

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster: An In-Depth Overview of the Environmental and Social Impact

Introduction to the Ok Tedi Mine

The Ok Tedi Mine, located in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, is one of the world's largest gold and copper mines. Since its commissioning in the early 1980s, it has played a significant role in the country's economy, providing revenue and employment opportunities. However, the mine's operations have also been associated with environmental controversies and social challenges, most notably the Ok Tedi Mine Disaster, which has had far-reaching effects on the local environment and communities.

Background of the Ok Tedi Mine

Geographical Location and Resources

The mine is situated in the remote Star Mountains region, approximately 200 km northwest of Mount Hagen. It primarily extracts copper and gold from the Ok Tedi river basin, which is rich in mineral deposits formed over millions of years.

Operational History

Operated by the Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML), a subsidiary of the Papua New Guinea Sustainable Development Program, the mine began commercial production in 1984. Its operations involve open-pit mining and processing facilities designed to extract valuable metals from ore.

The Ok Tedi Mine Disaster: An Overview

What is the Ok Tedi Mine Disaster?

The term "Ok Tedi Mine Disaster" generally refers to the environmental catastrophe resulting from the extensive tailings disposal practices at the mine. Over decades, the mine has released millions of tons of mine waste—tailings—directly into the Ok Tedi River. This practice has caused severe environmental degradation, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, and local communities.

Causes of the Disaster

The disaster stems from the mine's disposal of tailings—finely ground rock and waste materials—into the river system. This was initially done to manage waste and reduce costs, but it led to:

1. Continual sedimentation of the river system
2. Destruction of aquatic habitats
3. Alteration of river flow and sediment transport

The practice was largely driven by economic considerations, with insufficient environmental safeguards in place during early operations.

Environmental Impact of the Ok Tedi Disaster

Ecological Damage

The release of tailings has resulted in:

1. Massive sediment buildup in the river system, reducing water quality
2. Destruction of fish habitats, leading to declines in fish populations vital for local diets and livelihoods
3. Loss of biodiversity, including endemic species unique to the region

Impact on Water Quality and Ecosystems

The contaminated waters have high levels of heavy metals such as copper, zinc, and cadmium, which are toxic to aquatic life. The sedimentation has caused:

1. Reduction of navigable river channels
2. Altered river morphology
3. Increased erosion and siltation downstream

Long-Term Environmental Consequences

The environmental damage from the tailings disposal has persisted for decades, making rehabilitation challenging. The ecosystem's resilience is compromised, and the recovery of natural habitats remains difficult.

Social and Economic Effects

Impact on Local Communities

The indigenous communities living along the Ok Tedi River have faced significant hardships due to the environmental degradation:

1. Loss of fishing grounds, which were a primary food source
2. Displacement and relocation due to environmental damage
3. Health issues related to pollution and contaminated water sources

Economic Implications

While the mine has contributed significantly to Papua New Guinea's economy, the environmental costs have been substantial:

1. Decreased agricultural productivity due to sedimentation and water pollution
2. Loss of livelihoods for communities dependent on fishing

3. Increased costs for environmental remediation and health care

Controversies and Legal Actions

Initial Management and Response

For many years, the mine's operators faced criticism for inadequate environmental safeguards and the unchecked disposal of waste into the river system.

Legal and International Interventions

In response to mounting environmental concerns, several legal actions and protests emerged:

1. Community lawsuits demanding compensation and environmental cleanup
2. International pressure from NGOs advocating for sustainable mining practices
3. Government efforts to regulate and enforce environmental standards

Reforms and Current Practices

In recent years, the mine has adopted more environmentally conscious practices, including:

1. Tailings disposal into designated tailings dams rather than the river
2. Environmental monitoring programs
3. Community engagement and compensation schemes

Rehabilitation and Future Outlook

Environmental Rehabilitation Efforts

The PNG government, in partnership with the mine operators and international organizations, has initiated projects aimed at rehabilitation:

1. Restoration of riverine habitats
2. Implementation of sediment control measures
3. Community livelihood programs

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite efforts, full ecological recovery remains elusive due to:

1. Extensive prior damage
2. Ongoing sedimentation issues
3. Limited resources for comprehensive rehabilitation

However, increased global awareness and technological advancements offer hope for better environmental management in the future.

