

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
MINE SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION  
HEARING ON PROPOSED RULE FOR HIGH-VOLTAGE CONTINUOUS  
MINING MACHINE

NOVEMBER 4, 2004

9 A.M.

LITTLE AMERICA HOTEL  
500 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84101

A.M. Panel:

Rebecca J. Smith, Mediator  
Sandra Wesdock  
Ronald Ford  
Ron Stahlhut  
Elio L. Checca  
Salwa El-Bassioni  
Robert Boring  
Susan Miles

Speakers:

William Farrar  
Tain Curtis  
Jeffrey Anderson

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## PROCEEDINGS

9 a.m.

November 4, 2004

- - -

MS. SMITH: Good morning. My name is Becky Smith. I'm a deputy director of MSHA's Office of Standards, Regulations and Variances, and on behalf of Dave Loriski, assistant secretary of labor for Mine Safety & Health, I'd like to welcome all of you here this morning for this public hearing.

This is the first of four hearings. The other hearings will be held as follows: On November the 16th in Birmingham, Alabama; on November the 18th in Lexington, Kentucky; and on November the 30th in Morgantown, West Virginia.

The purpose of these hearings is to obtain input from the public on a proposed rule that was published in the Federal Register on July the 16th, 2004. A modified hearing location and date notice as well as the extension of the posthearing comment period was published in the Federal Register on August the 12th. We have copies of these documents at the registration in the back if you need them.

The proposed rule we are addressing today would include construction and design requirements for approval

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1 of high-voltage continuous mining machine under MSHA's

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1 regulations found at 30 CFR, Part 18, and mandatory safety  
2 standards for high-voltage miners in underground coal  
3 mines under 30 CFR, Subpart I of Part 75. The proposed  
4 rule would also amend Subpart K of Part 75 to allow the  
5 use of such machines in permissible areas of underground  
6 coal mines.

7 I'd like to introduce others here from MSHA here  
8 with me today on this panel. On my left is Larry Checca.  
9 Larry is the chairman of this regulatory development  
10 committee and is with our technical-support organization.  
11 Salwa El-Bassioni is from our coal mine safety and health  
12 organization. Bob Boring is from our technical-support  
13 organization. Ron Stahlhut is from our coal mine safety  
14 and health organization. Ron Ford is from our office of  
15 standards and Sandra Wesdock is from our solicitor's  
16 office. The back table, you've met Susan Miles, she's  
17 also from our standards office.

18 This hearing is being held in accordance with  
19 Section 101 of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of  
20 1977 and as is the practice of MSHA, formal rules of  
21 evidence will not apply, therefore, cross examination of  
22 the hearing panel will not be allowed but the panel may  
23 explain and clarify provisions of the proposed rule. As  
24 moderator of this public hearing, I reserve the right to

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1 limit the amount of time each speaker is given as well as

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1 the questions of the hearing panel. Those of you who have  
2 notified us in advance of your intent to speak, will be  
3 allowed to make your presentations first and I will call  
4 on the speakers in the order that requests were made.

5 Following these presentations, others who  
6 request an opportunity to speak will be allowed to do so.  
7 We invite all interested parties to present their views at  
8 this hearing and if you are sitting in the audience now  
9 and wish to speak, please sign in at the registration  
10 table.

11 We will remain in session today until everyone  
12 who desires to speak has had an opportunity to do so.  
13 Also, if you are not speaking today, we would like for you  
14 to sign the attendance sheet at the back of the room so we  
15 have an accurate record of today's attendance at the  
16 hearing.

17 We will accept written comments and information  
18 at this hearing from any interested party, including those  
19 who are not speaking. When I call on you to speak, please  
20 come to the speaker's table and begin your presentation by  
21 identifying yourself and your affiliation for the record.  
22 If you have a prepared statement or any supporting  
23 documents you would like to submit for the record, please  
24 leave a copy with us today. You can give written comments

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1 office -- MSHA's office of standards electronically by  
2 facsimile, by regular mail, or hand delivery using the  
3 address information in the Federal Register notice. The  
4 posthearing comment period on this proposed rule will end  
5 on December the 10th and submissions must be received by  
6 that date.

7 A verbatim transcript of this hearing will be  
8 made part of the record and it will be posted on MSHA's  
9 Web site. If you would like a copy sooner, you can make  
10 your own arrangements with the court reporter. The  
11 company information is available at the registration  
12 table.

