

Highwall Hazards

On August 30, 2003 a mobile equipment operator was injured while working at a surface coal mine. The miner was operating a Hitachi hydraulic shovel when a 35-foot wide by 35-foot high section of the highwall toppled onto the operator's cab, pinning him inside. The victim was removed from the shovel and transported to a hospital where he was treated and released.

The left image, below, shows the inside of the operator's cab after the accident. The front of the operator's cab is completely missing and the roof is caved in over the operator's seat.



BEST PRACTICES

- Train all employees in highwall hazard recognition.
- Conduct examinations prior to beginning work around highwalls, and as frequent as necessary to ensure safety, especially during periods of changing weather conditions. Inspect the top and bottom of the highwall for cracking, spalling, sloughage, loose ground, and large rocks that could be hazardous.
- Communicate changes in mining methods or blasting issues to oncoming shifts.
- Ensure loose material is scaled prior to performing work. To safely scale using the shovel, maintain the highwall height within the reach of the bucket.
- Position the shovel and trucks so that the shovel cab swings away from the highwall when loading.

