

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Surface  
(Crushed and Broken Granite)

Fatal Drowning Accident  
April 13, 2024

Morgan County Quarry  
Martin Marietta Materials, Inc.  
Buckhead, Morgan County, Georgia  
ID No. 09-01126

Accident Investigators

Mark Schilke  
Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Inspector

Justin Vinson  
Mine Safety and Health Inspector

Originating Office  
Mine Safety and Health Administration  
Birmingham District  
1030 London Drive, Suite 400  
Birmingham, AL 35211  
Brian Thompson, District Manager

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## OVERVIEW

On April 13, 2024, at approximately 10:20 a.m., Melvin Hobgood, a 63 year-old front-end loader operator with over four years of mining experience, was found in a pool of water next to the area he had been working.

The autopsy report states that Hobgood died due to drowning.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Martin Marietta Materials, Inc. owns and operates the Morgan County Quarry. This mine is a surface crushed and broken granite mine located in Buckhead, Morgan County, Georgia. The mine employs ten miners and operates one 11-hour shift, five days per week, and one five-and-a-half-hour shift on Saturdays. The mine extracts material from an open pit and uses haul trucks to transport material to a plant for crushing and screening. Belt conveyors transport material from the crushers to stockpiles where the mine operator sells the finished product for use in various industries.

The principal management officials at Morgan County Quarry at the time of the accident were:

Christopher Sorrows  
Fredrick Carr

Plant Manager  
Foreman

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) completed the last regular safety and health inspection at Morgan County Quarry on March 20, 2024. The 2023 non-fatal days lost incident rate for Morgan County Quarry was 8.81, compared to the national average of 1.12 for mines of this type.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On April 13, 2024, at approximately 6:30 a.m., Hobgood began his shift. According to witness statements and interviews, Hobgood and Fredrick Carr, Foreman, cleaned different areas of the plant using water hoses and then moved the water hoses to the primary rock crusher plant at the C1 belt conveyor. There, Carr and Hobgood washed off the concrete pad under the C1 belt conveyor. When they finished at approximately 10:20 a.m., Carr saw Hobgood move to the other side of the C1 belt conveyor, next to the area where wash down water accumulated, and lean against a set of stairs for the C1 belt conveyor.

Austin Batchelor, Crane/Backhoe Operator, Mason Stockdale, Haul Truck Driver, and LaTraious Saulsberry, Mechanic, were working in the area. When Saulsberry descended the C1 belt conveyor steps, he saw Hobgood face down in the water next to the concrete pad below the C1 belt conveyor. Carr, Stockdale, and Batchelor pulled Hobgood from the water and Stockdale, Batchelor, and Saulsberry started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). At 10:22 a.m., Carr called 911, then called Christopher Sorrows, Plant Manager, and went to retrieve an automated external defibrillator (AED) from the scale house.

Carr returned with the AED and placed it on Hobgood. The AED advised and administered a shock. CPR continued until Charles Gillis, Morgan County Police Officer, arrived at 10:32 a.m. and took over performing CPR. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived at 10:38 a.m. and continued performing CPR. EMS transported Hobgood to the Morgan Medical Center where Harry Wingate, MD, pronounced Hobgood dead at 11:06 a.m.

## INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCIDENT

On April 13, 2024, at 10:38 a.m., Andrew Whitworth, Safety Manager, called the Department of Labor National Contact Center (DOLNCC) to report the accident. At 12:13 p.m., the DOLNCC contacted Jarvis Westery, Assistant District Manager. Westery contacted Mark Schilke, Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Inspector, and assigned him as the lead investigator.

At 3:15 p.m., Schilke arrived at the mine and issued an order under the provisions of Section 103(k) of the Mine Act to ensure the safety of the miners and the preservation of evidence. Schilke secured, examined, and photographed the accident scene, conducted interviews, and obtained written statements.

On April 15, 2024, Justin Vinson, Mine Safety and Health Inspector, traveled to the mine to assist in the investigation. The MSHA accident investigation team conducted an examination of the accident scene, interviewed miners and mine management, and reviewed conditions and work practices relevant to the accident. See Appendix A for a list of persons who participated in the investigation.

## DISCUSSION

### Location of the Accident

The accident occurred on the ground level of the primary rock crusher plant, beneath the C1 belt conveyor (see Appendices B and C). The pool of water was approximately one foot deep where Hobgood was found (see Appendix D).

### Weather

The weather at the time of the accident was 70 degrees Fahrenheit, with sunny skies. Investigators determined that the weather did not contribute to the accident.

### Training and Experience

Hobgood had over four years of mining experience, all at the Morgan County Quarry. Washing down concrete pads was part of his regular duties. Investigators reviewed Hobgood's training records and determined he received all training in accordance with MSHA Part 46 training regulations.

### Examinations

Saulsberry performed a workplace examination in the area and did not identify any conditions that contributed to the accident.

### Autopsy Report

The autopsy report states the manner of death as "accident" and cause of death as "drowning," with hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease listed as a significant condition. Based on the conclusions presented in the autopsy report, MSHA decided that Hobgood's death should be charged to the mining industry.

## CONCLUSION

On April 13, 2024, at approximately 10:20 a.m., Melvin Hobgood, a 63 year-old front-end loader operator with over four years of mining experience, was found in a pool of water next to the area he had been working.

