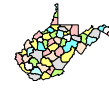




MINER DETAILS



Volume 6 Issue 5

WV Office of Miners' Health, Safety & Training

October 2001

BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From the Director's Office

I recently attended my 1st National Mine Rescue Contest held in Louisville, KY. I am pleased to report that a couple of WV teams fared well in the final contest standings. Congratulations go out to the Eastern Associated Coal Corp.'s Southern Appalachia Team. They won 1st place in the Combination Team event and their First Aid team (Team A led by Jackie Repass) won 1st place. Their First Aid Team (Team B led by Harvey Ferrell) placed 3rd in the National Competition. A total of 39 different teams from across the United States participated. The National Mine Rescue Contest winner for 2001 was the Consol Energy Enlow Fork Team from West Finley, PA.

The reality of all this training faced one of the teams shortly after their return home to Brookwood, AL. The Jim Walters Resources, Inc. JWR #5 Team was called to active duty on Sunday at the Jim Walters Resources Blue Creek #5 Mine. An explosion had occurred at the #5 mine at approximately 5:45 P.M. Sunday. Thirty-two miners were inside at the time of the explosion. Later, the rescue team was forced to leave the mine due to high concentrations of harmful gases. Six miners were in the area of the explosion, and three of those were able to escape. Unofficial reports indicate that 4 miners died and 9 others are missing.

Such a tragedy is a sad situation. My heart goes out to the families who have lost loved ones in this accident. This accident touches home in that I personally knew one of the victims, Sammy Joe Riggs, formerly from Roderfield, WV. Also another of the missing

miners, Joseph Sorah, was formerly from Welch. Both were former McDowell County residents.

I want to thank the Staff from MHS&T for the work performed at the National Contest. The long hours worked by the employees was very helpful in making the contest a great event. Once again, thank you to all MHS&T employees who worked so hard in Louisville.

C.A. Phillips, Deputy Director

Agency Accomplishments

MHS&T at the State Fair

Again this year the employees of our agency manned an informational booth during the week of the State Fair. The most popular handout item we had were fans with over 1,000 given each day. Everyone who worked the fair seemed to enjoy the experience and we received very high marks for professionalism from the judges. Our booth won first place for "booth display" in the grandstand area. There were approximately forty-five booths in the judging.

Inside this Newsletter:

- *From the Director's Office*
- *Agency Accomplishments*
- *For Your Information*
- *Winter Alert*
- *Did You Know?*
- *Up Close and Personal*

For Your Information

National Mine Rescue Contest

The National Mine Rescue, First Aid and Bench Contests were held in Louisville, KY, September 17-21, 2001. Three very difficult ventilation problems were laid out

for the 39 teams that came from all over the United States to compete for the national championship. Some of the teams could not work the problem without causing an explosion or moving a poisonous gas over a live person.

Contest winners were: First place Mine Rescue, Consol Energy, Enlow Fork Mine, West Finley, Pa.; First place First Aid, Eastern Associated Coal Corp. Southern Appalachia team, Twilight, WV; First place Bench, The American Coal Co. Galatia Mine, Harrisburg, IL. First place Combination, Eastern Associated Coal Corp., Southern Appalachia team, Twilight, WV.

2002 State Mine Rescue Contest

The WV State Mine Rescue Contest has been moved up to July 16 and 17 instead of September. This change has been made because several contests were too close together. The Blacksville contest is still scheduled in early August and the Southern WV contest is still scheduled in late August.

Winter Alert

The recent explosion at the Jim Walter mine in Alabama that reportedly cost thirteen lives should warn us of the dangers associated with the fall and winter months. Mines always become dryer and dustier as cooler outside air travels into the mine. Also, lower barometric pressure associated with storm fronts moving across our state cause more methane gas to liberate in the working places. Old workings are harder to ventilate during a time of low barometric pressure. Seals may begin to leak; low oxygen and methane may expand out from abandoned areas and into active

workings. Be sure all underground workings are kept well rock dusted. Keep a careful watch of underground bleeder evaluation points and be sure proper methane exams are made as working places advance.

