



March 6, 2002 - Non-injury surge pile accident at Mingo Logan Coal Company's Black Bear Preparation Plant, West Virginia.

The accident occurred at 11:00 am on a sunny day. The dozer operator was pushing coal away from a truck dump area when his D9N Caterpillar dozer fell into a hidden cavity. The operator was "ramping up" an area, and indicated that the slope on the pile made it difficult to judge the position of feeders, even with overhead markers. Additionally, a bright sun was in the operator's eyes. Just as he got a call from the control room that the feeder had quit discharging coal - indicating that the coal had bridged over the feeder - the dozer operator realized he had gotten too far over the feeder location. The dozer broke through and fell approximately 31 feet into the hidden cavity. The dozer ended up in a vertical position with the blade pointing up.

Coal covered one side of the cab and the windshield, but one cab door could be opened. The wire guard for the rear window was smashed into the rear window, but the window did not break. The company carefully maneuvered a crane into position and rescued the operator by lowering a ladder on a line into the cavity. The operator was pulled to safety with no injuries.

Safety measures in use included: High-strength glass in the cab windows; two SCSRs in the dozer cab; emergency lighting in cab in form of chemical light sticks; three forms of communication - two-way radio, CB radio, and personal walkie-talkie; a high-backed seat to provide support to the operator's head; large red balls suspended over feeder locations; and a radio-control to allow belts to be shut down remotely from cab.