

MINER DETAILS

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BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From The Director's Office

Since my appointment, I have talked with many of you and I want you to know that I appreciate all the support and cooperation I have received. I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to those who have been unable to reach me. I have been overwhelmed by telephone calls from well-wishers expressing their support and offering assistance. I want everyone to know that I will visit each region and talk with the staff to inform you of my plans for this agency. I thank you for all the support and cooperation and I look forward to talking with each of you and answering your questions.

Ron Harris, Director

TQM Update

Due to administrative changes, the TQM process has been in a holding pattern. No new charter teams have been created. Total Quality Management, however, is alive and well and will be revived shortly, possibly under a new name. Since its introduction to our agency, the TQM management style has created the following seven charter teams:

- *Newsletter Team
- *Permit Extension Violation Team
- *Certification Card Revision Team
- *Electrical Policy for Battery Maintenance Team
- *Permitting Process Team
- *Pocket Size Law Book Team
- *IF-018 N.O.V. Team

Remember, the process improvement form is your doorway into TQM.

Agency

Accomplishments

Fire Preparedness Classes

Recently, several MHST instructors attended a conference on mine fire preparedness at Lake Lynn, PA. The

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NIOSH-sponsored classes were held to further enhance the knowledge of fire prevention. Fire fighting and prevention of mine fires at underground and surface facilities was emphasized.

Several demonstrations were presented for fighting mine fires including belt fires, ventilation tubing, electrical, and equipment fires. Proper use of firefighting equipment was demonstrated including fire extinguishers, water, and foam. A fire demonstration was presented underground in the limestone experimental mine. Closed-circuit cameras were used to observe the fire for the protection of the students.

The underlying theme of the fire prevention training taught that the prevention of any mine fire will always have better results than fighting that fire.

Haulroad Access Survey

In March, Steve Snyder, Inspector-at-Large implemented a haulroad access survey throughout Region Four. Initially, district inspectors in two-man teams traveled to each mine site and evaluated the haulroads pertaining to that mine, preparation plant, or quarry.

Inspectors checked locations of high voltage transmission lines in regard to cranes and mobile equipment traffic. Inspectors used this opportunity to observe other safety-related situations such as dangerous intersections, blind curves, and other haulroad or work area hazards. Inspectors made suggestions and recommendations concerning the dangers encountered during the survey without taking enforcement action.

A subsequent survey was initiated and completed during the first week of May. Approximately 98% of suggestions and recommendations made during the first survey had been viewed favorably by mine managers and preventive and corrective action had been completed.

Many safety signs were erected regarding the location of high voltage transmission lines and other hazards. Several designated tarping sites were established as a result of the survey. Some quarries have volunteered to bury their overhead power lines.

Seismic Survey Training

In the event of an underground mine emergency, rescue efforts soon will be enhanced by the use of a new high-tech tool. One of the most difficult aspects of mine emergency operations is locating the position of entrapped miners. This task can now be accomplished by using state of the art technology in the form of a mobile seismic surveillance system to triangulate the exact location of the miners. Star-shaped arrays of interconnected geophones are placed on the ground, overlaying the approximate area of the entrapment. The geophones can detect low frequency sound waves, such as when a timber is struck against the mine floor. The sound wave travels

through the overlaying strata to the geophone array, then to a computer in the mobile unit. The computer can then calculate the location in the mine from which the sound originated. Rescue efforts are then directed to those areas of the mine where entrapped miners are barricaded.

Several MHST mine rescue team members were trained to use the seismic survey technology in an extensive three day hands-on class conducted by the US Bureau of Mines at the Pittsburgh Research Center. Funding for this instruction was made possible by the MSHA State Grant Program. The following employees completed the training: Steve Womack, Brian Mills, Leon Bailey, Mike Rutledge, Jim Whetsell, and Tyrone Coleman.