13 Before the speakers begin their testimony this  
14 morning, I would like to give you some background on the  
15 proposed rule we are addressing today. The mining  
16 industry has been moving toward the use of high-voltage  
17 continuous mining machines to increase productivity. This  
18 efficiency can be accomplished with a minimal increase in  
19 machine size. When paired with more efficient roof  
20 bolting and section haulage equipment, a high-voltage  
21 continuous mining machine can increase production over a  
22 low or medium-voltage continuous mining machine. These  
23 high-voltage machines use less electrical current and  
24 permit the use of smaller cables. Smaller cables are

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easier to handle and can reduce injuries to miners.

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1 MSHA's existing regulation, 30 CFR 75.1002,  
2 applies to the use of electrical equipment and conductors.  
3 This regulation does not allow the use of high-voltage  
4 conductors or cables in or inby the last open crosscut or  
5 within 150 feet of pillar workings except for high-voltage  
6 longwalls. Consequently, at the time the rule was  
7 published, mine operators had submitted 38 petitions for  
8 modification that MSHA had granted to use high-voltage  
9 continuous mining machines. Since the proposed rule was  
10 published, mine operators have submitted additional  
11 petitions, some of which MSHA has granted. In developing  
12 this proposed rule, we reviewed the granted petitions for  
13 modification. The proposed rule includes most of the  
14 provisions from granted petitions for modification as well  
15 as some new safety provisions with enhanced safety  
16 protections from fire, explosion, and shock hazards.

17 The proposed rule would improve the design  
18 requirements for high-voltage continuous mining machines  
19 consistent with existing requirements, accommodate new  
20 design technology that is practical and lessen burdens on  
21 the mining community associated with the petition for  
22 modification process, while preserving safety and health  
23 protection for miners. To date we've received five  
24 comments on this proposed rule and you can look at these

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1           Our purpose here today, then, is to receive  
2 further information on this proposed rule. Our first  
3 speaker this morning will be William Farrar. Good  
4 morning.

5           MR. FARRAR: Good morning. I'm Bill Farrar from  
6 UMWA. I've worked in the coal mines 29 years, safety  
7 committee for 15, and that's about it. Oh, I work for  
8 Energy West. Okay. My concerns on the high-voltage  
9 miner, I've heard that they're trying to make it to 4160,  
10 I want it limited to 2400 volts, vulcanized splices only,  
11 no tape splices because you can't keep moisture out of the  
12 tape splice. And I would like to have the -- require the  
13 operator to contact MSHA on any faults that ends with the  
14 cable blowing up because with high voltage -- I've been a  
15 mechanic for -- since '77. High voltage -- they don't  
16 make any device quick enough to trip on high voltage  
17 before it blows up. We've had high-voltage cables with  
18 PLM plugs, you get moisture in it, blow up, hundred feet  
19 apart. That's why I'd like to see where we can track any  
20 cables that blow up, if there is a written record on any  
21 of these high-voltage miners that's had this kind of  
22 fault. And that's about all of my comments.

23           PANEL MEMBER: Can I ask you a question? Why do  
24 you want to limit to less -- or 2300, 2400 volts instead

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1 MR. FARRAR: The higher the voltage, the more  
2 potential on blowing up, I believe, in working with power.  
3 When you have a fault, it's going to be more severe of an  
4 explosion when they do blow up --

5 PANEL MEMBER: Do you have --

6 MR. FARRAR: -- more of a chance of somebody  
7 getting hurt.

8 PANEL MEMBER: Do you have some experience that  
9 you could share with us of some examples of when that  
10 would be the case? Do you have information or data that  
11 would help us?

12 MR. FARRAR: Well, like I say, I've worked in  
13 the mines. When you have -- I've seen high voltage --  
14 when you move power, we used to splice a high-voltage  
15 cable, 4160, if there was a fault there, when they kicked  
16 that power on, it blew up, it didn't just trip at the  
17 transformer, you know. The devices are good but they're  
18 not quick enough to stop the explosion where the fault is.  
19 And that's why I'm concerned. You know, the higher the  
20 voltage, the more when people's handling that cable, the  
21 more severe the accident's going to be if it happens.

22 MR. BORING: This is Bob Boring, sir, I do have  
23 a question for you. On the 4160-volt cable that you have  
24 experience with, was that going to permissible equipment

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or other type of equipment in the mine?

1 MR. FARRAR: Well, when I've seen it happen  
2 personally, that's when we've just been -- we used to run  
3 4160 just to our power centers, it's not in permissible  
4 equipment.

5 MR. BORING: Okay.

6 MR. FARRAR: Now we're running 1470 power in our  
7 mine, but I'm saying the higher the voltage, the bigger  
8 the explosion's going to be when it does fault.