Lessons Learned from the Ok Tedi Mine Disaster

Importance of Sustainable Mining Practices

The disaster underscores the necessity for:

1. Proactive environmental assessments
2. Strict regulation and enforcement
3. Community involvement and transparency

Global Implications

The Ok Tedi case serves as a cautionary tale for mining operations worldwide, highlighting the importance of balancing economic development with environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

The Ok Tedi Mine Disaster exemplifies the profound impact that mining practices can have on the environment and local communities when not managed responsibly. While significant strides have been made toward remediation and improved practices, the legacy of environmental degradation persists. Moving forward, sustainable management, community involvement, and international cooperation are essential to mitigate ongoing damages and ensure the health of the Ok Tedi ecosystem for future generations.

References and Further Reading

- Papua New Guinea Mine Watch: <https://www.pngminewatch.net> - Environmental Justice Foundation: <https://ejfoundation.org> - Ok Tedi Mine Official Site: <https://www.oktedi.com> - United Nations Environment Programme Reports on Mining Impacts - Academic Articles on Environmental Rehabilitation in Papua New Guinea This comprehensive overview emphasizes the importance of responsible mining practices and highlights the ongoing efforts to address the environmental and social challenges caused by the Ok Tedi Mine Disaster.

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster: An In-Depth Analysis of One of Papua New Guinea's Most Significant Environmental Catastrophes The Ok Tedi Mine disaster stands as a stark reminder of the profound environmental and social consequences that can result from large-scale mining operations, especially when management and regulatory oversight fall short. This incident not only reshaped environmental policies in Papua New Guinea but also ignited global conversations about corporate responsibility, sustainable mining practices, and the importance of protecting indigenous communities and ecosystems. In this comprehensive examination, we delve into the origins of the Ok Tedi disaster, its environmental and social impacts, the response measures taken, and lessons learned that continue to influence mining practices today.

Background of the Ok Tedi Mine

Location and Significance

The Ok Tedi Mine is situated in the remote Western Province of Papua New Guinea, nestled within the rugged mountainous terrain of the Bismarck Range. Discovered in the early 1980s, the mine was developed to extract copper and gold from the Ok Tedi River basin, a region rich in mineral deposits but also characterized by fragile ecosystems and indigenous communities dependent on the natural environment for their livelihoods. The mine was operated primarily by Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML), a subsidiary of the multinational mining giant BHP Billiton (now BHP), with formal agreements established with the Papua New Guinea government. The project was heralded as a significant economic boon, promising employment, infrastructure development, and national revenue.

Mining Process and Waste Management Practices

The extraction process involved open-pit mining, which produced vast quantities of waste material known as tailings. These tailings, containing fine particles of crushed rock mixed with residual copper, gold, and other minerals, posed a significant environmental challenge. Traditionally, the waste was disposed of directly into the Ok Tedi River—a practice known as riverine tailings disposal—under the assumption that the river's natural flow would dilute and carry away pollutants. However, this approach proved problematic over time, as the volume of waste increased exponentially with mining expansion.

The Disaster Unfolds: Environmental and Social Impacts

The Genesis of the Disaster

The crisis at Ok Tedi was not a sudden event but rather a gradual escalation stemming from unsustainable waste disposal practices. Starting in the late 1980s and escalating into the 1990s, the volume of tailings discharged into the river overwhelmed its natural capacity to dilute pollutants. This led to severe environmental degradation, affecting water quality, aquatic life, and downstream communities. The primary trigger of the disaster was the unchecked disposal of mining waste directly into the Ok Tedi River, which resulted in the accumulation of sediments, toxic substances, and heavy metals in the water system.