For Your Information

Looking for Danger in Dangerous Places

Activities that cause accidents to employees in and around mines are also potential hazards to inspectors. The inspector faces the same danger of haulage or machinery-related accidents as other workers, perhaps even more since the workers are not used to having the extra person in the workplace. Traveling from place to place a mine inspector is usually in a different environment each day. The inspector drives a different road to work every few days, and conducts inspections on different shifts during the week. Hazards to surface and underground inspectors must be recognized and guarded against. Watch for holes in elevated walkways or deteriorated flooring; do not drive, walk, or crawl by mobile equipment until you make eye contact with the operator; beware of loose roof and unstable highwall conditions; use your protective equipment, drive with headlights turned on, and wear your seatbelt.

Up Close and Personal

Val Hoffman, district inspector from Danville has received his disability retirement. Art Shumate reports that the retirement board met on July 22 and voted in Val's favor. We wish Val all the best in his retirement.

The Newsletter Staff wishes to sincerely thank Sandy Bailey who is leaving the newsletter and to welcome Garry McComas of the Welch office who is the newest member.

Echoes of the Past

Jacob L. Vowell and his son, Elbert, perished following a coal mine explosion on May 19, 1902 at the Fraterville Mine in Coal Creek, TN. "Jake" was the husband of Ellen and the father of four other children. A note found on the body of "Jake" read as follows:

"Ellen, darling good-bye for us both. Elbert said the Lord has saved him. We are all praying for air to support us, but it is getting so bad without any air. Ellen I want you to live right and come to heaven. Raise the children the best you can. Oh how I wish to be with you, good-bye. Bury me and Elbert in the same grave by the little Eddy. Good-bye Ellen, good-bye Lily, good-bye Jemie, good-bye Horace. Is 25 minutes after two. There is a few of us alive yet.

Jake and Elbert
Oh God for one more breath. Ellen remember me as long as you live. Good-bye darling."

A total of one hundred and eighty four coal miners died in this disaster.

Did You Know?

Assessment conferences and mine foreman examinations are now held in all regional offices.

Diesel Equipment Bill

House Bill 2890 passed this last legislative session relates to the establishment of standards and procedures for the use and maintenance of diesel-powered equipment in underground coal mines. The bill created the West Virginia Diesel Equipment Commission which will operate out of MHST. The bill defines numerous specific areas the commission is required to address, such as fuel storage, fire and safety training, and a certification process. The commission is composed of representatives of industry and labor, and is to promulgate initial rules, requirements, and standards

governing the operation of diesel equipment by April 1, 1998. If the commission cannot reach agreement on the initial rules by that date, there are provisions in HB 2890 for the issues to be decided by independent arbitration.

Appointments of the members to the commission were announced July 8. Governor Underwood appointed Ken Perdue, Dr. Pramod Thakur, and Chris Hamilton as operator representatives. Richard Glover, Gary Trout, and Dennis O'Dell were appointed as labor representatives.

Funds are included in the appropriation for HB 2890 to provide training for MHST inspection staff.

Mine Humor

At Westmoreland Coal Company, No. 6 mine, most miners carried their water from home. Drinking requirements of different miners varied tremendously and water thievery was common. To combat this, two older miners stored their false teeth in the lower portion of their dinner buckets immersed in their drinking water. At lunch time, they simply put their teeth in to eat. After eating, they placed their teeth back in their drinking water. Anybody robbing these dinner buckets to quench their thirst were in for a stunning surprise. These two older miners were also stunningly surprised one day when they both went to lunch and someone had secretly switched their sets of false teeth.



A young thermal dryer operator once had the habit of pressing the "start" button too long while the dryer attendant attempted to light the gas burners of the dryer. The attendant had repeatedly warned the operator not to do this, but one day a blast occurred. The dryer attendant was blown out the furnace room doorway and landed in a graveled area just outside. The attendant, who was a stout man, took off his mine belt and whipped the dryer operator until the foreman arrived.