

## Fire in the hole!

*Dotiki 'sets the standard' with mine recovery effort*

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“Mine recovery efforts that should have taken three-to-four months to possibly a year were completed safely in only three-to-four weeks,” announced MSHA (Mine Safety and Health Administration) Assistant Secretary of Labor Dave D. Lauriski from Washington, D.C. during a press conference at Dotiki Mine on Friday, March 26.

Lauriski added, “Cooperation, technology and quick decision making contributed to the unusually quick recovery of the Dotiki Mine, located near Providence, following an equipment fire on a diesel supply tractor in this underground coal operation on Wednesday, Feb. 11.”

Personnel from Dotiki Mine, including mine rescue team members, MSHA and Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals (KDMM) are a prime example of working in harmony to evacuate 70 miners endangered by the fire and recovery efforts. Evacuation took less than one hour.

When Dotiki Mine Safety Director Mark Evans was asked how he felt about the recovery efforts he commented, “I was not surprised at all by the accomplishments and efforts received from all the company, state and federal personnel. We are all trained for mining events and must act very quickly and effectively when an incident arises. “

Evans is also a member of the Dotiki Mine Rescue Team who have finished first place in, seven of the last nine tri-county competitions.

Dotiki General Mine Foreman James Martin stated, “The fire was so hot we could not get to it underground. However, we knew all our miners were safely above ground within the first hour.”

With this joint cooperation and involvement of representatives, Dotiki Mine resumed production on March 8, after implementing state-of-the-art recovery plans to extinguish the mine fire.



Dotiki Mine Foreman Billy Mitchell explains the process used to build the fire wall at Dotiki Mine following the Feb. 11 underground fire.

Alliance Senior Vice President of Operations Charlie Wesley added, “Initial estimates indicated the mine could remain sealed for a period of several months to up to one year. However, due to the unprecedented success of the mine recovery efforts, Dotiki Mine resumed production only 28 days after the fire incident occurred.”

MSHA’s mine emergency operations team established surface monitoring points in and around the area of the fire. The data it collected assisted the company in developing a plan to install remote seals from the mine’s surface. These temporary seals in the main passageway cut off the air supply approximately three-and-one-half miles from the fire and isolated the fire from the sealed mine works.

The jointly developed recovery plans used remote sensing techniques to ascertain the extent of the fire damage and to monitor mine atmospheric conditions. Eighteen underground barriers or seals, at an average depth of 620 feet, were pumped through bore holes from the surface to establish a perimeter around the fire. Five observation and seven monitoring holes were also drilled.

In concert, inert gases (carbon dioxide and nitrogen) were injected into the fire zone to stabilize the mine atmosphere. Once the remote seal construction was completed and the mine atmosphere behind the seals was rendered inert (without oxygen), mine rescue personnel from Alliance’s Dotiki, White County, Gibson County and Warrior Coal along with MSHA and KDMM entered the mine, restored ventilation and constructed 32 permanent seals, effectively extinguishing the mine fire and totally isolating the affected area of the mine behind these seals.

**“We are honored by today’s (Friday) visit from Dave Lauriski,” said Alliance President and CEO Joseph W. Craft III. “The Alliance organization is committed to continuing work with MSHA’s Technical Support Department to refine the mine recovery methods used at the Dotiki Mine in order to benefit the entire coal industry.**

“As a result of the cooperative efforts and teamwork between MSHA, KDMM and Webster County Coal as well as all the others who supported the mine recovery efforts, we achieved mine recovery results never before seen in the coal mining industry. Even though Dotiki Mine returned to production in record time, we are particularly grateful that this occurred without injury to anyone involved in the around-the-clock firefighting and mine recovery operation.”

Craft added, “We appreciate the heroic teamwork of hundreds of individuals who were responsible for this extraordinary safety achievement. In addition, we are also grateful for the support of our local communities, landowners, customers and suppliers during the difficult times these past several weeks.”

Dotiki Mine is an underground mining complex that employs approximately 360 workers. The mine produces low-moisture, high-sulfur coal from the Kentucky No. Nine

coal seam utilizing continuous mining units and room-and-pillar techniques. Production for the mine during 2003 averaged approximately 407,000 tons per month.

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