



## **May 22, 2000 - Summary of Non-fatal Coal Surge-Pile Accident May 22, 2000, at the Zeigler Central Cleaning Plant, Old Ben Coal Company, Coulterville, IL.**

A Caterpillar D9N bulldozer fell approximately 22 feet into a hidden cavity. The raw coal pile was approximately 30 feet high at the time of the accident. The dozer ended up in a vertical position with the blade pointing upward and just above the top of the pile. Prior to the start of the shift, the operator was warned by the foreman not to run over the feeders. The dozer operator was assigned to open up 2 feeders that were "clogged up". Despite the warning and after opening up 1 feeder, the dozer operator ran back and forth across the second feeder to remove layers of coal until the back end of the dozer sunk into the cavity.

The back cab window and left rear pillar were pushed in as the weight of the dozer came to rest on the coal at the bottom of the cavity. A self-contained self-rescuer that was stored behind the operator's seat had been covered up with coal and the operator did not use it. The coal on the sides of the cavity was packed tight enough that it stood vertical and did not flow in to cover the cab. The operator radioed the other dozer operator, reported his situation, shut off his dozer and told the other dozer operator to shut down his dozer so that the vibration from his machine would not disturb the coal. The operator unfastened his seat belt and attempted to open the right-side door, but couldn't because of the coal against it. He was able to open the left-side door and climb up the hood of the dozer onto the blade. From the end of the blade he was able to walk uninjured onto the pile and away from the cavity.