 4.7.10	Influence of joint spacing on peak particle velocity.....	170
Figure 4.7.11	Isochromatic wave field showing the P-wave for horizontal joints	170
Figure 4.7.12	Isochromatic wave field showing P-wave	171
Figure 4.7.13	The array of geophones between the rock bolt units and an indication of the exposure of the rock mass structure on the sidewall of the tunnel (after Le Bron <i>et al.</i> , 1999).....	172
Figure 4.7.14	Photograph showing rockburst damage along the experimental tunnel. The area of high intensity damage is in the foreground and low intensity damage towards the background (after Le Bron <i>et al.</i> , 1999).....	173
Figure 4.7.15	In situ relationship between PPV and distance from a rock bolt reinforcement unit (after Le Bron <i>et al.</i> , 1999).	174
Figure 4.7.16	Example of the numerical model showing velocity contours, rock mass structure and rock bolt reinforcement unit (after Le Bron <i>et al.</i> , 1999).....	175
Figure 4.7.17	Peak particle velocities at support and at 0.25 m intervals away from support.....	176
Figure 4.8.1	Tributary area requirements for rockfall conditions.....	179
Figure 4.8.2	Design force versus deformation curve of hypothetical support unit (in this example the support unit was initially pre-stressed to 200 kN)	180
Figure 4.8.3	Stope plan view indicating minimum distance behind face over which the support performance criteria must be met.....	180
Figure 4.8.4	Tributary area requirements for rockburst conditions.....	181
Figure 4.8.5	Remaining energy absorption capacity of the hypothetical support unit.....	182
Figure 4.8.6	Example of a hangingwall with FPFs	183
Figure 4.8.7	Critical keyblock parameters influencing the rock mass stability	183
Figure 4.8.8	Rockfall stability envelopes for hangingwalls with FPFs as a function of instability height, unsupported span, support load and discontinuity orientation ($\gamma = 90^\circ - \phi$, where ϕ is the friction angle associated with the fracture surfaces)	184

Figure 4.8.9	Rockburst stability envelopes for hangingwalls with FPFs as a function of instability height, unsupported span, support load and discontinuity orientation ($\gamma = 90^\circ - \phi$, where ϕ is the friction angle associated with the fracture surfaces) ...	186
Figure 4.8.10	Example of a blocky hangingwall.....	187
Figure 4.8.11	Length requirements of yielding tendons.....	187
Figure 4.8.12	Classification of a rock mass on the basis of the aspect ratio parallel to the hangingwall skin and the volume of the blocks	188
Figure 4.8.13	Maximum unsupported span for blocky rock mass structures as a function of rock mass class and depth of instability (rockfall conditions).....	188
Figure 4.8.14	Maximum unsupported span for blocky rock mass structures as a function of rock mass class and depth of instability (rockburst conditions)	189
Figure 4.8.15	Design flowchart for shallow mines	192
Figure 4.8.16	Design flowchart for intermediate- and deep-level mines	193
Figure 4.8.17	Force versus deformation characteristics of the Loadmaster prop.....	198
Figure 4.8.18	Corrected Loadmaster reference curve (90 % probability).....	199
Figure 4.8.19	Dynamic force versus deformation characteristics of the Loadmaster prop.....	200
Figure 4.8.20	Energy absorption capacity of the Loadmaster prop.....	201
Figure 5.2.1	The effect of prop mass on the physical effort to install a prop.....	205
Figure 5.3.1	A proposed production cycle for a crew to improve on support installation practices	210
Figure 6.1.1	Typical production cycle.....	213
Figure 6.3.1	Investigation of stability in the immediate face area for varying spans – shallow-dipping face parallel fractures	216
Figure 6.3.2	Investigation of stability in the immediate face area for varying spans – moderate dipping face parallel fractures(up to 55,50 degrees)	217
Figure 6.3.3	Investigation of stability in the immediate face area for varying spans – moderate dipping face parallel fractures(up to 55,50 degrees)	217
Figure 6.3.4	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying spans – moderate dipping face parallel fractures(up to 55,50).....	218
Figure 6.3.5	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying spans-continuum analysis for shallow to intermediate conditions	219
Figure 6.3.6	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying spans-continuum analysis for shallow to intermediate conditions – Effect of pre-stressing the immediate face area support units	220
Figure 6.3.7	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying spans-continuum analysis for shallow to intermediate conditions – Effect of using stiffer,	