9 MR. BORING: Thank you.

10 MS. SMITH: Are there any other questions from  
11 panel members of Mr. Farrar?

12 PANEL MEMBER: I've got one on his --

13 MS. SMITH: Okay. Ron.

14 PANEL MEMBER: Could you clarify, you said on  
15 the splices something about vulcanized splices only?

16 MR. FARRAR: Yes.

17 PANEL MEMBER: Were you referring to cable  
18 repairs as well?

19 MR. FARRAR: Cable repairs because you can't  
20 keep water out of a taped splice. Like I say, I've been a  
21 mechanic for a long time and it's impossible.

22 PANEL MEMBER: You just mentioned splices, I  
23 wanted to clarify that you were including the --

24 MR. FARRAR: Yes.

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MS. SMITH: Further questions? Mr. Farrar, we

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1 appreciate your testimony, thank you very much.

2 Our next speaker is Tain Curtis.

3 MR. CURTIS: My name's Tain Curtis, T-a-i-n, and  
4 I'm the safety committee chairman for Local 1769 at the  
5 Deer Creek mine, I'm employed by Energy West. I represent  
6 approximately 268 miners at the mine and we produce 4  
7 million tons, 4-million-plus tons a year and we have three  
8 continuous miner sections and a longwall section.

9 Again, I pose the question: Why 4160 instead of  
10 the 2400? The potential of 4160 -- we've had people hurt  
11 at our mine with a PLM plug blowing apart and that  
12 individual is no longer able to work underground. He was  
13 hit with a nip when it blew out of the end of a  
14 transformer. Again, that was nonpermissible equipment.  
15 And we have had a lot of cable trouble with our longwall  
16 and that is a high-voltage longwall. The difference  
17 being, on a longwall the cables are run in tracks and are  
18 protected from any kind of mechanical damage that can --  
19 usually can ensure, they're also protected from the  
20 individuals that work on the face. What you're proposing  
21 is a longwall -- is a high-voltage cable with the same  
22 potential as the longwall cable running up without those  
23 same protections and exposing people to handling these  
24 cables.

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I'm -- granted we're proposing that you put out

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1 a protection, high-voltage gloves, you know, we -- I work  
2 in a coal mine, we have hazardous conditions, wet  
3 conditions. I don't know how long high-voltage gloves  
4 would hold up in those kind of conditions. My experience  
5 with high-voltage gloves is limited but I know linemen use  
6 them all the time, but they don't handle dirty cable at  
7 the same time like we would in the coal mine. So my  
8 proposal is to limit it to what it is.

9 I'm not aware of the technology available for a  
10 4160 miner, I don't know if one's available on the market  
11 to even buy so we're proposing something that technology  
12 would have to catch up with. And I can understand why  
13 that's a proposal, but at the same time we have diesel  
14 particulate filters and the industry has still not caught  
15 up with them. So I just don't see the point in going that  
16 way when we don't have to.

17 I'm not aware -- most mines don't have a miner  
18 helper. We still have miner helpers at Deer Creek, and  
19 his sole responsibility is to watch the cable and to keep  
20 it protected. Most mines now don't have miner helpers, I  
21 feel that that's an added safety feature that would be  
22 detrimental if it wasn't there to have a person watching  
23 the cable because this last little bit, the cable would be  
24 exposed, where it enters the miner and runs back the first

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1 crosscut, the way I understand the proposal. So having

1 that miner helper would be a big plus and a big safety  
2 factor in both prolonging the life of the cable and also  
3 keeping equipment and other damages from occurring to it.

4 Splices, right now the proposal you're saying  
5 has no limit on the number of splices and would be able to  
6 use tape splices. We still get violations at our coal  
7 mine by inspectors finding moisture in splices and we use  
8 the tape-wrap splices that -- granted a lot of it is on  
9 mobile equipment that does get more movement with a cable  
10 reel, but it still doesn't keep out all the moisture. And  
11 I find that most accidents happen by little breakdowns,  
12 small breakdowns in the safety precautions that are there.  
13 And I feel that if you keep the splices with taped splices  
14 on them, those little breakdowns, added up to several,  
15 could cause a potentially hazardous situation.

16 The vulcanizing of splices is the only way that  
17 I know that guarantees and assures a hundred percent --  
18 well, maybe not even a hundred percent, to keep the  
19 moisture out. And I do know that they have equipment  
20 available for vulcanizing splices that you wouldn't have  
21 to take the miner clear out of the coal mine, the cable  
22 clear out to do it anymore, but I necessarily wouldn't be  
23 opposed to a kind of a -- a number -- limiting the number  
24 of splices on a cable because every time you splice a

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1 cable, the resistance in the cable would go up. I mean,

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1 we do make mechanically sound splices but it's still a  
2 weak link in the chain on that cable.

