U.S. Department of Labor
MSHA
Mine Safety & Health Administration

# Safety Alert

## Highwall Safety

**Since CY 2012, falling rocks and materials from hazardous highwalls have resulted in 9 mining fatalities and 27 serious injuries.**

*A miner was fatally injured at a surface coal mine while operating a front-end loader to remove shot rock near the base of a 63 ft. highwall.*


*A miner was severely injured while working near the base of an approximate 65 ft. highwall. The miner was struck by loose, fractured and overhanging rocks.*

## Best Practices

- **Develop and follow a plan** for the safe control of all highwalls where miners work and travel in close proximity to the highwall.
- **Train miners to recognize highwall hazards**.
- **Conduct highwall examinations** and assure hazards (loose rocks, overhangs, trees, etc.) are taken down or supported prior to work or travel near the highwall. Examine more frequently after rain, freezing and thawing.
- **Scale highwalls** to eliminate hazards, e.g. loose rocks or overhangs. Perform scaling from a position that will not expose miners to injury. Until hazards are corrected, place warning signs or barricades to prevent entry.
- **Restrict highwall height** to allow available equipment to safely scale the highwall. If benching is necessary, provide adequate bench width based on the type of equipment used for routine clearing or scaling operations.
- **Develop blasting plans** and use proper blasting techniques. Examine highwalls after blasting.
- **Remove trees, vegetation, and unconsolidated material** a safe distance from the top edge of highwalls.
- **Never park equipment, perform maintenance or store materials beneath highwalls.**
- **Use diversion ditches or slope the ground** so that surface runoff drains away from highwalls.

**Report accidents and hazardous conditions: 1-800-746-1553**