

FATAL INJURY ACCIDENT: March 2014

Miner Struck By Water Pipe

On March 27, 2014, a 64-year-old certified mine foreman with 31 years of mining experience was seriously injured when he was struck in the head by a piece of process water pipe as it was being moved by an excavator. Another certified mine foreman was operating the excavator at the time of the accident. The six-inch diameter high density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe was being repositioned to one side of a power-line pole. The pipe, which was lying unsecured across the excavator bucket, was raised in the air by the excavator operator in order to clear the pole. The victim, who arrived on the scene unexpectedly, was standing approximately 20 feet away from the excavator and began giving hand signals to the excavator operator indicating that the pipe was clear of the pole. As the operator began backing up the excavator to reposition the pipe, the pipe slipped off the bucket and struck the victim in the head and neck. The excavator operator was unaware that the victim had changed his position and did not know he was injured until he saw him lying on the ground next to the pipe. Local EMS personnel transported the injured miner to a local hospital for treatment and evaluation. The miner died on March 30, 2014, from the injuries he sustained.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Virginia Division of Mineral Mining's investigation determined the accident occurred because the mine operator did not have an established procedure to safely move the discharge pipe. No method had been incorporated to secure the pipe against dangerous motion while moving, and no measures were in place or being practiced to ensure all personnel in the work area were clear prior to and during movement of the equipment and pipe. To aid in avoiding this type of accident, DMM recommends:

- Mine operators should establish safe procedures for performing this kind of work. All mine personnel shall be trained in proper job procedures (4VAC25-40-100).
- Persons on the ground shall remain clear of equipment in operation (4VAC25-40-1600).
- Persons shall stay clear of suspended loads (4VAC25-40-2600).
- Equipment operators shall be certain that all persons are clear prior to moving their equipment and when equipment is in motion (4VAC25-40-1340).
- All miners shall be trained in the proper procedures associated with all assigned tasks, and discuss any potential hazards that are unique to the work being performed (4VAC25-40-100).
- All loads should be adequately secured prior to moving to prevent unexpected movement.



Accident Scene