

**U.S. Department of Labor**  
**Mine Safety and Health Administration**  
Protecting Miners' Safety and Health Since 1978

**SAFETY ALERT**  
**ROCK DUSTING**

Float coal dust is generated by coal mining processes. Float coal dust on the mine floor, ribs, roof, suspended items or other objects must be adequately inerted by the application of rock dust. The liberal application of rock dust is necessary to maintain the required minimum total incombustible content and prevents the possible propagation of explosions in underground coal mines. The Best Practices below are ways to help inert float coal dust and to maintain the required minimum total incombustible content.



**BEST PRACTICES**

- Continuously apply rock dust in immediate return entries for working sections while mining.
- Continuously apply rock dust in longwall tailgate entries while mining.
- Continuously apply rock dust downwind of belt transfer points while belts are running.
- Regularly apply rock dust in main return and bleeder entries.
- Use mechanical means to regularly apply rock dust into inaccessible worked-out areas.
- Regularly clean overhead items, such as waterlines, mesh, “bacon strips”, and standing roof supports to remove float coal dust.
- Ensure that rock dust is thoroughly applied to the roof, ribs, and floor of all safely accessible areas of the mine.
- Water should be used to wet and remove float coal dust from the roof and ribs during the mining process.
- Preshift and on-shift examinations should include observing for float coal dust accumulations. More frequent examinations for float coal dust accumulations should be conducted downwind of mining.



**REMEMBER:**  
Safety depends upon what you  
DO or DON'T DO.