

Subpart J      Travelways and Escapeways57.11050      Escapeways

This standard requires two or more separate escapeways to the surface at every underground mine. However, a second escapeway is recommended, but not required, during the exploration or development of an ore body. In this application, "exploration or development of an ore body" should be used in its narrowest sense, i.e., while an ore body is being initially developed, or development or exploration work is being conducted as an extension of a currently producing mine. Where mining occurs along a mineralized zone and production and development are indistinguishable as separate activities, the standard must be applied as it would to a producing mine.

A violation of 30 CFR 57.11050(a) exists and a citation must be issued whenever fewer than two functional escapeways out of an underground metal or nonmetal mine are available to miners working underground, even if the mine operator has started correcting the condition which caused the second escapeway to be nonfunctional. No violation of 30 CFR 57.11050(a) exists, however, if, upon there being fewer than two functional escapeways, the mine operator immediately initiates a continuous withdrawal of miners to the surface.

A "properly maintained" escapeway is an escapeway that is functional, providing the miners with a safe means of egress to the surface during a mine evacuation. There may be temporary periods when an escapeway is not immediately available, however, the functionality is still intact.

The following examples demonstrate situations that the Agency would consider to be functional escapeways. No violation of 30 CFR 57.11050(a) would exist in these circumstances:

- 1) When maintenance, repairs, or other interruption of service, and the removal from service does not affect the functional ability of the escapeway to enable miners to reach the surface in an emergency. For example, an interruption of service that would not usually affect the functioning of the escapeway would include the lubricating of hoist ropes, adjustment of hoist gates, replacement of bolts on the shaft guides, or the inspection of shafts, adits, or conveyances. If the functioning escapeway would not be impaired or affected in any way, i.e., if the work being performed or the inspection of the escapeway can immediately be terminated and the miners can

resume using the escapeway, the Agency would consider the escapeway to be "properly maintained."

2) When it is necessary to use the escapeway to lower mining equipment into, or retrieve mining equipment from the mine, and only miners facilitating the lowering or retrieving of mining equipment remain underground. As in the situation of miners working underground to perform maintenance or repair on the escapeway itself, in this situation the escapeway can be rapidly returned to service and only a few miners are stationed underground. The Agency believes that this policy interpretation reflects a reasonable accommodation of the concern for miners stationed underground to have a second escapeway out of the mine and the need to lower and retrieve mining equipment.

In setting an abatement time for any violation described above, an inspector or other authorized agency representative should, at a minimum, consider the following factors: the hazard(s) to miners, the time required to safely evacuate all but necessary maintenance personnel from the mine, the type of self-rescue devices available, the notification of all miners underground of the unavailability of the nonfunctional escapeway (including the instructions for use of the remaining escapeway in the case of an emergency), and the time required to return the affected escapeway to operation. The violation is abated when at least two escapeways are again fully functional or miners are no longer underground.

The second paragraph of this standard directs the positioning of a refuge within 30 minutes of a working place, where an employee cannot safely reach the surface within an hour.

57.11055            Inclined Escapeways

This standard requires an emergency hoisting facility only for that portion of a designated escapeway which is inclined more than 30 degrees and that is more than 300 feet in vertical extent. The vertical extent refers only to a continuous portion of a designated escapeway, and not to a composite of portions each less than 300 feet but more than 300 feet when combined.