

News Release



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Commission ruling raises MSHA penalties against Alabama coal mine *Mine operator failed to follow ventilation plan, conduct adequate preshift exam*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that an administrative law judge with the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission increased penalties assessed against Shelby Mining Co. from \$7,684 to \$10,000. The administrative law judge upheld two unwarrantable failures issued by MSHA in November 2007 regarding the coal mine operator’s ventilation plan and conducting an adequate preshift examination.

The violations occurred at the company’s Coke Mine #1 near Montevallo, Ala., and both arose from the operator’s failure to have ventilation curtains in place to sweep methane gas from the face of an active mining area. The preshift violation was issued for the operator’s failure to detect and correct the lack of ventilation curtains.

Coke Mine #1, which has since closed, was an extremely gassy mine liberating more than 7 million cubic feet of highly explosive methane gas every 24 hours. Proper ventilation in such a gassy mine is an important component for mine safety.

“Before the inspector issued the citation and order in dispute, the mine had experienced six previous methane ignitions, one of which resulted in serious burns to two miners,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Those ignitions should have raised sufficient concern for the mine operator to take the necessary steps to protect its miners.”

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