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Smoke billows from the mine at North Goonyella. Picture: David Greig

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Peabody develops plan to extinguish underground mine fire

by [CAS GARVEY](#)

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MINING giant Peabody has developed a "multi-tiered plan" to extinguish a fire that's been burning underground at its North Goonyella mine for weeks.

In an update issued today, Peabody said the plan was reviewed by the Queensland Mine Inspectorate, with safety their "first priority" with the underground mine and surface areas restricted by exclusion zones while the work continues.

The fire at the Bowen Basin mine, the workplace of 225 employees according to Peabody Energy, has the potential to rage for years if efforts to extinguish it fail, putting the long-term viability of North Goonyella at risk.

The situation at the mine, about 65km north of Moranbah and 160km northwest of Mackay, has progressively worsened over "the last few weeks", [an expert in mine fires told the Daily Mercury last week](#).

According to Peabody, the plan includes:

- Implementing use of a mobile GAG unit - a specialist piece of equipment that generates high-moisture inert gases to displace oxygen supply at a fire zone;

Menu • Installing temporary seals into mine openings following completion of risk assessments and utilising remote control equipment to pump a fire-resistant expandable material called Rocsil;

Daily Mercury

- Ensuring the area is further isolated by additional drilling and sealing of the old longwall panel;
- Working with air quality monitoring experts on a voluntary program of environmental monitoring at North Goonyella, including regular site visits and boundary inspections to assess and analyse air quality data from key points;

- Ensuring all aspects of the exclusion zone and other safety protocols are in place and observed; and
- Utilizing strict risk assessments for all anticipated plan components.



"Working in consultation with the Inspectorate and third-party experts, we're moving safely and as quickly as possible to address the situation," Peabody Australia president George J. Schuller Jr said.

"Peabody appreciates the ongoing work of the team at North Goonyella, the Inspectorate, independent technical experts, Queensland Mines Rescue Service, union representatives and all of the people who are engaged in the response to this issue."

The company said it was "too early" to assess the extent of the impacts of the fire, but at the weekend said

"Peabody is taking typical steps with regard to insurance coverage. The company has potentially applicable insurance policies with a coverage limit of \$125 million above a deductible of \$50 million."

Peabody's [stock price has also fallen following the incident](#), with Peabody Energy Corporation (NYSE: BTU) closing on Friday at \$35.64, which is a 13.45% fall.

The company said they were working closely with landholders and neighbours and others to ensure stakeholders have access to up-to-date information about the continuing situation.



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