3           Again, you know, the high voltage, I know of one  
4 individual where a PLM plug blew apart on a miner -- or on  
5 a longwall transformer, and I'm not sure what the voltage  
6 was but it was probably more than 4160, and that  
7 individual has retired from the coal-mining industry  
8 because of injuries sustained. So I'm not necessarily  
9 opposed to the technology and the higher production  
10 because I understand that's what pays my paycheck, and the  
11 people I represent, you know, we want -- we want the  
12 technology. We find that technology is important to  
13 mining coal but we would like the technology to be sound  
14 before it's imposed upon us. And I understand the  
15 24,000-volt miner -- or 2400-volt miner is sound  
16 technology, has proven itself.

17           Again, I -- what Bill said about recordkeeping,  
18 we have no way of knowing what goes on at other coal mines  
19 with the high-voltage miner unless we personally know  
20 those mines and can get that information from them. Being  
21 able to track that kind of stuff, you know, from this  
22 standpoint, we could go back and look at violations and  
23 those kind of things and accident reports, but if the  
24 accident isn't serious, if it's a near miss, there's no

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kind of recordkeeping that goes on.

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1                   So that's about it. I appreciate the  
2 opportunity of coming today and you guys coming to hear  
3 our concerns.

4                   MS. SMITH: Salwa, please.

5                   MR. EL-BASSIONI: I'm Salwa El-Bassioni. I  
6 have two questions. What voltage is your longwall?

7                   MR. CURTIS: Our longwall is limited to the  
8 2400 volts and I believe that's -- I think it's a  
9 2,000-volt system but I'm not sure.

10                  MR. EL-BASSIONI: And for recordkeeping, I  
11 didn't quite understand your comment on that. Are you  
12 saying that what we're requiring as recordkeeping is not  
13 sufficient or what exactly were you referring to?

14                  MR. CURTIS: No. For us to -- as I was surfing  
15 the Net trying to get information to come here today and  
16 talk about it, I can find no information on how other  
17 mines -- the cable was holding up or anything like that,  
18 so for recordkeeping, if you have a high-voltage cable or  
19 a near-miss accident, if you would -- if that was  
20 mandatory that that would be a record kept -- you know, I  
21 don't necessarily care what mine it happened at or who was  
22 involved or what the circumstances was, but if there was a  
23 way I could find that out, then I'd have a better  
24 understanding today of what's going on with these

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high-voltage miners.

1           And it's a big concern for us to go into  
2 something that we haven't had experience with and we rely  
3 on you guys to make those judgment calls. So that's what  
4 was meant by that, if there was a way that the record  
5 could be established for me to go and retrieve that  
6 information.

7           MR. CHECCA: You had a comment on -- this is  
8 Larry Checca. You had a comment on the miner helper. Are  
9 you suggesting that we put something like that in the rule  
10 to require a miner helper or why did you bring it up?

11           MR. CURTIS: Well, my concern with the miner  
12 helper is that most mines don't have a miner helper  
13 anymore. We still have them at our mine and we still have  
14 problems with the cable. My concern is that a mine that  
15 doesn't have a miner helper with a high-voltage miner  
16 being used, you know, what precautions -- you know, what  
17 human precautions is there to watch the cable?

18           I don't know if you're familiar with the new  
19 remotes for the miner. We've got -- recently got new  
20 remotes for our miners and the miner operators hate them  
21 because all their concentration is on the remote, trying  
22 to get the remote to multitask. They wouldn't have any  
23 attention to pay -- any time left to pay attention to a  
24 cable. I mean, they do stop and -- when we're backing up

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and pulling forward a little bit, they do pay attention,

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1 don't get me wrong, but with a miner helper, you have got  
2 somebody there and I don't want -- I don't want to tell  
3 you how to propose that, but I feel strongly that if  
4 you're going to have a high-voltage miner, you need  
5 somebody up there to watch the cable, to keep track of  
6 what's going on with the equipment coming in and out. His  
7 attention's not on the remote. His attention isn't  
8 necessarily on the conditions, the adverse conditions that  
9 you're mining in. I mean, we're approaching 22-,  
10 2300-foot of cover and the conditions that we're mining in  
11 in one section now is atrocious with the ribs. And it's  
12 just -- it's too much for one person to have all the  
13 responsibility. And when we're talking about the safety  
14 of that one person, it would be good to have another  
15 person there. But I have no idea how to tell you to  
16 accomplish that.