Environmental Consequences

The environmental toll of the Ok Tedi disaster has been profound and multi-faceted:

- **Sedimentation and River Morphology Changes:** The increased sediment load caused the river to become heavily silted, altering its natural course, reducing navigability, and damaging habitats.
- **Loss of Aquatic Biodiversity:** The toxicity and sedimentation led to a drastic decline in fish populations, which were crucial for local diets and economic activities.
- **Contamination of Water Sources:** Toxic elements such as copper, arsenic, and other heavy metals leached into water supplies, posing health risks to both wildlife and humans.
- **Ecosystem Collapse:** The downstream ecosystems, including forests and wetlands, suffered

from pollution and sedimentation, leading to habitat destruction and reduced biodiversity.

Impact on Indigenous Communities

The indigenous communities living along the Ok Tedi River experienced direct and devastating impacts: - **Livelihood Disruption:** Traditional fishing practices were severely affected by the decline in fish populations and contaminated waters. - **Health Risks:** Exposure to toxic metals increased incidences of health issues such as skin disorders, gastrointestinal problems, and other chronic illnesses. - **Displacement and Social Disruption:** Environmental degradation forced some communities to relocate, disrupting social cohesion and cultural practices.

Response and Mitigation Efforts

Initial Management and Response

Initially, the mining company and government agencies attempted to justify continued riverine disposal, citing economic benefits and lack of alternatives. However, mounting environmental degradation and international criticism prompted some efforts toward mitigation. - **Environmental Monitoring:** Periodic assessments were conducted, though critics argued these were insufficient and lacked transparency. - **Rehabilitation Attempts:** Some reforestation and sediment control projects were initiated, but their effectiveness was limited due to the scale and ongoing waste discharge.

Legal and Political Developments

The severity of the disaster and its widespread impacts led to significant legal and political responses: - **Legal Actions:** Various local and international groups filed lawsuits and petitions demanding accountability and remediation. - **Community Compensation:** From the late 1990s onward, negotiations led to the establishment of the Ok Tedi Development Foundation (OTDF), which administers funds for community development and environmental management. - **Government Involvement:** The Papua New Guinea government took steps to regulate mining practices more strictly, including the eventual decision to cease riverine disposal in favor of alternative waste management strategies.

Shift Toward Sustainable Practices

Recognizing the need for sustainable mining, OTML and its stakeholders have adopted more environmentally friendly practices: - **Dry Stack Tailings:** Moving away from riverine disposal to dry stacking methods to minimize water pollution. - **Environmental Restoration Programs:** Implementing projects aimed at rehabilitating affected ecosystems and restoring biodiversity. - **Community Engagement:** Enhancing local participation in decision-making and ensuring funds are directed toward sustainable development initiatives.

Lessons Learned and Global Implications

Environmental Management in Mining

The Ok Tedi disaster underscores the importance of proactive environmental management: - Avoiding Riverine Tailings Disposal: Recognized globally as an unsustainable practice, especially in sensitive ecosystems. - Implementing Strict Regulations: Governments must enforce rigorous standards for waste disposal and environmental monitoring. - Adopting Innovative Technologies: Dry stacking, filtration, and other methods should be prioritized to reduce ecological footprints.

Corporate Responsibility and Community Engagement

The case exemplifies the necessity for mining companies to prioritize social and environmental responsibilities: - Transparency: Open communication about environmental impacts fosters trust and accountability. - Community Development: Investing in local infrastructure and health initiatives helps mitigate adverse effects. - Long-term Planning: Sustainable practices should be integrated into corporate strategies from the outset.

Global Impact and Policy Reforms The Ok Tedi disaster catalyzed policy reforms in Papua New Guinea and influenced international guidelines: - **Strengthening Environmental Laws:** Enhanced legal frameworks to regulate mining activities and enforce environmental accountability. - **International Standards:** Adoption of global best practices, such as the International Council on Mining and Metals' (ICMM) sustainability principles. - **Monitoring and Reporting:** Increased emphasis on environmental impact assessments and transparent reporting mechanisms.

