FAI-F00B823-1

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Underground
(Coal)

Inundation Accident Fatality Report
November 8, 2025

Rolling Thunder Mine
Nicholas-Contura, LLC
Swiss, Nicholas County, West Virginia
Mine ID: 46-09111

Accident Investigators

Christopher Dodson
Mine Safety and Health Specialist

Derrick Kiblinger
Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Specialist

Originating Office
Mine Safety and Health Administration
Beckley District
1293 Airport Road
Beaver, WV
Craig Plumley, District Manager

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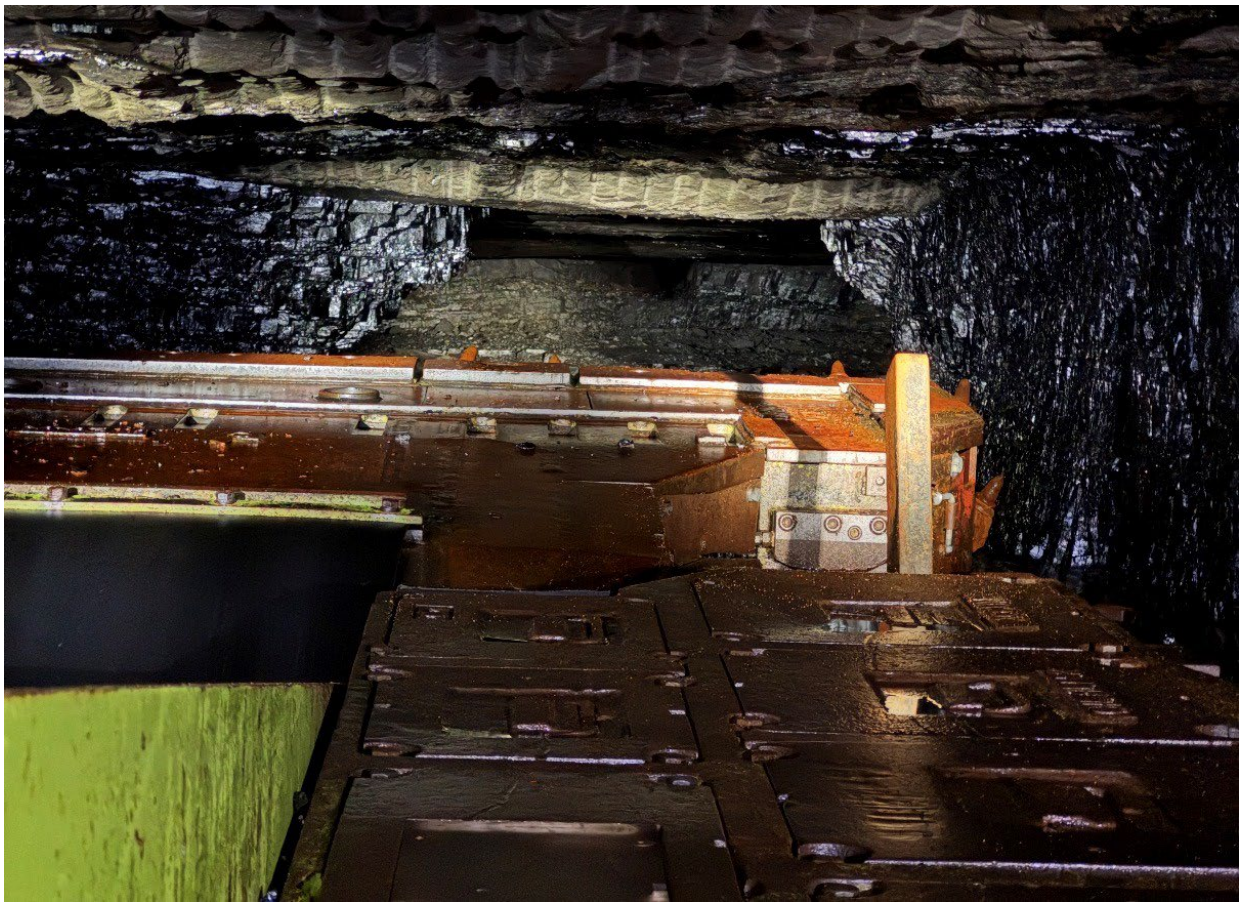