17 MR. CHECCA: Thank you.

18 MS. SMITH: Any other questions? Ron.

19 MR. STAHLHUT: Yeah. Excuse me. This is Ron  
20 Stahlhut. You mentioned that you had a high-voltage  
21 longwall and you had cable trouble on the longwall. Was  
22 there any specific instances there, have you got any  
23 clarification on that? I guess we're just curious.

24 MR. CURTIS: Well, I'm not sure of any instances

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1 where the cable's blown up, you know, but, like I said, on

1 the longwall, the cable that runs through the shear, down  
2 the pan line is all protected in the Bretby. The cable  
3 that runs from the transformer to the head gate is all  
4 protected in a monorail system that people don't get into.  
5 And I'm just saying, with all these protections in place,  
6 we have still damaged cable, whether something's fell in  
7 against the Bretby and when it's pulled across it, it cut  
8 into it or something like that, with all these precautions  
9 in place, we have still had cable problems, you know, and  
10 in my mind, I don't understand how you could do the same  
11 thing for a miner that we do for the longwall -- for a CM,  
12 that we do for the longwall in protecting the cable. So  
13 my concern would be we still have problems with these  
14 protections, how are you going to eliminate that without  
15 them?

16 MR. STAHLHUT: I was just needing some  
17 clarification there. I didn't know if there was any  
18 specific instances, I was only trying to --

19 MR. CURTIS: No. No. I know that we've had  
20 trouble with our cable going to the shear and usually it's  
21 caused because of rock falling in on the Bretby and  
22 pulling it across the Bretby or something like that.

23 MR. STAHLHUT: Okay. Were you done there?

24 MR. CURTIS: Yeah.

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MR. STAHLHUT: My next question, I guess, for

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1 clarification for me, what was your recommendation on the  
2 high-voltage gloves? You talked about the high-voltage  
3 gloves, were you -- could you clarify, were you for or  
4 against, I guess, or what?

5 MR. CURTIS: Well, my concern with high-voltage  
6 gloves and my -- I'm a mechanic at the mine or have been  
7 and I've been used -- I've used high-voltage gloves when  
8 we're doing a power move and grounding out the leads. My  
9 concern with them is -- they're quite nice, they're really  
10 nice. Well, if I'm handling a cable that's wet and got --  
11 dragging through the dirt and it's got mud attached to it  
12 and small pieces of coal, these really nice gloves, how  
13 good are they going to be under those conditions? I know  
14 linemen use them but the linemen, they're up on a pole,  
15 they're not in the mud, they're not handling cable that's  
16 got grit on it and rock on it that would be able to damage  
17 the gloves. These are all the things that a miner helper,  
18 a miner operator handling a cable would be exposed to even  
19 wearing gloves. How tough would they be, enough to  
20 withstand those rigors?

21 And then another thing that was brought up -- I  
22 don't know how you're familiar with coal miners, they get  
23 wet, everything goes down on the kitchen light, gets put  
24 underneath the heat light to dry out, you know, I don't

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know how the gloves would stand up, even an apron or tongs

1 or something like that, you know, that would stand up to  
2 the rigors of being in the face. That's my concern.

3 MR. STAHLHUT: One more thing, if you're  
4 finished there.

5 MR. CHECCA: Can I interject here?

6 MR. STAHLHUT: Yeah, go ahead.

7 MR. CHECCA: Larry Checca. What is your  
8 suggestion then, that we don't require gloves?

9 MR. CURTIS: No. I -- again, I don't have an  
10 answer for you. All I have is a concern that -- I wasn't  
11 able to get any information on the high-voltage miners or  
12 some of the experiences of other miners so I have a  
13 concern that a high-voltage glove that I've used wouldn't  
14 stand up to the rigors of the face environment in the  
15 conditions -- we have some sections that are relatively  
16 wet and, you know, I always -- you know, it's easy to pick  
17 up stray currents in wet -- and what good would a glove do  
18 if you're wet up to your elbows, you know, I . . .

19 MS. SMITH: Are you finished?

20 MR. STAHLHUT: Okay. One more question. You  
21 made a comment toward the end there about the miners  
22 having new remotes, continuous miners, do you have any  
23 idea what type of remotes these were or how they're  
24 different?

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MR. CURTIS: They're the new ones that Joy has,

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1 it has a deadman on the bottom that takes a -- you have to  
2 push the button with each hand.

