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MSHA Job Safety Tips
ST Card No. 13

Continuous Miner/Loading Machine Operators and Helpers

PROTECTION FOR PRODUCTION

Most coal mined today continues to be produced by continuous miners and loading machines, and the miners who operate them.

Causes of accidents to these occupations include:

- Not properly using and maintaining personal protective equipment.
- Failure to adequately examine work areas and equipment.
- Not ensuring that all ventilation controls are in place and being maintained.
- Methane monitors not properly operating or calibrated.
- Equipment not maintained or properly operating.
- Lack of knowledge and failure to follow approved ventilation/roof control plan requirements.
- Lack of knowledge and failure to follow approved emergency firefighting and evacuation plans.
- Failure to adequately communicate with other miners.
- Insufficient cleanup and rock dusting.
- Unsafe body/hand positioning.
- Traveling under unsupported roof.

To prevent these types of accidents, miners should:

- Use and know how to use all personal protective devices, including SCSRs, safety glasses, and hearing and respiratory protective devices.
- Make sure their work area and equipment have been adequately examined, not only by themselves, but by certified persons.
- Install, repair, or replace ventilation controls, particularly check curtains and line brattice, as needed or required.

- Regularly calibrate and check methane monitors to ensure proper function.
- Keep equipment well-maintained, free of combustible materials, and working properly, including water sprays, bits and scrubbers (if installed).
- Know and follow all ventilation/roof control plan requirements. Make sure air current volume and velocity are complied with.
- Know the mine's firefighting and evacuation plans and be familiar with the mine's escapeways.
- Communicate with other workers on the section. Use warning devices on equipment and use reflective materials. Report any unusual or hazardous conditions to mine management.
- Follow the mine's cleanup program. Thoroughly rock dust the mine floor, roof and ribs.
- Stay clear of loading boom and cutting head. Miners should keep their body and hands inside the operations compartment, if provided. When tramping, avoid pinch points.
- Never travel inby or under unsupported roof, except to install additional support.

A summary of some of the fatal injuries to continuous mining machine operators and helpers in 1996 are as follows:

April 20, 1996 -- A continuous mining machine operator and two other miners were installing a belt drive off of the main belt line. The miner operator was jacking the belt drive upwards, when either the drill steel slipped or the jack malfunctioned causing the drill steel to "kick". The drill steel hit the continuous mining machine operator and caused fatal injuries.

June 26, 1996 -- A roof fall occurred during the mining of a final pushout on a pillar block. The pushout block had just been timbered and mining started with a continuous mining machine, when the roof began to cave from right to left. The continuous miner operator and a continuous miner helper tried to run from the area, but the continuous miner operator was fatally injured.

November 1, 1996 -- A pillar crew was mining the first lift from a pillar block when the immediate mine roof cracked along the ribs between the pillar blocks. The crew ran outby the pillar line to get away from the bad roof. The continuous mining machine operator fell in front of the shuttle car and was run over. The shuttle car was being trammed out of the pillar lift.

PROTECTION FOR PRODUCTION

U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health Administration