



May 27, 2003 - Summary of a Non-Fatal Surge-Pile Accident, at Big Ridge, Inc., Willow Lake Central Preparation Plant, Saline County, IL.

In this accident, a Caterpillar D10 bulldozer fell into a void located above the No. 1 feeder at a clean coal reclaim surge pile. In order to do some clean-up work on the other side of the surge pile, the dozer operator traveled across the feeder. As he traveled back across the same path, he noticed the feeder indicator light was on indicating the feeder was operating. The feeder was not previously operating, and the dozer operator was unsure of the exact feeder location. As the dozer traveled back across the top of the coal pile, it fell backward and sideways into the void. The bulldozer operator immediately called the load-out operator to shutdown the feeder. When the load-out operator stopped the feeder, the bulldozer stopped sliding into the feeder cavity. The dozer operator was not injured.

Contributing factors in the development of the void included an idle pile for three days due to a holiday weekend, compaction of the pile, and a latex binder added to the coal. The latex binder was added to the coal by an adjacent synthetic fuel treatment plant.

The operator of the surge piles in Case #7 and #8 had implemented only a few of MSHA's recommended "Best Practices". Reportedly, since the occurrence of these two incidents, the operator has installed a Trimble Recon GPS system and tilt system (inclinometers) on one of 3 dozers at this site. In addition, the operator is reportedly considering the use of high-strength glass in the dozer cabs.