OVERVIEW

On November 8, 2025, at 12:05 p.m., Steven Lipscomb, a 42-year-old section foreman with over 19 years of mining experience, died after the mine was inundated with water when the active workings mined into an adjacent abandoned mine. Lipscomb was found on November 13, 2025, after the water level in the mine was pumped down.

The accident occurred because the mine operator did not: 1) have an accurate and up-to-date map identifying the adjacent mine works within 1,000 feet of the active mine; and 2) follow the approved Alternate Drill Plan to verify the absence of the adjacent mine works to allow safe development of Rolling Thunder Mine.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Nicholas Contura, LLC owns and operates the Rolling Thunder Mine located in Swiss, Nicholas County, West Virginia. The underground mine operates a dual mechanized mining unit (MMU) in the Powellton coal seam with an average mining height of 66 inches. The mine employs 61 miners and operates two 10-hour production shifts and one maintenance shift 6 days per week. Coal is extracted using a continuous mining machine (CMM) using the room and pillar mining method, then hauled by shuttle cars to a conveyor belt system and transported to the surface.

The principal management officials at the Rolling Thunder Mine at the time of the accident were:

Jeffrey Toler	Mine Superintendent
Gregory Baker	General Mine Foreman
Michael Vaught	Safety Director

The mine operator contracted Aracoma Coal Company, Inc (Aracoma), a subsidiary of Alpha Metallurgical Resources, to drill horizontal directional boreholes (directional holes).

The principal management official at Aracoma at the time of the accident was:

Jerry Trump	Directional Drill Senior Manager

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) completed the last regular safety and health inspection at this mine on September 17, 2025. A regular safety and health inspection was ongoing when the accident occurred; however, no MSHA inspectors were on-site at the time of the accident. The 2024 non-fatal days lost (NFDL) injury incidence rate for the Rolling Thunder Mine was zero, compared to the national average of 3.02 for mines of this type.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On November 8, 2025, at approximately 6:00 a.m., Lipscomb entered the mine and traveled to the No. 1 section with the production crew. The production crew consisted of Lipscomb; Zachary Hicks, left CMM operator; Jerry Mullins, Derek Keyes, Jacob McGough, Hunter Amick, roof bolters; Toney Belt, Jenning Neil, William Taylor, Anthony Curry, shuttle car operators; Caleb Boyce, right CMM operator; Jonathon McKinney, scoop operator; and Robert Moore, electrician.

At approximately 6:45 a.m., the production crew arrived on the No. 1 section. During the regular mining cycle, Hicks mined into the upper half of the coal seam on the left side of the No. 1 face and encountered water at 12:05 p.m. Hicks evacuated the No. 1 face and traveled to the No. 2 entry where he met Belt and Neil. Belt called Lipscomb on the radio to tell him about the water. Lipscomb arrived in the No. 2 entry where he met with Belt to discuss the inundation. Belt began alerting the remainder of the production crew before he and Lipscomb traveled to the power center in the No. 4 entry. Keyes, already at the power center, pushed the emergency stop button to deenergize the No. 1 section. Belt told Lipscomb that everyone was accounted for, and that they needed to travel outby because the water level was rising quickly. All miners except Lipscomb traveled outby through water to get to higher ground. The section rail-mounted mantrip could not be used because the water level was too high. John Winthrow, fireboss; Steve Johnson, outby foreman; and Neil operated three rubber-tired personnel carriers (located one crosscut outby the rail-mounted personnel carrier) to transport the crew to the surface.

