

Suggested Safety Measures for Operating Equipment on Surge Piles



Best Practice Series
BP-38

Accidents can occur at surge piles when a person, or a piece of equipment, is drawn down into the feeding material. Feeding material acts like “quicksand.”

Another danger is that a person or piece of equipment can fall into a hidden cavity above a feeder when the bridged over material collapses.

The following safety suggestions apply to surge piles where equipment, normally a dozer, operates directly on the stockpiled material, to push the material to the feeder openings.

- **Never operate equipment directly over a feeder.**
- **Never walk on stockpiled material in the area of a feeder.**
- Always operate equipment with it **facing the feeder.**
- Indicate feeder locations with an **overhead marker.**
- Use **signal lights** to indicate an active feeder.
- Use equipment with a **fully-enclosed cab.**
- Equip the cab with **self-contained self-rescuers.**

- Equip the cab with a **two-way radio.**
- Have adequate **illumination** at night.
- Before starting a feeder, check that miners or equipment are not in the area.
- Have operators in their equipment and on the pile early in the loading operation so that they can observe how the material is feeding.
- Operate with the drawhole kept nearly full to avoid having equipment drawn into it.
- Get **training** on the potential hazards and safety precautions.
- Have a chart in the cab indicating expected drawhole size for different pile heights.
- Notify the supervisor if a cavity forms or is suspected.
- To eliminate a cavity, remove material, starting from well off to the side of the possible cavity and away from other feeders.
- Consider using a video camera and monitor if the surge pile cannot be seen from the control panel.
- Have contingency plans in place should a piece of equipment become trapped.