	non-removal, blast resistant immediate face area support units.....	220
Figure 6.3.8	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying unsupported spans- continuum. Elbroc RB 80 Hydraulic prop used as temporary support	221
Figure 6.2.9	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying unsupported spans- continuum. Elbroc RB 80 Hydraulic prop used as temporary support	222
Figure 6.3.10	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying unsupported spans-continuum. Elbroc RB 80 Hydraulic prop used as temporary support	222
Figure 6.2.11	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying unsupported spans-continuum. Mechanical prop ,Ebenhaeser MK1 1.0m Rockburst and Pack.....	223
Figure 6.2.12	Investigation into instability in the immediate face area for varying unsupported spans-continuum. Mechanical prop, and an integration of Ebenhaeser MK1 1.0m Rockburst and a Pack	224
Figure 8.3.1	Maximum allowable tributary area as a function of different bedding thickness and peak load of tendons (rockfall conditions).....	233
Figure 8.3.2	Maximum allowable tributary area for a block ejected at a velocity of 3 m/s. The support spacing is a function of the bedding thickness and energy absorption capabilities of the tendons (rockburst conditions)	234

List of tables

Table 2.1.1	Fallout thickness for the various reefs at 95 per cent frequency level as the support resistance criterion.....	28
Table 2.1.2	Ejection thicknesses for the various reefs at 95 per cent frequency level and the associated energy absorption criteria	29
Table 2.5.1	Summary of shear test results	60
Table 3.2.1	Mining environments and associated conditions.....	63
Table 3.3.1	Classification of UCS of intact rock (after Guler et al., 1998).....	66
Table 3.3.2	Classification of UCS of intact rock (after Guler et al., 1998).....	70
Table 3.3.3	Classification of discontinuities based on discontinuity sets (after Guler et al., 1998).....	73
Table 3.3.4	Classification of discontinuity spacing (after Brady and Brown, 1985).....	74
Table 3.4.1	Classes of strata conditions and recommended support types for each class.....	76
Table 3.5.1	Characteristics of mining induced fractures in deep gold mine stopes (amended after Daehnke <i>et al.</i> , 1998). Types 1 to 4 represent extension fractures while type 5 represents shear fractures	78
Table 3.6.1	Classes of strata conditions and the recommended support types for each class for intermediate/deep mines	80
Table 8.2.1	Classes of strata conditions and recommended support types for each class (shallow mining environment)	231
Table 8.2.2	Classes of strata conditions and recommended support types for each class (intermediate/deep mining environment).....	231

Glossary of abbreviations and symbols

Abbreviations

BPM	Big Pebble Marker
UCS	Uni-axial Compressive strength
VCR	Ventersdorp Contact Reef
CMC	Continuous mechanically coupled tendons
CFC	Continuous frictionally coupled
DMFC	Discrete mechanically and frictionally coupled
AAC	Anglo American Coporation
RYHP	Rapid Yielding Hydraulic Props
UDEC	Universal Distinct Element Code
RQD	Rock Quality Designation
SDA	Support Design Analysis
PPV	Peak Particle Velocity
SB	Smooth bar (16mm);
RB	Rebar (16 mm);
VB	Twist bar (12 mm sq.)
CB	Cone bolt (16 mm)
R1	Rope # 1 (12 mm)
R2	Rope # 2 (12 mm)
R3	Rope # 3 (14 mm)
R4	Rope # 4 (16 mm)
SS	Split Set (SS 39)