Ryan Johnson, block maintenance foreman, met the crew in the No. 4 entry outby the rail mounted personnel carrier located at crosscut 50 where the water level was rapidly rising, and asked where Lipscomb was. R. Johnson then called Lipscomb on the radio several times and

then got the response, “I’m coming, I’m coming.” R. Johnson walked toward where he thought Lipscomb would be exiting. When R. Johnson got to the end of track, he could see Lipscomb about 60 feet inby his location near crosscut 52, but could not reach him due to the heavy flow of water. After trying to communicate, R. Johnson saw Lipscomb’s light turn and lost sight of him. With no way to reach Lipscomb and water levels rising, R. Johnson evacuated by rubber-tired personnel carrier to the surface. Lipscomb was not seen or heard from after the miners evacuated the mine.

When the CMM cut into the abandoned mine works in the No. 1 face, the initial inrush of water filled localized dips from the active No. 1 section extending outby to the No. 5 Belt Head. The section was mining slightly upgrade with an elevation change of approximately 38 feet over the 4,400-foot distance from the No. 5 Belt Head to the active section. The inflowing water settled in the low-lying entries surrounding the No. 5 Belt Head, flooding all entries and crosscuts for approximately 3,300 feet and reaching the mine roof. The flooded area prohibited any travel inby the No. 5 Belt Head area (Appendix A).

RESCUE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Immediately after miners evacuated to the surface, the mine operator began pumping water out of the mine. At the time of the accident, the mine operator could pump 700 gallons per minute (gpm) of water out of the mine.

On November 8, 2025, divers from the American Sump Diving Team arrived onsite to support search and rescue efforts. The following day, November 9, 2025, they conducted two search and rescue missions in the flooded sections of the mine, traversing approximately 1,900 feet of pooled water. The dive route included an initial 700-foot section where the water reached the mine roof, followed by a 500-foot segment where water did not reach the mine roof that allowed the divers to walk, and concluded with a second 700-foot pool where water again reached the mine roof.

After emerging from the deep water, the team continued up the alternate escapeway, covering another 3,300 feet to reach the mine faces. Throughout both dives, the divers explored all strategic areas where Lipscomb might have been located, including inby escapeways, mine faces, and the refuge alternative (RA). They also confirmed that the mine phone system was functional, which provided valuable support for ongoing operations. Despite their efforts and the comprehensive search, there was no sign of Lipscomb.

On November 9, 2025, additional measures were taken to address the flooding. Sixty- and ninety-five horsepower pumps were installed at the water shoreline to move water out to the surface mine portals. To further expedite the process, the mine operator drilled a 15-inch borehole near the shoreline and installed a vertical pump, allowing water to be pumped directly to the surface more efficiently.

On November 10, 2025, the mine operator completed another 15-inch borehole and installed another pump and began pumping water. The mine operator initiated drilling a 28-inch borehole for access inby the flooded area. From November 8 to November 13, 2025, the mine operator

increased the water pumping rate to approximately 6,000 gpm. Initial estimates indicated that 40 million gallons of water needed to be pumped out of the mine to gain access to the inby areas.

At 7:37 a.m. on November 13, 2025, Lipscomb was found at crosscut 50 on the Yankee Mains in the No. 4 entry. Jan-Care paramedics notified West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services' Medical Command, and Kaitlyn Thomas, M.D., pronounced Lipscomb dead at 9:08 a.m. Recovery began at 12:00 p.m. and rescuers arrived on the surface with Lipscomb at 3:29 p.m.

INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCIDENT

On November 8, 2025, at 12:14 p.m., Benjamin Johnson, safety representative, called the Department of Labor National Contact Center (DOLNCC) to report a serious accident. The DOLNCC notified Martin Carver, supervisory mine safety and health inspector. Carver informed Michael Moten, assistant district manager. Moten notified Larry Bailey, acting district manager, and sent Joseph Morris, mine safety and health inspector, to the mine. Moten also contacted Derrick Kiblinger, supervisory mine safety and health specialist, and Christopher Dodson, mine safety and health specialist. Moten assigned Dodson as the lead accident investigator.

