

Highwall Drill Operator



U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health Administration

Health Hazard Information Card HH-45

Breathing mine air with harmful levels of respirable coal mine dust causes coal workers' pneumoconiosis (CWP) and other lung diseases, collectively known as "black lung."

Surface equipment such as highwall drills present unique problems in controlling exposure to dust. Surface drills may operate in areas that expose the operator to haulage road dust and downwind of other dust-generating equipment like bulldozers and front-end loaders.

Drill operators often drill into high quartz-containing overburden, presenting a significant health risk to the operator since quartz dust, which can cause silicosis, is far more toxic to the lungs than coal dust alone.

ALWAYS:

- Ensure that the dust controls on the highwall drill are fully functional and operating.
- Examine the dry dust collection system completely to ensure it is functioning properly. Report damaged, worn, or defective components immediately. Check for:
 - » Proper contact of the drill deck shroud enclosure with the ground
 - » Damaged duct work and holes which cause air leaks
 - » Condition of the rubber drill deck bushing required for maintaining a good stem seal with the drill table
 - » Missing or defective dust collector discharge dump shroud that ensures the

(over)

BLACK LUNG KILLS!

dust from the collector is dumped close to the ground and not dispersed in the air

- » Damaged or missing components
- » Dust coming from the collector's exhaust.
- Check wet drilling systems for water leakage and adequate water delivery. **Never** drill dry.
- Keep environmental cabs clean inside. Maintain window and door glass and seals as well as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.
- Clean or replace air conditioning and recirculation/pressurization filters.
- Keep cab doors and windows closed when drilling and clean off boots when entering the cab.
- Use good housekeeping practices to clean environmental cabs. **Never** use compressed air or dry sweeping.
- Position yourself out-of-the-dust when possible.
- Review the operator bimonthly dust sampling results posted on the mine bulletin board.
- Use a properly fitted NIOSH-approved respirator when needed. (**Remember**, MSHA does **not** accept respirators as a primary means of dust control.)

—REMEMBER—

**Black lung is NOT curable,
but it is preventable!**

If you have questions about coal mine health matters, please contact your local MSHA office or see the MSHA Web site at www.msha.gov.