Checklist for Underground Coal Mines

A drop in barometric pressure can increase the release of methane in underground coal mines. Always maintain adequate ventilation and make frequent checks for methane and proper airflow.

Know your mine ventilation plan. Properly maintain methane detection devices. Communicate changing mine conditions to one another during each shift and to the oncoming shift.

Properly maintain and check bleeder systems to ventilate abandoned areas and remove dangerous gases.

Control coal dust with frequent and liberal applications of rock dust. Maintain water sprays and other coal dust suppression devices in good working condition.

Make frequent visual and vibration checks of mine roof during each shift. Never travel under unsupported roof.

Know your escapeways and mine emergency procedures. Always keep your self-contained self-rescuer close at hand. Now is a good time to conduct refresher training in the proper donning of your self-contained self-rescuer.

Temperature and humidity changes in the winter months cause the interior of mines to become drier and create a greater potential for fires. Always know the exact location of fire fighting equipment and maintain such equipment in proper operating condition.

Checklist for Surface Work Areas

Freezing and thawing conditions affect highwall stability. Watch for loose and falling rocks when working near highwalls.

Frost, ice, snow and mud on steps and catwalks increase slip and fall hazards. Use caution when traveling elevated walkways and mounting and dismounting equipment. Always use handrails.

Keep the windshields, windows, and mirrors on all mobile equipment free of frost, ice, snow and mud to ensure a clear line of vision.

Icy conditions create rough roadways and increase the braking time and distance needed to control heavy mobile equipment. Equipment operators should think ahead when operating in these conditions.

Regularly check mobile equipment exhaust systems for leaks that may allow carbon monoxide to enter operator's cabs.

Hypothermia slows reaction time and can kill a person. Dress for the weather, but watch heavy clothing that may interfere with your mobility, vision or hearing. Also watch bulky clothing around electric heaters, open flames, and machinery.

Did you Know?

How Electricity is Produced by *Jim Berry* When two materials rub together, due to friction contact, some electron orbits of the materials cross each other and one material may give up electrons to the other. If this happens, static charges are built up in the materials, and friction has thus been a source of electricity. Example: When the humidity is low, a person can rub their feet across carpet and touch a metal file cabinet and can actually see and feel the discharge. This discharge also happens by touching another person.

Across the Board Pay Increase

October 1, the 3rd and final \$756.00 across-the-board pay increase becomes effective and will be reflected in the mid-October paycheck.

Up Close and Personal

Veterans' Day

We should make this Veterans' Day special. At the monthly staff meetings, perhaps there could be a show of hands or a "calling of the roll" of the veterans in each office. All of these men and women deserve our sincere thanks for the services they gave to our country.



Thank you to all those employees who helped with the Bureau of Commerce Picnic. A follow-up article will be in the next issue.

John Collins of the Buckhannon office spends his leisure time with his granddaughter Camcyn Brook, hunting and fishing. John says, the - *Spot Light* - ranks high on the list of special techniques. John enjoys collecting mining items, shopping at flea markets, antique shows, yard sales and is a Christmas tree grower and trimmer. **Kip Bell** of the Welch office spends his leisure time with his daughter, playing golf and tennis and fishing. Kip enjoys shopping at the mall and watching WVU football games. **John Griffith** of the Danville office spends his leisure time golfing, watching sports- especially NASCAR - and collecting Dale Earnhardt collectibles. John enjoys his granddaughter Rachael, and officiating high school football and softball games. **James Matthews** of the Danville office spends his leisure time fishing, gardening and woodworking. James enjoys golf, bowling and hunting ginseng.

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

Governor Bob Wise

Doug Conaway, Director

Contact Person: Dave Kessler

Visit the agency's website at:

www.state.wv.us/mhst