

In the matter of:
S & M Coal Company
Buck Mountain Slope
I.D. No. 36-02022

Petition for Modification

Docket No. M-2008-001-C

PROPOSED DECISION AND ORDER

On January 8, 2008, a petition was filed seeking a modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1400 to Petitioner's Buck Mountain Slope, located in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. The Petitioner alleges that the alternative method outlined in the petition will at all times guarantee no less than the same measure of protection afforded by the standard.

It was found that the Buck Mountain Slope had an existing modification of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1400, which was granted to the mine under Docket No. M-1986-178-C on June 17, 1987. The modification allowed the use of a truck hoist. That installation consisted of a hoist drum welded to the rear wheel of a truck, which utilized the engine, drive train, and braking system of the converted highway vehicle as a man hoist. The truck hoist has been fully removed and replaced by a hoist designed for mine use and properly housed in a structure meeting applicable safety standards.

MSHA personnel conducted an investigation of the petition and filed a report of their findings and recommendations with the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health. After a careful review of the entire record, including the petition and MSHA's investigative report, this Proposed Decision and Order is issued.

Finding of Fact and Conclusion of Law

The investigation revealed that application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1400 to the subject mine will result in a diminution of safety to the miners and the special terms and conditions set out below will at all times provide a safe work environment to the miners.

MSHA's investigation verified that the hoist rope size (1-inch diameter, 6x19 classification hoist rope) and the secondary safety attachment of the same rope type and size provided the necessary strength to exceed three times the strength required by 30 C.F.R. § 75.1431(a). The MSHA investigators confirmed that safety catches remain commercially unavailable for use on hoisted conveyances on the high pitch and undulating slopes typical of the anthracite region.

On the basis of the petition and the findings of MSHA's investigation, S & M Coal Company is granted a modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1400 to its Buck Mountain Slope. When this Proposed Decision and Order becomes final it will supersede and replace the modification the standard granted under Docket No. M-1986-178-C.

ORDER

Wherefore, pursuant to the authority delegated by the Secretary of Labor to the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health, and pursuant to Section 101(c) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 811(c), it is ordered that S & M Coal Company's Petition for Modification of the application of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1400 in the Buck Mountain Slope is hereby:

GRANTED, for the use of the hoist conveyance (gunboat) without safety catches, conditioned upon compliance with the following terms and conditions:

1. A communication signal system, audible to the hoist operator, shall be installed so that it can be activated from the gunboat at any location along the intake haulage slope.
2. The design safety factor of the hoist rope shall be maintained at all times not less than three times the value specified in 30 C.F.R. § 75.1431.
3. A detailed inspection procedure of the ropes and terminations used at the mine shall be posted in the hoist house and complied with at all times.
4. A secondary safety connection shall be securely fastened around the gunboat and securely fastened to the hoisting rope at a point above the main connecting device. The secondary safety connection must be, at a minimum, the same diameter and type of wire rope used as the main hoist rope, properly terminated above the main hoisting rope attachment with at least two clips on each end or with equivalent-strength chains.
5. At least 2 feet of clearance must be maintained between the highest part of the secondary attachment and the head sheave when the gunboat is positioned in the full dump position.

6. Within 60 days after this Proposed Decision and Order becomes final, the Petitioner shall submit proposed revisions for their approved 30 C.F.R. Part 48 training plan to the Coal Mine Safety and Health District Manager. These proposed revisions shall specify initial and refresher training regarding compliance with the conditions stated in the Proposed Decision and Order.

Any party to this action desiring a hearing on this matter must file in accordance with 30 C.F.R. § 44.14, within 30 days. The request for hearing must be filed with the Administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health, 1100 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209-3939.

If a hearing is requested, the request shall contain a concise summary of position on the issues of fact or law desired to be raised by the party requesting the hearing, including specific objections to the proposed decision. A party other than Petitioner who has requested a hearing may also comment upon all issues of fact or law presented in the petition, and any party to this action requesting a hearing may indicate a desired hearing site. If no request for a hearing is filed within 30 days after service thereof, the Decision and Order will become final and must be posted by the operator on the mine bulletin board at the mine.

Kenneth A. Murray
Deputy Administrator for
Coal Mine Safety and Health