



Silicosis claims serious threat to mining - analysts

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The risk of a litany of silicosis claims against the mining industry is a serious threat which should not be underestimated, according to analysts who warned claims could be crippling to the industry.

Commenting on the possible fallout of the Constitutional Court case won by former mine worker Thebekile Mankayi against AngloGold Ashanti in March, a team of at RBC Capital Markets analysts led by Leon Esterhuizen said a figure of \$100bn in claims was not far-fetched, notes a Miningmx report. It said the court ruled that Mankayi, who contracted lung disease while in the employ of AngloGold at Vaal Reefs mine from 1979 to 1995, was permitted to sue the company for damages if the employer had failed to provide a safe and healthy work environment. The report notes that Mankayi, who died the day before the ruling, initially sued AngloGold for R2.6m. His attorney, Richard Spoor, is said to have told Miningmx he is in the process of putting together a class action case. According to the report, the same sentiments were expressed by the National Union of Mineworkers, which says it 'will work with miners to compile a register of people who died from and are still suffering with lung disease to file a class action suit against the mining companies'. At the time of the judgment, says the report, Webber Wentzel partner Warren Beech said damages claims could amount to between R1.5m to R2m per employee, based on the particulars of the Mankayi case.