The autopsy report states that Hobgood died due to drowning.

Approved By:

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Brian Thompson  
District Manager

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Date

## ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

1. A 103(k) order was issued to Martin Marietta Materials, Inc.

A fatal accident occurred on April 13, 2024, at approximately 10:20 a.m. This order is being issued under the authority of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, under Section 103(k) to insure the safety of all persons at the mine and requires the operator to obtain the approval of an authorized representative of MSHA of any plan to recover any person in the mine or to recover the mine or affected area. This order prohibits any activity in the affected area. The operator is reminded of the obligation to preserve all evidence that would aid in investigating the cause or causes of the accident in accordance with 30 CFR 50.12.

## APPENDIX A – Persons Participating in the Investigation

### Morgan County Quarry

Christopher Sorrows	Plant Manager
Andrew Whitworth	Safety Manager
Fredrick Carr	Foreman
LaTraious Saulsberry	Mechanic
Austin Batchelor	Crane/Backhoe Operator
Mason Stockdale	Haul Truck Driver

### Mine Safety and Health Administration

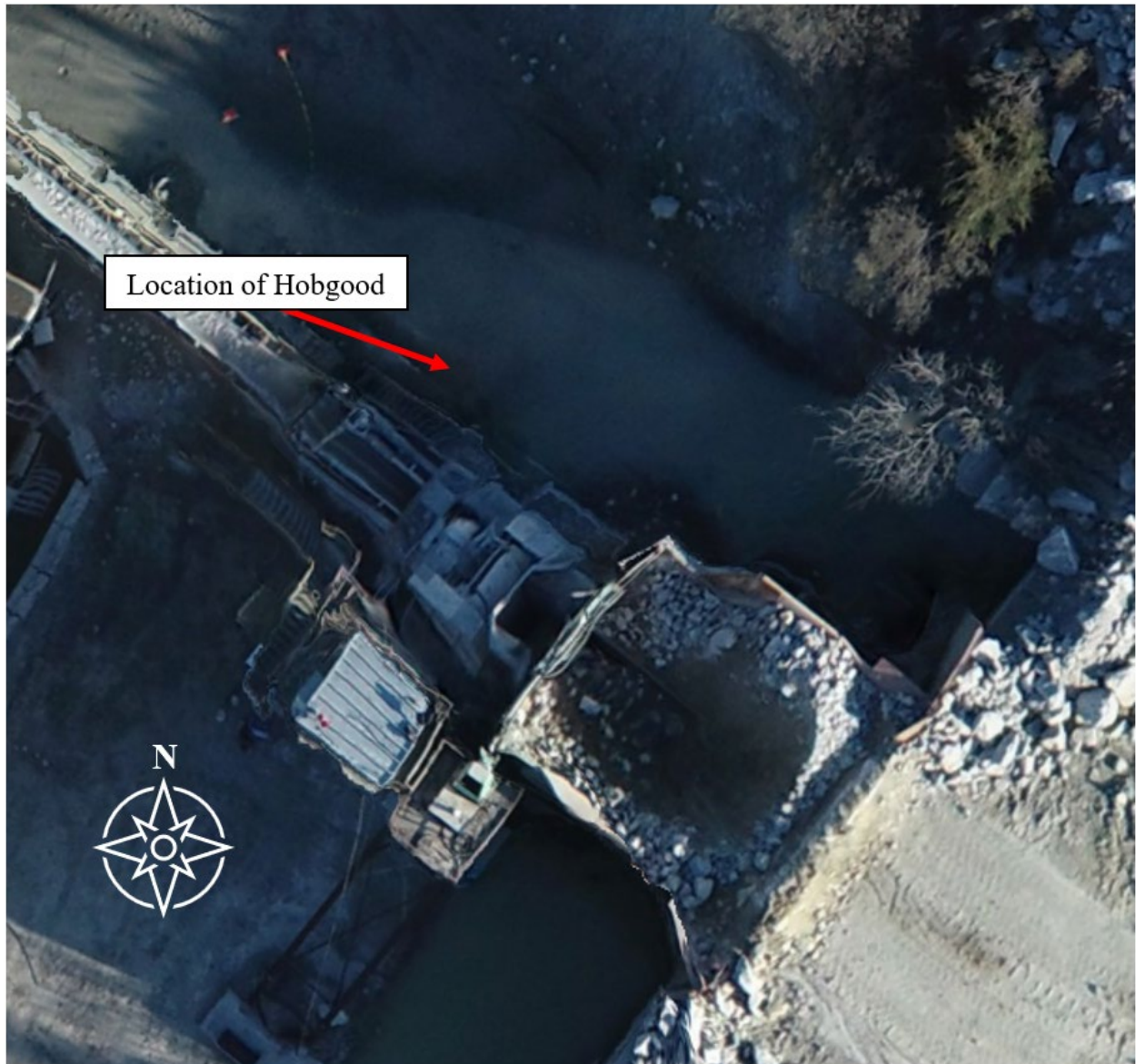
Mark Schilke	Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Inspector
Justin Vinson	Mine Safety and Health Inspector



## APPENDIX B – Aerial View of Morgan County Quarry



## APPENDIX C – Aerial View of Accident Location





## APPENDIX D – Accident Location

