# District 2 – Coal Mine Near Miss

On Monday, August 2, 2004, a preparation plant utility man began his shift at 6:00 am. At approximately 6:15 am the sizing screen, located outside the plant, plugged up. The utility man exited the plant and was traveling down along the #1 plant feed belt when he fell approximately nine feet through an eight foot long by two foot wide opening in the travel way. This section of walkway was removed on July 29, 2004, and was to be replaced at that time. However a break down in the plant resulted in the repairmen being sent to the plant before the section of walkway could be replaced. The area was not guarded to prevent persons from falling through the hole. The utility man received a fractured vertebra as the result of the fall.

**BEST PRACTICES**

- Protect accessible openings with substantial railings or barriers to prevent falls of persons.
- Establish procedures and train personnel in those procedures for removing, protecting, and replacing decking during construction or maintenance.