



**Fatality #23 - December 7, 2011**  
**Fall of Highwall - Surface Mine - Virginia**  
**Fairbanks Coal Company Inc - Fairbanks No 4**

**COAL MINE FATALITY** - On Wednesday, December 7, 2011, at approximately 7:30 a.m., a 49-year-old excavator operator, with 20 years of mining experience, was fatally injured when a highwall he was working near collapsed. The excavator was being used to load rock trucks. The operator's cab was positioned on the highwall side when the accident occurred.



**Best Practices**

- Operate excavators with the cab perpendicular to, and away from, the highwall.
- Design benches to safely accommodate the type of equipment used and include this in the Ground Control Plan.
- Examine highwalls from as many perspectives as possible (bottom, sides, and top/crest) while maintaining the safety of the examiner(s). Look for signs of cracking or other geologic discontinuities.
- Use auxiliary lighting during non-daylight hours to conduct highwall examinations and to illuminate active work areas.
- Perform supplemental examinations of highwalls, banks, benches, and sloping terrain in the working area during inclement weather.
- Immediately remove all personnel exposed to hazardous ground conditions, barricade, and/or post signs to prevent entry, and promptly correct the unsafe conditions.
- Brief foremen and miners coming to work on any uncorrected hazardous conditions, and ensure the hazardous conditions are noted in the on-shift examination record book.

This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> fatality reported during calendar year 2011 in the coal mining industry. At this time in 2010, there were 48 coal mine fatalities. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> Fall of Highwall/Rib/Face fatality in 2011. At this time in 2010, there were 3 fatalities in this classification.

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The information provided in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

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