Symbols

J_r	Joint roughness number
J_a	Joint alteration number
s_n	Normal stress
t	Shear strength of the joint
JRC	Joint roughness coefficient
f_r	Residual friction angle for weathered joints
f_b	Basic friction angle for unweathered joints
JCS	Unconfined compression strength of joint surface
r	Dry density of rock (kg/m^3),
g	Acceleration due to gravity (9.8 m/s^2) and
r	Rebound on weathered joint surface (Schmidt Hammer Test)
R	Rebound on unweathered rock surface (Schmidt Hammer Test)
JRC_0, JCS_0	Appropriate values for the length of joint actually rated
L_0	Length of joint actually rated
L_n	Total length of the joint
b	Height of bedding plane above hangingwall skin
j	Friction angle of bedding plane interface
f	Friction angle of extension and shear fracture interface

<i>a</i>	Angle of extension fracture (measured from h/wall skin)
<i>b</i>	Angle of shear fracture (measured from h/wall skin)
<i>f</i>	Spacing of discontinuities such as shear fractures & joints
<i>F</i>	Support load
<i>r</i>	Radius of cylindrical support unit
<i>w</i>	Width of rectangular support unit
<i>s</i> (<i>x</i>)	Zone of influence profile in two dimensions
<i>s</i> (<i>x,y</i>)	Zone of influence profile in three dimensions
<i>x</i>	Co-ordinate perpendicular to stope face
<i>y</i>	Co-ordinate parallel to stope face
<i>z</i>	Extent of zone of influence from support unit edge
<i>z_x</i>	Zone of influence extent extending in the <i>x</i> -direction from the support unit edge
<i>z_y</i>	Zone of influence extent extending in the <i>y</i> -direction from the support unit edge
<i>F_v</i>	Maximum vertical force
<i>s_h^{crit}</i>	Minimum stress
Ω	Scaling parameter
<i>d</i>	Distance from the edge of the support to the fracture
<i>f</i>	Fracture spacing
<i>z_x⁻</i>	Extent of the zone of influence on the left-hand side of the support
<i>H</i>	Depth of mining
<i>z_b</i>	Effective zone of influence
<i>c</i>	Average of the measurements from backfill face to backfill - hangingwall contact
<i>a</i> & <i>b</i>-values	Values associated with a backfill stress - strain graph
<i>W</i>	Weight of a block
<i>s</i>	Span between adjacent support units
<i>s_x</i>	Magnitude of compressive horizontal stress in the hangingwall
<i>m</i>	Coefficient of friction
<i>F</i>	Adjusted force
<i>F_o</i>	Original force determined by means of laboratory tests on 1 m elongates
<i>h</i>	Underground stoping width
<i>d</i>	Displacement
<i>P_{cr}</i>	Critical load
<i>A</i>	Area of column
<i>k</i>	Radius of gyration
<i>l</i>	Column length (stopping width)
<i>E</i>	Young's Modulus
<i>S_y</i>	Yield strength of the column material
<i>L</i>	Installed support length (stopping width)
<i>DL</i>	Closure acting on support unit
<i>e</i>	support strain
<i>C_p</i>	P-wave velocity
<i>C_s</i>	S-wave velocity
<i>V_n</i>	Input normal velocity
<i>V_n</i>	Input shear velocity

V_I, V_{II}	Frictional resistance at abutments
E	Total energy to be absorbed by the support system
m	Mass of the hangingwall (dependent on fall-out height)
v	Initial hangingwall velocity
h	Downward hangingwall displacement
L	Actual unsupported span of the hangingwall beam
L_s	Maximum stable span
L_{max}	Maximum support spacing (centre to centre)
M_x	Mid-point of the support unit
A_p	Area of the panel
A_b	Area of a block
N	Number of blocks in the panel
f_x	Joint spacing in the x-direction
f_y	Joint spacing in the y-direction
S_x	Support spacing in the x-direction
S_y	Support spacing in the y-direction
P	Probability that a block is supported