

News Release



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MSHA issues Big Laurel Mining Corp. more than \$542,000 in violations *Southwestern Virginia coal mine fined in 2009 mining fatality*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced \$542,400 in proposed penalties against Big Laurel Mining Corp. The mining operation, located in Wise County, Va., was cited for five contributory violations in the August 2009 death of an electrician/repairman who was fatally injured when a portion of mine rib collapsed upon him. Two of the violations have been assessed as flagrant.

On Aug. 20, 2009, the 58-year-old miner with 33 years experience was preparing to set timbers in an entryway when a rock measuring 26 feet long, 2.5 feet wide and 5 feet high toppled, and struck and crushed him. One day earlier, a hazardous condition noting excessive (wide) entry width in the No. 4 Entry had been logged in the pre-shift book, but the operator failed to correct the condition and made no notations in the evening on-shift and pre-shift reports.

A combination of factors occurred prior to the accident. MSHA investigators determined that the mine operator 1) did not properly utilize a sightline or other directional control to maintain the projected direction of mining, 2) failed to follow the approved roof control plan, 3) failed to perform adequate pre-shift and on-shift examinations and 4) failed to adequately support the rib. The first two determinations were flagged as flagrant violations, which can carry fines up to \$220,000 each.

“The importance of pre-shift and on-shift examinations can never be overstated,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Had the adverse conditions been detected and logged into the exam books properly, and had management overseen the detection and correction of those hazardous conditions, this tragedy could have been avoided.”

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