Conclusion: Reflecting on the Ok Tedi Disaster

The Ok Tedi Mine disaster serves as both a cautionary tale and a catalyst for change within the mining industry. While the economic benefits of resource extraction are undeniable, they must not come at the expense of ecological integrity and community well-being. The lessons learned from this environmental crisis continue to shape sustainable mining practices worldwide, emphasizing the importance of responsible resource management, technological innovation, and community engagement. As stakeholders across the globe strive toward more sustainable

development, the Ok Tedi case reminds us that environmental stewardship and corporate accountability are not just ethical imperatives but essential components of long-term economic and social stability. Properly managed, mining can coexist with healthy ecosystems and thriving communities—an ideal that the lessons of Ok Tedi help to realize.

The way people interact with information has quietly but fundamentally changed. Knowledge is no longer something that must be searched for physically or accessed through limited channels. With digital technology becoming part of everyday life, downloading *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* has emerged as a natural extension of how modern readers learn, explore ideas, and build understanding over time.

For many readers, the first appeal of a digital book is simplicity. There is no waiting period, no dependency on location, and no requirement to adjust schedules around physical access. When curiosity appears, learning can begin immediately. This seamless transition from interest to engagement plays a major role in keeping people motivated and intellectually active.

Digital access also reshapes habits. When materials are always available, learning becomes less formal and more organic. Readers return to content not because they have to, but because it is convenient to do so. Short reading sessions add up, and over time they form a consistent learning rhythm that feels sustainable rather than forced.

Life today rarely allows for long, uninterrupted reading sessions. Responsibilities, work demands, and constant movement define how people spend their time. Downloading *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* adapts to these realities. Whether reading during a commute, between tasks, or in quiet moments at night, digital formats make learning flexible without compromising depth.

Portability reinforces this freedom. Instead of choosing a single book to carry, readers gain access to entire collections on one device. This

abundance encourages exploration. One topic often leads to another, and learning becomes a connected experience rather than a linear path.

PDF files remain especially popular because of their stability. Layouts, images, tables, and formatting stay consistent across devices. This reliability is crucial for content that relies on structure, such as academic texts, manuals, or reference materials. Readers can focus on understanding the message instead of adjusting to shifting layouts.

Interaction with the text is another advantage that often goes unnoticed. Search tools, highlights, annotations, and bookmarks allow readers to engage actively with *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster*. Instead of passively consuming information, users shape the content around their needs. Important sections are marked, ideas are revisited, and insights are recorded directly within the document.

Search functionality changes how digital books are used. Locating specific concepts takes seconds, making PDFs valuable not only for reading but also for reference. This efficiency is especially helpful for students reviewing material, professionals seeking clarification, or researchers navigating complex subjects.

Cost considerations also influence how people access knowledge. Digital books, particularly those offered through public domain projects and open-access platforms, reduce financial barriers. Resources that were once difficult or expensive to obtain are now available to a much wider audience, supporting more inclusive learning opportunities.

Platforms such as Project Gutenberg, Open Library, and Internet Archive play a significant role in this ecosystem. They preserve knowledge and make it accessible while respecting legal frameworks. Academic platforms like Academia.edu add another layer by providing research materials that complement digital books and encourage deeper exploration.

Responsible access remains essential. Choosing legitimate sources ensures content quality and protects users from security risks. Ethical downloading respects authors, publishers, and institutions that contribute to the availability of educational materials. This balance allows digital knowledge sharing to remain sustainable over time.

In professional contexts, downloadable books serve as practical tools. Skills evolve, industries change, and staying informed requires constant learning. Having *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* readily available allows professionals to update knowledge efficiently without interrupting daily routines.

Students experience similar benefits. Digital books support flexible study habits, offline access, and organized note-taking. Instead of carrying heavy materials, students manage resources digitally, making learning more comfortable and adaptable to different environments.

Different learning styles are also better supported in digital formats. Some readers prefer focused, linear reading, while others move between sections or revisit specific ideas. Digital access accommodates both approaches, allowing readers to engage with *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* in ways that feel intuitive rather than restrictive.

