

News Release



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MSHA fines New Mexico potash mine \$165,000

Management policies and procedures failed to ensure safe electrical conditions

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced it has assessed \$165,000 in fines against Intrepid Potash NM LLC in the August 2008 electrocution of a mine shift foreman.

On Aug. 6, 2008, Jeffrey R. Franklin, a shift foreman with 15 years experience, was fatally injured on the surface of the Intrepid Potash East Mine in Eddy County, N.M., when he came into contact with energized parts of a steel water line. The 38-year-old Franklin contacted conductors for a heat tape that had been installed in a shared conduit body with the conductors of a 480-volt electrical circuit. One of the conductors short-circuited to the heater tape, which was attached to the water line. The heat tape overheated and portions of the heat tape insulation melted away, leaving bare conductors.

“This tragic accident occurred because management policies and procedures failed to ensure that all potential electrical hazards in the plant were identified and corrected properly,” said Michael A. Davis, MSHA’s deputy assistant secretary for operations.

Accident investigators concluded that the conduit body was not effectively grounded, the 480-volt circuit was not protected from overloads with a properly sized circuit breaker, the conductors inside the conduit body were not protected from mechanical damage and the two abandoned circuits were not removed.

Three contributory citations issued to the mine operator were each assessed at \$55,000 for having the wrong capacity circuit breaker, failure to protect the conductors from mechanical damage and failure to effectively ground the lighting circuit.

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