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Sent via e-mail and U.S. Postal Service

October 13, 2006

MSHA
Office of Standards, Regulations and Variances
1100 Wilson Blvd., Room 2350
Arlington, VA 22209-3939

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Subject: Interwest Mining Company regarding ``PPL P06-V-9-- Emergency Response Plan, Post-Accident Breathable Air''.

The attached are comments made by Interwest Mining Company regarding ``PPL P06-V-9-- Emergency Response Plan, Post-Accident Breathable Air''.

MSHA requests information on the following issues related to the breathable air provision of the MINER Act:

A. Emergency Supply of Breathable Air

1. What factors should MSHA consider in determining a "sustained period of time?" Should a specific time period be adopted? If so, what is the appropriate time period and why? The Agency has received suggestions ranging from one hour of post-accident breathable air to a continuous supply. Please include the rationale for the recommended period of time.

Interwest Mining Company believes 48 hours is a sustained period of time. At our mine, it would be extremely difficult to place supply lines in the mine or through bore holes due to the cover and terrain over our mines and the distance from the outside to the working sections of our mines.

2. Should factors such as mine size, mine design and layout, number of miners potentially affected, and distance from the portals to the working section be used, and if so, how, in determining the sufficient quantity of breathable air? What other factors should be considered and how should they be considered?

Interwest Mining believes that all of the factors mentioned above should be utilized to determine sufficient quantities of breathable air. In addition, the coal

seam height, the amount of portals that can be utilized for escape and the ventilation design(s) should be utilized to determine breathable air quantities.

3. Where should the post-accident breathable air supply be located in relation to: working sections; outby work stations; and along travel routes?

Interwest Mining Company believes post accident breathable air should be stored within 1000 feet of each working section and at strategic locations in the outby areas as determined by the mine operator.

4. The MINER Act requires that plans be periodically updated to reflect changes in operations in the mine. What specific changes in operations would result in a need to update the breathable air provision of the plan?

Interwest Mining believes the plan should be written so that the operator does not have to change it. If the operator designates the air storage will be within a certain distance of every operating section or section being set up, and at certain central locations outby known to all the miners, then the plan should not have to be changed unless technology provides a reason to change.

B. Oxygen Sources

1. Please provide information and make recommendations on the best way to provide breathable air. Please elaborate on the arguments for and against using oxygen, compressed air, or chemically-induced oxygen to maintain trapped miners for a sustained period of time. What other available means of technology appropriate to maintain miners would you recommend, and why?

Interwest Mining Company believes compressed air should be allowed. If compressed air was utilized, it should be filtered to remove oils and carbon monoxide from the source. Oxygen could present hazards. At mines where drilling from the surface is possible, a borehole should be predrilled into a rescue area with a pipe ready to hook compressed air onto to blow into the location. Not all mines would be able to do this due to the amount of cover over the mines.

2. MSHA solicits information on how compressed air lines routed through mine openings could be protected against damage from explosion or fire. How could techniques such as burying or armoring air lines provide adequate protection?

Interwest Mining Company believes the lines would have to be on the floor and covered with dirt to protect them from roof falls. I think most mines are using plastic (HDPE) air pipes today because of cost and ease of installation. MSHA should not require mines to use steel lines so they are more likely to survive an explosion or fire because that would just encourage mines to not run air pipes. Interwest mining Company believes that if a mine chooses to run pipe for compressed air, they should have their choice of materials.

3. MSHA solicits information on availability and possible obstacles in developing and deploying systems for providing oxygen.

Interwest Mining Company believes systems should provide breathing air and not Oxygen. Oxygen supports combustion and potentially could present a bigger fire hazard.

C. Emergency Shelters

Section 13 of the MINER Act requires the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to conduct research concerning various types of refuge alternatives, including commercially-available portable refuge chambers. In the interim, MSHA solicits comments on the use of emergency shelters which contain sufficient quantities of post-accident breathable air to maintain trapped miners.

Interwest Mining Company has reservations concerning refuge chambers in coal mines. As stated in previous comments we believe every effort should be made to exit the mine. However, if mines develop their version of refuge chambers such as air-locks or other similar areas where miners could congregate this should be acceptable. Some mines will be purchasing commercially available shelters before MSHA's specifications are finalized. (Just like the lifeline specs.) Shelters obtained before the spec's are available should be grandfathered for their full lives, not just for 3 years.

1. Until specifications for refuge alternatives are developed, what type of emergency shelters (e.g., inflatable or other portable quick-deploy designs) should be provided, what safety features should they offer, where should they be located, and why?

Interwest Mining Company believes inflatable stoppings would be easy to develop and quick to deploy, but there is nothing available on the market right now. Specs for inflatables should be developed quickly so that manufacturers can design a workable unit. We think they are much more attractive than traditional barricades. However, as stated in the previous question, we believe air locks or other similar designs should be accepted by MSHA that would have the ability to store food and breathable air.

2. How should the use of emergency shelters be tied to emergency supplies of breathable air?

Interwest Mining Company believes the emergency shelters and supplies of breathable air should be stored together.

3. If post-accident breathable air is provided through emergency shelters, provide information on appropriate distances between installations and proximity to working sections. Please provide specific feasibility considerations, if any.

Interwest Mining Company believes it should be within 1000 feet of working section or section under construction and strategic outby locations determined by the operator.

4. Under what circumstances, if any, could a barricade be used as an emergency shelter to provide post-accident breathable air?

Interwest Mining Company believes the operator should be able to choose what works best for each particular mine. If the mine chooses to build air-lock structures that could contain food, breathable air, etc., it should be allowed to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Ralph Sanich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ralph Sanich
Manager, Health Safety and Training
Interwest Mining Company
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