Accessibility features extend this flexibility even further. Adjustable text sizes, text-to-speech options, and compatibility with assistive technologies make digital books usable for a broader range of readers. These features help ensure that access to knowledge is not limited by physical or technical barriers.

Environmental considerations add another dimension. While digital technology has its own footprint, reducing dependence on printed materials lowers paper consumption and distribution demands. Digital access supports a more efficient way of sharing information across borders

and communities.

Organization is another quiet advantage. Digital libraries can be sorted, backed up, and accessed instantly. Over time, readers build personal collections that reflect their interests and learning journeys. Important ideas remain easy to find, even years later.

Perhaps the most meaningful impact of downloading *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* lies in how it shapes attitudes toward learning. When information is easy to access, curiosity feels welcome rather than inconvenient. Readers explore topics more freely, revisit ideas more often, and remain open to continuous growth.

Digital access does not replace traditional learning; it expands it. It creates space for reflection, exploration, and long-term engagement. With *Ok Tedi Mine Disaster* available in digital form, learning becomes something that evolves naturally alongside daily life, adapting to new questions, new goals, and changing perspectives.

Questions & Answers About ok tedi mine disaster

No	Question	Answer
1	What was the cause of the Ok Tedi Mine disaster?	The Ok Tedi Mine disaster was primarily caused by environmental degradation due to tailings and waste rock disposal into the Fly River, leading to severe ecological damage and community health issues.
2	When did the Ok Tedi Mine disaster occur and what were its immediate impacts?	The disaster became prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, resulting in massive deforestation, loss of aquatic life, displacement of local communities, and contamination of water sources.
3	How did the Ok Tedi Mine management respond to the environmental crisis?	Initially, management continued operations with limited environmental safeguards, but later, efforts were made to implement mitigation measures, including the establishment of the Ok Tedi Development Foundation to support affected communities.

4	What are the long-term environmental effects of the Ok Tedi Mine disaster?	Long-term effects include ongoing soil and water contamination, loss of biodiversity, and persistent health problems among local populations due to exposure to toxic waste.
5	What legal or governmental actions were taken regarding the Ok Tedi Mine disaster?	The PNG government and international organizations imposed regulations and negotiated agreements with the mine operators to reduce environmental damage, including the 2002 agreement that mandated environmental management and community development programs.
6	What lessons have been learned from the Ok Tedi Mine disaster to prevent similar incidents?	The disaster highlighted the importance of sustainable mining practices, strict environmental regulations, community engagement, and corporate responsibility to prevent ecological and social harm from resource extraction activities.

Ok Tedi Mine disaster, Ok Tedi environmental damage, Ok Tedi pollution, Ok Tedi river contamination, Ok Tedi mine environmental impact, Ok Tedi copper mine disaster, Ok Tedi ecological damage, Papua New Guinea mining disaster, Ok Tedi water pollution, Ok Tedi community impact

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBook Resource

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks provide structured digital knowledge.

Core Discussion

Digital books help readers maintain productivity.

Practical Use

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks support consistent study routines.

Conclusion

Digital reading improves access to information.

Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks help bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application.

When learning materials are readily available, readers are more likely to return regularly.

The digital format of Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks supports efficient information delivery without compromising depth or clarity.

Methodical study improves mastery.

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Structure enhances clarity.

Professionals in fast-changing industries use Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks to stay updated without committing to rigid learning schedules.

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Searchable content enhances productivity and supports just-in-time learning scenarios.

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Accurate reference improves outcomes.

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Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks support stable learning ecosystems.

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Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks represent a shift in how information is consumed, prioritizing convenience, efficiency, and adaptability in modern learning environments.

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Navigation tools improve efficiency when reviewing specific topics.

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When learning materials are readily available, readers are more likely to return regularly.

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Content depth can be revisited as understanding grows.

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By offering instant access, Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks eliminate delays often associated with traditional publishing and physical distribution.

Methodical study improves mastery.

Students benefit from Ok Tedi Mine Disaster eBooks through consistent formatting and layout.

They represent a practical response to evolving learning expectations.

