

Surge Pile Safety

Best Practice Series
BP-34



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Mobile Equipment

Use remote control equipment on surge piles, if possible.	
If not, install cab windows which can withstand 20 psi pressure.	
Equip the enclosed cab with communications, lighting, and at least two self-rescuers.	
Provide a transmitter inside the cab so the operator can shut down the feeder and stacker belts.	

Feeders

Install gates so that coal can only discharge when the feeder is activated – unless the feeder design otherwise precludes gravity flow.	
Install TV cameras and monitors so the feeder operator can see and monitor the top of the pile.	
Identify the feeder locations with overhead markers.	
Have a system of colored lights to indicate which feeders are drawing coal.	
Install and use a positive visual signal, such as a flashing red light over the feeder, when a cavity is suspected.	

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Safe Operating Practices

Avoid operating mobile equipment over feeders.	
Design and lay out new surge pile facilities to minimize the need to travel near feeders.	
Keep the draw hole nearly full during load-out operations to avoid pushing to the edge of a deep draw hole.	
Keep mobile equipment facing the feeder when near the draw hole, and use other safe practices.	
Post warning signs around the surge piles.	
Prohibit walking on the surge pile unless those walking use a safety belt and line and another person tends the lifeline.	
Provide lighting for operations after dark.	
Suspend operations, or use other safety devices such as infrared cameras, when visibility is inadequate because of water mist or other conditions.	
Have communication equipment so that every person who works on the pile, affects the pile, or supervises pile operations can speak to the others.	
Eliminate cavities by using safe, supervised procedures. If excavation into the pile is necessary to eliminate a cavity, start a safe distance off to the side of the pile, away from the feeder.	

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Training

Make sure you have good hazard training for all surge pile workers, especially new workers and contractors.	
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How does your surge pile operation do on the “Best Practices?” You’re encouraged to implement each of these practices to make your operation “Surge-Pile Safe” and eliminate accidents like the one shown below.



Look at the “Best Practices” that are **not** in use at your operation. Take the time right now to take that first step and set the wheels in motion.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE:

“Best Practice” Needed: Implementation Plan:

Visit the MSHA home page at www.msha.gov