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PROGRAM POLICY LETTER NO. P12-V-3

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SUBJECT: Reporting of Unplanned Roof Falls in Accordance with 30 C.F.R. § 50.10

Scope

This Program Policy Letter (PPL) applies to underground coal mine operators, miners' representatives, independent contractors, Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) enforcement personnel.

Purpose

This PPL provides guidance to the mining community for the reporting of accidents involving roof falls as required by 30 C.F.R. § 50.10.

Policy

Which unplanned roof falls must operators report? The following are types of unplanned roof falls that must be reported under 30 C.F.R. §§ 50.2 and 50.10:

- Any roof fall that resulted in death, injury with potential to cause death, or entrapment for 30 minutes or with the potential to cause death.
- Any unplanned roof fall at or above the anchorage zone in active workings where roof bolts are in use
- Any unplanned roof or rib fall in active workings that impairs ventilation or impedes passage
- Any coal or rock outburst that causes withdrawal of miners or which disrupts regular mining activity for more than one hour.

Are there other requirements related to roof falls? In addition, under 30 C.F.R. § 75.223(b), underground coal mine operators must plot on a mine map each roof or rib fall and coal or rock burst that occurs in active workings if it:

(1) is above the anchorage zone where roof bolts are used;
(2) impairs ventilation;
(3) impedes passage of persons;
(4) causes miners to be withdrawn from the affected area; or
(5) disrupts regular mining activities for more than one hour.

Under § 75.223(c), this map must be available at the mine site to authorized representatives of the Secretary and the miners.

What does "active workings" mean? For underground coal mines, under 30 C.F.R. § 75.2 "active workings" are defined as "Any place in a coal mine where miners are normally required to work or travel." Examples of areas in a coal mine that could be an active working include: the working section, primary and secondary escapeways, belt or haulage entries, travelways to any producing or nonproducing sections, travelways through bleeder entries to and including evaluation points and measurement point locations, travelways from the tailgate entry of a longwall section, pump locations, normal examiner routes, re-designated travelways and escapeways, and any other areas that miners normally work or travel.

An active working does not include worked out areas or areas adjacent to active workings that are not normally traveled such as common entries in a single aircourse and unmaintained entries. These areas should be dangered-off to prevent persons from traveling through them.

What are some examples of reportable and non-reportable roof falls?

- An unplanned roof fall that impedes travel occurs anywhere on the working section where bolts are installed.
  Reportable - Miners are regularly required to work or travel in this area.

- An unplanned roof fall above the proposed anchorage horizon occurs inby the last row of bolts on the working section.
  Non-Reportable This is not an area where miners normally work or travel, and roof bolts are not in use.

- A main return aircourse has three common entries adjacent to a main intake aircourse. The examiner normally travels the #1 entry. The stopping line for separating the return aircourse from the intake is between the #3 and #4 entries. An unplanned roof fall above the anchorage zone occurs in the #2 entry (not a crosscut used for access to examine or maintain permanent ventilation controls) at a time when the area is dangered off to prevent entry.

Non-Reportable– This is not an area where miners normally work or travel.

- An escapeway must be temporarily re-designated and an unplanned roof fall that impedes passage occurs in the re-designated escapeway.
  Reportable – This area has been re-designated as an escapeway (where miners would travel)

- A mine is using 6-foot fully-grouted resin bolts as primary support. An unplanned roof fall occurs that is 3-feet high in a return aircourse that does not impair ventilation or impede travel through the aircourse.
  Non-Reportable – This fall does not impair ventilation or impede travel and is not at or above the anchorage zone where roof bolts are installed.

Background

MSHA standards at 30 C.F.R. § 50.10 require operators to immediately report specific types of unplanned roof falls as "accidents." Under 30 C.F.R. § 50.2, an "accident" includes an unplanned roof fall at or above the anchorage zone in the active workings where roof bolts are being used. An "accident" also includes an unplanned roof or rib fall in active workings that impairs ventilation or impedes travel.

The reporting and map plotting of roof fall accidents that occur in the active workings of a mine assist the operator and MSHA in evaluating the effectiveness of the roof control system and identifying hazardous trends in areas where miners normally work or travel. Under 30 C.F.R. § 75.223(d), MSHA reviews roof control plans at least every six months, taking roof, face and rib falls into consideration. Under 30 C.F.R. § 75.223(a), the operator must propose revisions of the roof control plan when roof falls at a mine indicate the plan is inadequate. Further clarifying areas that require reporting of roof falls will make evaluations of roof control plans more consistent and effective.

Authority

The Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq.; 30 C.F.R. §§ 50.2, 50.10, 57.2, 75.2 and 75.223.

Internet Availability

The PPL may be viewed on the Internet by accessing the MSHA home page (www.msha.gov) and choosing "Compliance Info" and "Program Policy Letters."

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*Per PIB P14-04 the expiration date was removed.

**Contact information was updated on 7/25/14.