3 MR. STAHLHUT: Okay.

4 MR. CURTIS: So when you're tramping or  
5 multitasking, unless you've got six fingers on one hand  
6 that can be on top of the remote, it's hard to multitask.

7 MR. STAHLHUT: I think you're referring to the  
8 TX-2.

9 MR. CURTIS: Yeah, I'm not sure what the model  
10 is.

11 MR. STAHLHUT: I was just curious. I just  
12 wanted to -- you were mentioning that and I just wanted --

13 MR. CURTIS: Yeah, Mr. Anderson may know because  
14 he's more familiar with that and he'll speak after me.

15 MR. CHECCA: Okay. One last question and I'll  
16 let you go. Larry Checca again. In the preamble we talk  
17 about the installation of the trailing cable from the  
18 power center down to the last open crosscut. The original  
19 petitions, a number of them, required the cable to be  
20 hung, supported, and then we had a petition that we  
21 received that was a low-coal petition and we looked at the  
22 aspect of really we're not protecting cable in the  
23 low-coal situation if it's being hung, so as an  
24 alternative we put in the petition to use an unused entry.

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And we're asking for comments from the public on their

1 thoughts on this issue and maybe other ways of doing this.  
2 Do you have any thoughts in that area?

3 MR. CURTIS: Well, I can understand how an  
4 unused entry would be an advantage in being able to just  
5 run the cable up an unused entry. I've seen shuttle cars  
6 climb a rib to get a hung cable and I don't know if it's  
7 a -- if it's an operator failure or what or just something  
8 that happened, but, you know, it doesn't matter -- if I  
9 can put this in a polite manner. It doesn't matter what  
10 you do to some equipment in a coal mine, a coal miner's  
11 going to be the one operating it and you can't protect it  
12 from some of us. It scares me the way some people do  
13 things. And they're good miners, don't get me wrong. But  
14 an unused entry would be a big advantage because then  
15 you'd have that available.

16 Right now we mine with a two-entry petition, we  
17 run two entries. There is no unused entry. There's not  
18 an unused crosscut for several thousand feet so the  
19 availability of that with a -- with some two-entry  
20 petition would be void, I mean there would be no unused  
21 entry. So maybe that would be detrimental to a two-entry  
22 system because, you know, like -- again, I'm not opposed  
23 to the technology, I'm just -- I want to have a safe  
24 environment and the people I represent want to have a safe

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environment. And, again, we're not opposed to it. We

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1 like technology, you know, it makes our jobs easier.

2 The lighter cables is a big plus. Go from a  
3 number-two cable to a four aught cable, just kills your  
4 back. So those are all good pluses, but what are you  
5 going to trade off to accomplish them? And most of the  
6 splices you'd be handling would be in that last little  
7 bit, you know, there again, you know, that's -- that's why  
8 I think that a taped splice -- or some technology that may  
9 be out there that we don't know about yet -- a tape splice  
10 with the cable moving, you know, even though the raw  
11 rubber vulcanizes itself, it still has a lot of movement  
12 and there's still a lot of room for error.

13 MS. SMITH: All right. Sandra.

14 MS. WESDOCK: Hi. My name is Sandra Wesdock and  
15 I was wondering whether you had any comments regarding  
16 existing 1850 -- 18.53, which is the section designed for  
17 longwalls and proposed 18.54, which is for the high wall.  
18 We raised a question in the preamble regarding whether we  
19 should combine both sections, those two provisions because  
20 they are very similar or whether we should keep them  
21 separate. And I was wondering if you had any comments on  
22 that.

23 MR. CURTIS: Well, I think being able to write a  
24 petition and get equipment approved is a wonderful thing

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but I don't necessarily think that the law should be

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1 rewrote so you don't have to write a petition or you  
2 shouldn't be able to combine two areas of the law that  
3 deal with different things. If they're similar, it  
4 probably wouldn't have an effect. But one of the things I  
5 don't understand is, you know, this is going to affect 38  
6 miners or CM units in the United States that are working  
7 now today with a petition. And I take it they're  
8 successful but, you know, when you go to combine the areas  
9 of the law, sometimes that's not a good thing because  
10 there is differences. I mean, we wouldn't be able to  
11 combine the high-voltage longwall with the high-voltage  
12 miner section, but the high wall and the longwall, you  
13 know, you may could. I'm not familiar enough with the  
14 high wall to be able to answer that.

