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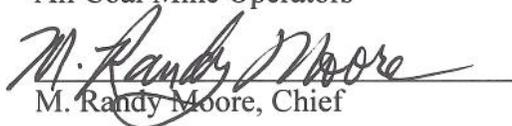
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy

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MEMORANDUM DM-14-03

TO: All Coal Mine Operators

FROM: 
M. Randy Moore, Chief

SUBJECT: **Remote Control Continuous Miners**

DATE: August 18, 2014

As you probably know, a Virginia coal miner lost his life earlier this year as he was tramming a remote control continuous miner between working places. The miner had positioned himself in the “red zone” and was pinned between the conveyor boom and the rib. Since 1990, 34 coal miners have died in the nation while tramming or servicing a remote control continuous miner. Six of those miners were Virginians. Numerous other injuries and close calls have occurred as a result of coal miners working in the “Red Zone” around remote control operated continuous miners.

After the most recent fatal accident, Division of Mines (DM) personnel met with representatives of manufacturers of Proximity Detection Systems that are currently available for installation on continuous miners and with representatives of major coal companies in Virginia. After soliciting information from both groups, the DM is convinced that Proximity Detection Systems are proven technology, have the potential to save the lives of many coal miners, and are readily available.

The Virginia Coal Mine Safety Board (CMSB) is also in support of implementation of the proximity detection technology. The CMSB is an advisory board with representatives from labor, industry, and the public. After receiving briefings from the DM in May 2014 and, after reviewing this memorandum, the Board is in support of requiring Proximity Detection Systems to be installed on continuous mining machines in Virginia.

Based on a review of accidents and fatalities that have occurred while moving a remote control operated continuous miner, the DM is, effective **October 1, 2014**, requiring all remote control operated continuous miners in Virginia to be equipped with Proximity Detection Systems

or use a designated spotter during moves. Underground operators who have continuous miners equipped with a deck may elect to tram them from the deck.

The DM has determined that moving or tramping a remote control operated continuous miner without adequate safety precautions is a “hazardous condition or practice.” Section 45.1-161.21.D of the *Coal Mine Safety Laws of Virginia* (CMSL) authorizes the DM Chief to require operators to submit for approval an Action Plan to address hazardous conditions or practices. Thus, all underground coal mine operators must submit an Action Plan prior to **October 1, 2014**, to address remote control operation of continuous miners. The Action Plan must include provisions for either equipping remote control operated continuous miners with Proximity Detection Systems; operated from the deck, if present; or utilizing a spotter during moves. In lieu of an Action Plan, the operator may elect to submit a supplement to the Roof Control Plan to the DM. Underground coal mine operators who have proximity detection systems installed on their remote control operated continuous miners and choose not to operate the continuous miners if the proximity detection system becomes inoperative, are not required to submit an Action Plan.

The DM has created a “Sample Action Plan” which incorporates the above stipulations for the use of underground coal mine operators. The plan is attached and, as always, may be modified by the mine operator to fit his or her individual needs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your assigned DM Inspector, any DM representative, or you can contact me at 276-523-8226 or Marshall.Moore@dmme.virginia.gov. Thank you.

djm

Attachment

ACTION PLAN

Remote Control Continuous Miners

Company Name

Mine Name or Number

Date

DM Mine Index Number

The following Action Plan is being submitted to address tramping or moving a continuous miner from place to place:

1. Remote control operated continuous miners will be equipped with a MSHA approved proximity detection system; use a trained spotter; or if equipped with a deck, operated from the deck when tramping or moving from place to place.
2. A “spotter” will be utilized to assist the continuous miner operator during moves if a remote control operator continuous miner is not equipped with an approved proximity detection system or if the installed proximity detection system is not functioning.
3. The spotter will be an authorized person, designated by the foreman, who has been trained in the remote control operation of a continuous miner.
4. The spotter will be within sight and sound of the continuous miner operator at all times during the moving process.
5. The mine foreman will ensure that all persons on the section, involved with moving continuous miners, are fully trained in safe procedures that have been established and approved for moving Remote Control Operational Continuous Miners from place to place.

COMPANY OFFICIAL

TITLE