



MINER DETAILS



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BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From the Directors' Office

The Mine Safety Technology Taskforce continues to meet daily to work out details of regulatory changes stemming from the Sago tragedy. They are trying to meet a fast approaching deadline to have their work completed by the end of May.

Acting Director James Dean asks that all inspectors remain committed to completing work assignments and assure that diligent mine inspections are made. New regulations concerning mine rescue requirements for our agency are being put forth by the Board of Coal Mine Health and Safety. Changes to improve the effectiveness of our agency are ongoing and Mr. Dean asks for the co-operation of all agency employees.

Agency Accomplishments New Mine Safety Laws and Regulations Reference Manual

A new updated version of the Mine Safety Laws and Regulations Reference Manual has been printed and is available for sale. This volume includes the Diesel Regulations, changes to inspector/instructor qualifications and all of the code changes made in the last legislative session. If your region has not already received a supply, they should shortly.

Revised Surface Mine Foreman Study Guide

The Surface Mine Foreman Study Guide has recently been revised with questions concerning the surface haulage regulations relating to cameras on large trucks. The new edition also includes the current surface certification forms. Other than these changes, the book is a reprint of the previous version.

Reprint of the Electricians Certification Study Guide

The Electrical Study Guide was recently reprinted and is now being distributed. The only change in this publication is the year reference on the cover and the inside title page.

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Diesel Update

The 100th piece of diesel equipment since February 2004 has been approved for use in West Virginia. A 20 ton diesel-powered AL Lee locomotive has been approved for Coal River Mining, LLC, Fork Creek No. 3 mine. Jim Bunn, Jr. is the President of the company and Carl Estep is the Maintenance Manager. Congratulations to Coal River Mining and to the WV Diesel Commission for achieving this milestone.

Did You Know?

Tree Cutting Rule Changed

Be aware that Title 56 Series 2, Rules Governing Safety Provisions for Clearing Crews, has been changed. The rule now includes provisions for pre-shift / on-shift exams, safety meetings, and 16-hour employee training. These new rules can be found in sections 56-2-19.1a through 56-2-21.3 in the new 2006 full-size lawbook.

Australian Technology Review by Kenny Dickens

On February 25, 2006, Kenny Dickens, Administrator of the Board of Coal Mine Health and Safety left Charleston, for the land down under. In Pittsburgh, Pa., I met up with my traveling partner, Patrick Retzer, from MSHA. Pat, an electrical engineer, works with MSHA out of their Approval and Certification Center in Triadelphia, WV. The purpose of our trip was basically a fact finding mission. It was set up by Mine Site Technologies (hereinafter MST), to observe MST's Personal Emergency Device (PED). The system is an Ultra Low Frequency "Through The Earth" paging, control and blasting systems and MST's TRACKER tagging system. The system seemed to work fine in the mines we visited.

On Monday morning, after a 14 ½ hour flight from San Francisco we landed in Sydney, Australia. I must say Sydney was simply beautiful.

The next few days were spent at MST's offices. MST staff gave Pat and I an overview of their equipment and the mines that we would be visiting in the next two weeks. On March 2, we visited our first mine which was north of Sydney, about a 4 hour drive outside of a town called Newcastle, in the state of New South Wales. The Newstan Colliery was located in Hunter Valley. Hunter Valley is primarily the wine growing area for the Australians. While in Newcastle, we toured the Newcastle mine rescue station. According to the information we received, all of the mine rescue members in the area come to this facility to receive their training. We also visited Dartbrook Colliery which is also located in the Hunter Valley region. For the record, no matter where you go in this world, all coal miners are the same. We

met numerous coal miners in Australia and they were all very helpful and hospitable. Also, they were very funny. Just like in the coal mines here, it seems everyone has a nickname.

On March 6, we flew about one hour north to Brisbane, Australia to meet with the Chief Inspector of Mines in the state of Queensland. Later in the day we flew farther north to the town of Mackay, Queensland. The next day we drove 4 hours southwest to visit the Oaky Number One mine. We spent the night in a little coal mine town called Emerald. On our drive to Emerald, I had made the statement I could not believe I had flown half way around the world and had not seen any kangaroos yet. Low and behold no sooner had the words come out of my mouth when one of the guys with us said there's one in the bushes along the road. Of course we turned around and went back to take several pictures.

The next day we visited another mine the Oaky North mine.

Although we did not get to see as much of Sydney as I would have liked, because we were traveling and working some pretty long hours, what I was able to see was breathtaking. The Australian people were very friendly and very hospitable. Believe it or not, they said I was the one with the accent. Gooday mate!

For Your Information

Checking New Mine Openings

It might be a good time to review several inspection points to be used when checking highwall and surface areas where new deep mines are being opened. This is especially important since so many new mines are opening this year. First, consider the highwall. It should be stable with no loose rocks and either sloped or benched for safety. Many consider a sloped-back, intact highwall of 50 feet or less as acceptable. Higher walls or fragmented walls should have one or more safety bench provided, and may require screening. Be sure adequate highwall is exposed to provide a minimum of 50 feet of solid coal between drift entries, and allow a

safe distance adjacent to the outer entries. Enough material should be removed so that entries begin only in sound rock rather than loose shale, dirt or hill seams. Remember too that old reclaimed underground workings very likely may be dangerously near the new mine entrance. Trees on top and sides of the highwall / surface area should be cut back approximately 15 feet. Stumps can be left to sprout and help secure soil and prevent erosion. Look carefully for large slips of bodies of soil in fill areas indicated by tension cracks developing in soil above the highwall. Three permanent survey markers located in sound, undisturbed soil should be cemented below the frost line to prevent weathering. Look for a stream nearby and consider the watershed upstream of the mine opening. See what provision has been made to prevent floodwater form entering the new mine. Be sure adequate roadbed width is developed on access roads leading to the mine to assure large vehicles can safely pass. Switchbacks should be enlarged so trucks can make curves without backing. Sufficient roadbed width should be developed so that strong, permanent berms can rest on solid ground for stability. Consider the need for truck escape ramps or straddle berms strategically placed to prevent run-away truck accidents. Photographs help when discussing problem areas where corrections need to be made so that expensive misunderstandings are prevented.



Highwall prepared for new mine opening.

West Virginia Encyclopedia

On June 20th, WV's birthday, the West Virginia Humanities Council will make available one of the most comprehensive books ever

published on West Virginia. *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* is the result of nearly nine years labor. The book will have over 900 pages and was written by several hundred contributors. The *Encyclopedia* will contain over 2,000 articles about the Mountain State and its history. You can order copies by contacting the WV Humanities Council at www.wvhumanities.org or by calling: 304-346-8500 The publication price is \$44.95, Early orders will receive a discount of 25%.

Up Close and Personal

Ray Blevins former Inspector-at-Large of the Welch Office died 3/30/2006, our condolences go out to the family.

We take this time to say goodbye and best wishes to **Ron Vance**, **Doug Conaway**, **Tim Bradford** and **Glen Fields**. Ron retired April 1. Doug has become Director of Corporate Safety for Arch Coal Inc. and will be relocating to St. Louis, Missouri. Tim Bradford resigned last month to return to private practice. Glen Fields resigned from Danville Region to return to the industry. **James Dingess** has been hired as an Underground Inspector in the Danville Region. **Randy Bell** has been rehired as an Underground Inspector in the Oak Hill Region and will be temporarily helping with inspections in Danville. Welcome, James and Randy.



MAY FLOWERS

This newsletter is published bimonthly by the WV Office of MHS&T

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