15 MS. SMITH: Mr. Curtis, thank you very much for  
16 your testimony.

17 MR. CURTIS: Thank you.

18 MS. SMITH: Our next speaker is Jeff Anderson.

19 MR. ANDERSON: Ms. Smith, ladies and gentlemen.

20 MS. SMITH: Good morning.

21 MR. ANDERSON: I'm Jeff Anderson and I also work  
22 at the Deer Creek coal mine for Energy West Mining. I've  
23 been employed there for 25 years minus a couple of years  
24 in Iraq, but -- which makes it even more interesting.

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A couple of concerns I'd like to bring up.

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1 First of all, there are some definite advantages to a  
2 high-voltage miner as far as productivity, the advantages  
3 of the lower current that we'd be exposed to, those sort  
4 of things. One thing that was mentioned, too, was cable  
5 sizing. Having talked with our maintenance  
6 superintendent, because he's looked at this high-voltage  
7 longwall, our cable size will not change. So that's not  
8 an advantage to us. We currently are on a two aught cable  
9 to our 950-volt miners and with a high-voltage miner, that  
10 would stay the same because it would be increased  
11 horsepower of the miner. He's looking to gaining  
12 approximately 250 horsepower on that -- on a high-voltage  
13 miner.

14 A lot of the other safety precautions have been  
15 taken for this miner, as far as the separation of high  
16 voltage from the low, medium-voltage controls, is  
17 excellent. I'm more in favor of the insulating boards  
18 and, you know, the grounded metal dividers, you know, that  
19 either way protects the miners from accidentally getting  
20 into that high-voltage section and also with the  
21 disconnects it will de-energize that piece of equipment if  
22 the high-voltage departments are entered into.

23 Another area I'd like to talk about is, as we  
24 talk about handling the cable, I see a lot of -- in this

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petition where they've taken a lot of precautions to

1 safeguard the cable. You just talked with Tain about an  
2 unused entry, he talked to you about we run a two-entry  
3 system for our longwall. No possible way we could use an  
4 unused entry in hanging a cable to the last open, we do  
5 have the height to do that. That is excellent. But, you  
6 know, from our power center to that last open, I see a lot  
7 of precaution you've taken to guard the high-voltage cable  
8 and to protect it. My concern is from that last open  
9 crosscut to the continuous miner. That's where that cable  
10 is exposed to the most damage, it's the most wear and  
11 tears on the cable there, that's where it's handled.  
12 That's where men are exposed to handling that cable. They  
13 talked about splicing in that area, again, our tape splice  
14 in a wet area -- and we currently have a very wet section  
15 in our mine, which I think it would be very impractical to  
16 run this type of machine. I don't think the machine would  
17 run, as far as the safeguards that are put in place to  
18 protect it as far as cable damage and the grounding and  
19 that sort of stuff, the look-ahead circuits, all of that,  
20 with the damage that occurs with our current mining  
21 practices, you know, I think we either need some better  
22 training in our practice of handling that cable or that  
23 cable needs to have some kind of a cable handler attached  
24 to the machine to deal with that cable to keep -- as far

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as that goes.

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1           Along with handling cable, you know, it talks  
2 about using aprons, tongs, high-voltage gloves. See, I  
3 also use high-voltage gloves in pulling disconnects and  
4 different things like that but the use of those gloves is  
5 very limited. We -- currently we inspect those gloves  
6 every 30 days. If we're going to use those gloves that  
7 continually, they need to be inspected more frequently.  
8 You know, 30 days on something that somebody uses every  
9 day on a ten-hour shift, not near adequate enough.

10           Again, with the splicing, like I say, they  
11 talked about the tape splices, the inadequacy of the tape  
12 splices. You know, a tape splice is good when it's first  
13 made but after you've drug it on the ground for some time,  
14 that's what damages and hurts your cables and your  
15 splices. And it also talks about the movement of the  
16 cable, that the only thing that can move that energized  
17 cable is the actual machine that it is supplying power to.

18           You know, current practice in our mine, we're  
19 allowed 750 feet of cable or 800 feet of cable on the  
20 miner, it's one continuous loop, you know, back beyond the  
21 power center to the face. They can pull 3- or 400 feet of  
22 cable at one time, puts a lot of stress on the cable so  
23 that's something I think that -- there was a time, you  
24 know, our cable was always ahead of the power center and

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that's where it should be, that way we're not subjecting

1 that cable to quite the stress that it would have pulling  
2 at those longer distances. Once you start pulling cables  
3 around a corner or two to go from one face to another,  
4 that's a lot of stress to the cable and you have a lot of  
5 failure in splices when that happens.

