

On Tuesday, December 11, 2018, a 38-year-old miner was fatally injured at a surface coal mine. The miner was operating a front-end loader to move shot rock near the toe of a 63-foot-high highwall. A large portion of the highwall collapsed onto the front-end loader, crushing the operator cab and fatally injuring the miner.



Best Practices

- Safely examine highwalls from as many perspectives as possible (bottom, sides, and top/crest). Look for signs of cracking and other geologic features that could lead to instability and secure or remove hazardous conditions. Conduct additional examinations as ground conditions warrant, especially during periods of changing weather conditions.
- Follow the approved ground control plan at all times to ensure the safe control of highwalls.
- Use mining methods that ensure highwall stability and safe working conditions and do not excavate the base of the highwall.
- Train all miners to recognize hazardous highwall conditions.
- Operate mobile equipment perpendicular to the highwall or with the operator's cab positioned away from the highwall. Ensure that miners work, travel, and operate mining equipment at safe distances from the highwall.
- Use proper blasting techniques for forming highwalls and thoroughly examine the highwall after each blasting operation.

This is the ninth fatality reported in calendar year 2018 in the coal mining industry and it is the second classified as Fall of Face, Rib, Side or Highwall. As of this date in 2017, fourteen fatalities were reported in the coal mining industry, with two in this classification.