

District 2 – Coal Mine Near Miss



On July 21, 2004, a loader operator , began his shift at 0600 hours and made final preparations to begin loading coal from the 026 pit. The employee then began loading coal using a Gradall XL5200L into a Caterpillar D400E haulage truck operated by his supervisor. At approximately 11:30 AM, the truck operator noticed some material beginning to dribble from the highwall and radioed the loader operator to get out of the pit. The loader operator rotated the bucket and operator's compartment approximately 180 degrees and was attempting to exit the pit when the highwall collapsed covering the Gradall and the back end of the haulage truck. The truck operator radioed the scale house for help and then assisted in getting the loader operator out of the cab of the Gradall. He was then transported to the hospital via ambulance. The loader operator received several minor cuts and a sprained ankle.

Best Practices

- Train all employees in highwall hazard recognition.
- Conduct examinations prior to beginning work around highwalls, and as frequent as necessary to ensure safety, especially during periods of changing weather conditions. Inspect the top and bottom of the highwall for cracking, spalling, sloughage, loose ground, and large rocks that could be hazardous.
- Ensure loose material is scaled prior to performing work. To safely scale using the shovel, maintain the highwall height within the reach of the bucket.
- Position the shovel and trucks so that the shovel cab swings away from the highwall when loading.