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PROGRAM POLICY LETTER NO. P11-V-01

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SUBJECT: Clarification on Repairs or Maintenance of Machinery,
30 C.F.R. § 75.1725(c)

Scope

Coal mine operators, equipment manufacturers, miners and miners' representatives, Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) enforcement personnel, and other interested parties should have this information.

Purpose

This Program Policy Letter covers the MSHA policy concerning the requirements of Section 75.1725(c), Title 30 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), in order to prevent injuries while machinery repairs or maintenance are performed. This policy letter addresses the meaning of 30 C.F.R. § 75.1725(c), and identifies a number of methods for complying with the standard.

Policy

Section 75.1725(c) provides that "[r]epairs or maintenance shall not be performed on machinery until the power is off and the machinery is blocked against motion, except where machinery motion is necessary to make adjustments."

"Machinery" includes hydraulic jacks or cylinders, belt conveyors, longwall conveyors, and other machinery used in coal mines. "Repair" means to fix, mend, or restore to good working order. "Maintenance" means the labor of keeping machinery in good working order and includes clean-up, clearing jammed material or conducting examinations on or in close proximity to machinery.

Methods to comply with this standard to prevent inadvertent or unexpected motion include:

1. Opening the circuit breaker for the affected machinery, provided no energized parts or conductors are exposed, and placing the run selector switch for startup of the machinery in the "off" position. On longwall machinery, this would include placing the lockout switch in the lockout position in the area where the repair or maintenance is being performed. (A qualified electrician would be required to de-energize a circuit breaker if there are exposed energized parts or conductors. See Item No. 8, 30 C.F.R. § 75.511, Program Policy Manual, Volume V.)
2. Opening the circuit breaker at the power center that supplies power for the affected machinery (30 C.F.R. § 75.900) and disengaging the power cable coupler that supplies power to the machinery (30 C.F.R. § 75.903).
3. Opening a manual visible disconnect switch, either within the circuit or onboard the machinery, (30 C.F.R. § 75.903) and securing the switch against re-energization. A control circuit start-stop switch does not constitute a manual disconnect.
4. In cases such as steeply inclined belt conveyors and suspended loads, when removing the power alone will not ensure against unintentional or inadvertent movement, the machinery shall be physically blocked, in addition to removing the power by one of the three methods described above. Physical blocking may be achieved by the use of such devices as bars, chocks, or clamps.

Other methods may be appropriate in particular situations to prevent unintentional or inadvertent movement. What method(s) is appropriate depends upon the circumstances and type of machinery. The critical determination is whether the method(s) used would effectively prevent motion.

The types of maintenance work that can be performed on longwalls and continuous miners are lubrication, changing bits, changing water sprays and conducting respirable dust control parameter checks with the circuit breaker opened that opens all power conductors entering the machine. Taking air readings on continuous miners equipped with a scrubber to determine compliance and checking water pressure requires the continuous miner to be energized. Extra precautions shall be taken to prevent injuries such as moving the continuous miner to a crosscut with the cutter head against the inby coal rib and limiting the number of miners exposed when taking air reading on scrubbers and checking water pressure.

In addition, it is important to emphasize that restoring power prematurely while repairs or maintenance are ongoing places a miner performing that work in harm's way.

Operators must prevent inattentive restarting and assure that repairs or maintenance have ceased before power is restored to the machinery. Preventive measures operators can take include locking and tagging out, clearance checks, or visible or audible alarms with built-in time delays before restart to warn the miner(s) performing the work so power will not be restored without the miner's knowledge.

Background

Miners have suffered serious injuries and fatalities when performing maintenance and repairs on machinery that started up and moved unexpectedly. Adequate methods to assure the miners' safety must be used while conducting this work.

Authority

The Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq., and 30 C.F.R. § 75.1725(c).

Internet Availability

This program policy letter may be viewed on the Internet by accessing MSHA's homepage at (www.msha.gov) then choosing "Rules & Regs" and "Compliance Assistance Information."

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