6 And as Bill talked about, you know, our current  
7 system, you know, we're looking at milliseconds to trip  
8 this miner. Even with milliseconds I've seen high-voltage  
9 PLM plugs on our twelve four seventy, moisture or  
10 whatever, tracking in those plugs, you energize that plug,  
11 it comes apart, it will move that plug and the cable  
12 across the 20-foot entry. Since then, you know, we've  
13 come up with provisions to protect that from going across  
14 the entry, but that's the capability of that kind of a  
15 fault. So I think the last part of that, you know, my  
16 concern's that last hundred, 150 feet of cable where the  
17 men are handling it, that's what we need to protect.

18 Again, we talked about wet areas, you know, all  
19 the things we do, like Tain talked, take a set of  
20 high-voltage gloves, my concern would be, you know, they'd  
21 go throw them under a 500-watt heat light to dry those  
22 gloves out. What effect is that going to have on those  
23 gloves? And also, you know, the high-voltage gloves we  
24 have now with the gloves and the insula- -- and the shells

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1 for those gloves, you know, you may as well put on a pair

1 of boxing gloves to handle that cable, they're really  
2 impractical, I feel, for that type of use, just because of  
3 the size and bulkiness of them.

4 I think I've covered about everything I have  
5 written down here. I believe that's all I have.

6 MS. SMITH: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Anderson.  
7 Salwa.

8 MR. EL-BASSIONI: My name is Salwa, I have a  
9 question. You said you're concerned about the cable from  
10 the last open crosscut inby the last 250 feet of the cable  
11 and you suggested the use of the cable handlers, what kind  
12 of cable handlers are you referring to?

13 MR. ANDERSON: I know in the past they've had  
14 something attached to the machine itself, whether -- you  
15 know, I don't know what would be practical, but if you  
16 talk about our high-voltage longwall, all that's in a  
17 Bretby, it's well protected, no one ever handles that  
18 cable. I don't know what the answer is as far as a design  
19 feature to add to a machine to help handle that cable.  
20 You know, high-voltage cable, when it faults, it's not  
21 just a little spark or a little smoke, it comes apart.  
22 Say you have a splice come apart, it does, you know. And  
23 I just think that the high-voltage gloves and stuff like  
24 that is really impractical and there should be an

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1 alternative means of handling that cable, whether it's a

1 new design to add to the miner to help keep that miner --  
2 you know, the cable out of the way if the shuttle car's  
3 coming in to be loaded, you know, that's where you're  
4 going to see a lot of damages. Currently, you know,  
5 shuttle cars run over the cable. Shuttle cars run into  
6 that cable onto the back of the miner. That's where a lot  
7 of the damage occurs.

8 MR. EL-BASSIONI: Are you proposing to use a  
9 higher dielectric strength for the gloves or are you  
10 proposing to eliminate the need for gloves or exactly --  
11 I'm not sure I'm following what --

12 MR. ANDERSON: Not necessarily eliminate them,  
13 you know, if the protections were there to safeguard the  
14 miners without the gloves, that would be wonderful. I  
15 mean, you do work -- I do a lot of work as a mechanic and  
16 people don't like to get their hands dirty just as a  
17 nature, I take my gloves off. And I feel miners, you  
18 know, they'll rather use a lighter-weight glove to handle  
19 this cable than, you know, currently what we have, it's  
20 really bulky and I don't think it's practical. But, yes,  
21 there needs to be some type of protection there still, not  
22 totally eliminate, you know, the protection.

23 MS. SMITH: Any other questions for  
24 Mr. Anderson? Thank you very much for your testimony,

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Mr. Anderson.

1 MR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

2 MS. SMITH: Do we have any other individuals who  
3 would like to present testimony at this time?

4 What we're going to do is we're going to go off  
5 the record for probably about 45 minutes, let's say until  
6 about 10:30. We'll come back on the record to see if we  
7 have other speakers who are interested in presenting  
8 testimony at that time. And if not, then we'll close the  
9 record at that time. So at this point we're going to go  
10 off the record then. Thank you.

11 (Off the record.)

12 MS. SMITH: I'd like to go back on the record at  
13 this point in time and ask if there's anyone else in the  
14 audience who would like to give further testimony at this  
15 point in time?

16 Given that there are no further speakers, I'm  
17 going to officially close the record on this public  
18 hearing. Thank you very much for coming. I'd also like  
19 to remind those of you here, that we will have another  
20 public hearing this afternoon starting at one o'clock and  
21 that public hearing will have to do with low and  
22 medium-voltage diesel-powered electric generators and that  
23 public hearing will start at one o'clock. Thank you very  
24 much.

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(A.M. Proceedings were concluded.)

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