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PROCEDURE INSTRUCTION LETTER NO. I12-V-14

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SUBJECT: Procedure for Permitting the Use of Belt Air to Ventilate  
Working Sections of Underground Coal Mines

### **Scope**

This Procedure Instruction Letter (PIL) applies to Coal Mine Safety and Health (CMS&H) District Managers, Supervisors, Specialists, and Inspectors.

### **Purpose**

This PIL provides instruction for district personnel regarding the procedures for permitting the use of belt air to ventilate the working sections of underground coal mines.

### **Procedure Instructions**

When evaluated and approved by the District Manager in a mine ventilation plan, air from a belt air course may be used to ventilate a working section. MSHA will conduct at least one on-site investigation (a) at any mine proposing to use belt air to ventilate the working face, prior to authorizing such use, and (b) at any mine that has already received authorization to use belt air to ventilate the working face, if that mine has not previously been subject to an on-site investigation in relation to the use of belt air. At least one MSHA Authorized Representative (AR) will be present during the on-site investigation. Any mine requesting approval to use belt air to ventilate the working face must provide a compelling reason to do so before MSHA will approve such request. "Compelling reasons" may include dilution of methane, ground control hazards, or other hazards due to unique mine conditions.

**Background**

Section 75.350(b) permits the use of air from a belt air course to ventilate a working section when evaluated and approved by the District Manager in the mine ventilation plan. This PIL is intended to ensure that, prior to permitting the use of belt air to ventilate working sections or continuing the practice after a prior approval, MSHA will have conducted at least one on-site investigation into the safety and health implications of the mine's proposed ventilation system, and that the investigation be conducted by an individual qualified to make the necessary findings to support an appropriate conclusion by the District Manager. In addition, there must be a compelling reason justifying the mine's use of belt air to ventilate a working section, such as dilution of methane, ground control hazards, or other hazards due to unique mine conditions.

**Authority**

Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 801, et seq.; 30 C.F.R. §§ 75.323(b) and 75.350(b).

**Filing Instructions**

This instruction letter should be filed behind the tab marked "Procedure Instruction Letters" in the binder for Program Policy Handbooks and Procedure Instruction Letters.

**Issuing Office and Contact Person**

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**Internet Availability**

This instruction letter may be viewed on the Internet by accessing the MSHA Home Page ([www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov)) and then choosing "Compliance Info" and Procedure Instruction Letters.

**Distribution**

MSHA Program Policy Manual Holders