

In the matter of:
Knight Hawk Coal, LLC
Prairie Eagle Underground Mine
Mine I.D. 11-03147

Petition for Modification

Docket No. M-2008-047-C

PROPOSED DECISION AND ORDER

On October 2, 2008, Knight Hawk Coal, LLC (Petitioner), filed a petition requesting modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1101-1(b) to petitioner's Prairie Eagle Underground Mine located in Perry County, Illinois. 30 C.F.R. § 75.1101-1(b) states:

Nozzles attached to the branch lines shall be full cone, corrosion resistant and provided with blow-off dust covers. The spray application rate shall not be less than 0.25 gallon per minute per square foot of the top surface of the top belt and the discharge shall be directed at both the upper and bottom surfaces of the top belt and to the upper surface of the bottom belt.

Petitioner proposes to conduct weekly examinations and functional testing of the deluge fire suppression systems in lieu of the blow-off dust covers for nozzles required by the standard. The petitioner alleges that the alternative method outlined in the petition will, at all times, guarantee no less than the same measure of protection afforded by the standard.

MSHA personnel conducted an investigation of the petition at the Prairie Eagle Underground Mine and filed a report of their findings with the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health. After a careful review of the entire record, including the petition and MSHA's investigative report, this Proposed Decision and Order is issued.

Finding of Fact and Conclusion of Law

Contaminated mine water systems and corrosion deposits create restrictions that result in reduction or closure of the water spray orifices on fire suppression systems. In order to ensure that the fire system is functional and adequate, a method of visual examination coupled with a measuring mechanism of the residual water pressure is necessary.

The proposed alternative method, as amended by MSHA, will at all times provide the same measure of protection to the miners as afforded the miners under 30 C.F.R. § 75.1101-1(b). On the basis of the petition and the findings of MSHA's investigation,

Knight Hawk Coal, LLC is granted a modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1101-1(b) to its Prairie Eagle Underground Mine.

ORDER

Wherefore, under the authority delegated by the Secretary of Labor to the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health, and pursuant to Section 101(c) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 811(c), it is ordered that Knight Hawk Coal, LLC's Petition for Modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1101-1(b) to the Prairie Eagle Underground Mine is hereby:

GRANTED, for the weekly examination and functional testing of deluge-type water spray systems installed at belt-conveyor drives in lieu of blow-off dust covers for nozzles, conditioned upon compliance with the following terms and conditions:

1. Once every seven (7) days, a person trained in the procedures for testing the deluge-type water spray fire suppression systems utilized at each belt drive shall:
 - (a) Conduct a visual examination of each of the deluge-type water spray fire suppression systems.
 - (b) Conduct a functional test of the deluge-type water spray fire suppression systems by actuating the system and observing its performance.
 - (c) Take residual pressure measurements at the most hydraulically-demanding nozzle to determine whether the system meets the manufacturer's specifications.
 - (d) Record the results of the examination, functional test, and residual pressure measurements in a book maintained on the surface for that purpose. The record shall be made available to authorized representatives of the Secretary and be retained at the mine for one year.
2. Any malfunction or clogged nozzle detected as a result of the weekly examination and functional test shall be corrected immediately.
3. The procedures used to perform the functional test shall be posted at or near each belt drive that utilizes a deluge-type water spray fire suppression system.

4. Within 60 days after this Proposed Decision and Order becomes final, the Petitioner shall submit proposed revisions for its approved 30 C.F.R. Part 48 training plan to the Coal Mine Safety and Health District Manager. These proposed revisions shall specify the procedures used to conduct the weekly functional test and the initial and refresher training regarding the terms and conditions specified by the Proposed Decision and Order.

Any party to this action desiring a hearing on this matter must file in accordance with 30 C.F.R. § 44.14, within 30 days. The request for hearing must be filed with the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health, 1100 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209-3939. If a hearing is requested, the request shall contain a concise summary of position on the issues of fact or law desired to be raised by the party requesting the hearing, including specific objections to the proposed decision.

A party other than Petitioner who has requested a hearing may also comment upon all issues of fact or law presented in the petition and any party to this action requesting a hearing may indicate a desired hearing site. If no request for a hearing is filed within 30 days after service thereof, the Decision and Order will become final and must be posted by the operator on the mine bulletin board at the mine.

Charles J. Thomas
Acting Deputy Administrator for
Coal Mine Safety and Health