Accessible knowledge encourages lifelong learning.

Formal presentation supports serious study.

Troubleshooting Common Issues

Even with proper preparation and organization, users may occasionally encounter issues when working with Ok Tedi Mine Disaster in digital formats. Understanding common problems and their solutions helps minimize disruption and ensures a smooth reading, study, or research experience. Troubleshooting skills are especially valuable for long-term users who rely on digital libraries daily.

One of the most common issues is file compatibility. Sometimes Ok Tedi Mine Disaster may not open correctly on a specific device or application. This can result from outdated software, unsupported formats, or corrupted files. Updating the reading application or trying an alternative reader often resolves the issue. If the problem persists, re-downloading the file from a trusted source is recommended.

Another frequent problem involves formatting inconsistencies. Text misalignment, missing images, or broken layouts can occur when files are converted between formats. Using professional conversion tools and reviewing files after conversion helps prevent these issues. Maintaining an original master copy also ensures that users can revert to a reliable version if errors occur.

Handling corrupted or incomplete files

Corrupted files may fail to open, display errors, or load only partially. These issues often result from interrupted downloads or storage errors. Verifying file size, checking download completion, and comparing files against official versions can help identify corruption. Re-downloading from a verified source is usually the quickest solution.

Performance and loading problems

Large files may load slowly, particularly on older devices or limited hardware. Compressing Ok Tedi Mine Disaster without sacrificing quality improves performance. Splitting large documents into smaller sections can also enhance navigation and responsiveness.

Annotation and sync issues

Users may experience lost annotations or unsynced notes when switching devices. Ensuring that cloud sync is enabled and accounts are properly logged in helps maintain continuity. Regularly exporting annotations provides an additional safety layer for important notes.

Best Practices for Everyday Use

Establishing good daily habits reduces the likelihood of technical issues and improves overall efficiency when using Ok Tedi Mine Disaster. Simple practices, when applied consistently, create a stable and productive digital environment.

Organizing files immediately after download prevents clutter and confusion. Assigning files to the correct folders and renaming them clearly saves time in the future. Regular maintenance sessions—such as weekly or monthly reviews—help keep the library clean and up to date.

Keeping software updated is another essential practice. Updates often include bug fixes, performance improvements, and enhanced compatibility. Staying current ensures that Ok Tedi Mine Disaster functions smoothly across devices and platforms.

Security and privacy awareness

Avoid opening files from unknown or unverified sources. Even if a file claims to contain Ok Tedi Mine Disaster, it may include malware or unwanted scripts. Using antivirus software and trusted platforms protects both data and devices.

Optimizing the reading experience

Adjusting display settings such as font size, background color, and brightness improves comfort and reduces eye strain. Comfortable reading environments support longer sessions and better comprehension, especially for extensive materials.

Advanced problem prevention

Preventive measures reduce the need for troubleshooting altogether. Maintaining backups, using stable file formats, and documenting changes create a resilient system that withstands technical challenges.

Version tracking prevents confusion when multiple editions exist. Clearly labeled files and documented updates ensure that users always know which version they are using and why. This practice is particularly important in collaborative or academic environments.

When to seek support

If issues persist despite troubleshooting, consulting official documentation or support forums can provide solutions. Many platforms offer detailed guides, FAQs, and community discussions addressing common problems. Reaching out to official support channels ensures accurate and secure assistance.

Future-proofing your use of Ok Tedi Mine Disaster

Technology continues to evolve, and future-proofing ensures long-term access. Using widely supported formats, maintaining updated backups, and periodically reviewing compatibility help protect against obsolescence. These strategies safeguard investments in digital learning and research materials.

Final thoughts on troubleshooting and best practices

Troubleshooting is an essential skill for maximizing the value of Ok Tedi Mine Disaster. By understanding common issues, applying best practices, and adopting preventive strategies, users can maintain a smooth and reliable digital experience. With proper care, Ok Tedi Mine Disaster remains a dependable resource that supports learning, research, and professional growth without unnecessary interruptions.