At 1:40 p.m., Morris 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 preservation of evidence. Kiblinger arrived at 3:20 p.m. and Dodson arrived at 8:05 a.m. on November 9, 2025. The MSHA accident investigation team, in conjunction with the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training (WVOMHST), conducted an examination of the accident scene, interviewed miners and mine management, and reviewed conditions and work practices relevant to the accident. See Appendix B for a list of persons who participated in the investigation.

DISCUSSION

Location of the Accident

The accident occurred in the No. 1 section in the No. 1 entry. The miners evacuated the mine in accordance with the Mine Emergency Evacuation and Firefighting Program of Instruction.

Equipment Involved

The left CMM involved in the accident was a Joy Model 14CM15 with remote. The directional drill used by Aracoma for the directional holes was a 2G-2533A Fletcher Drill.

Abandoned Mine Works

The Rolling Thunder Mine is located adjacent to an abandoned mine called Mountain State Mine. Rolling Thunder Mine's No. 1 section mines both the upper 35-inch section of the Powellton seam (called the Powellton Main Bench) and the lower 16-inch section of the Powellton seam (called the Powellton Lower Split), as well as a 15-inch rock parting between the two (Appendix C). MSHA investigated the location where the CMM breached Mountain State Mine. This revealed that the Mountain State Mine only mined the Powellton Main Bench in this location.

The last known map of the Mountain State Mine was produced on February 22, 1945.

Investigators determined that the map of the Mountain State Mine was not accurate. The map inaccurately depicted adjacent mine works in the form of the abandoned Mountain State Mine to be approximately 500 feet from active mining. Not having an accurate mine map identifying the boundaries of the abandoned Mountain State Mine contributed to the accident.

Alternate Drill Plan

Because the abandoned Mountain State Mine is in the same coalbed as Rolling Thunder Mine and cannot be preshift examined, 30 CFR 75.388(a)(3) requires boreholes to be drilled to ensure the working place does not advance to within 200 feet of the adjacent mine. Additionally, since the Mountain State Mine was developed at a time when mines frequently mined past the boundaries shown on mine maps, MSHA required Rolling Thunder Mine to maintain a 1,000-foot distance from the last known extents of Mountain State Mine (Appendix D). To receive approval for mining inside of the 1,000-foot perimeter, Rolling Thunder Mine submitted an alternate drill plan to MSHA that would allow the mine to drill directional holes in advance of mining to verify the absence of the adjacent mine works.

The mine operator submitted an alternate drill plan on April 28, 2025, and MSHA approved the plan on May 7, 2025. The approved plan allowed the mine operator to drill three horizontal Abandoned Mine Verification (AMV) directional holes from three locations around the suspected location of the Mountain State Mine, each 3.75 inches in diameter and approximately 2,000 feet in length. After using the directional holes to verify the absence of Mountain State Mine, the plan allowed the mine operator to continue developing the Yankee Mains within the 1,000-foot perimeter while still adhering to the 200-foot No Mining Safety Barrier. The approved plan required Rolling Thunder Mine to have a certified engineer review and submit a certified map showing the drill trace to the MSHA District Manager after completing each directional hole. See Appendix D for the location of the three horizontal directional holes.

Horizontal Directional Drilling Procedure

Drilling in-mine horizontal directional holes involves using a drill that can be maneuvered by the survey crew to follow a predetermined path, such as a specific coal seam, adjacent to development sections. In this case, the predetermined path was the Powellton Main Bench. It is important the drill remains in the targeted coal seam to verify that the reserve is solid and does not have any previous mining. Aracoma attempted to maintain the drill in the targeted coal seam by using water pressure gauges, observing cuttings, and survey tools to determine if the drill head was angled in toward the top or bottom of the coal seam.

Investigators contacted REI Drilling Solutions (REI) and Target Drilling Inc. (Target) to gather independent information concerning the drilling procedures. REI was used to resurvey the AMV YM-3 (YM-3) directional hole drilled by Aracoma and to determine why the drilling in advance of mining had not identified the presence of adjacent mine works. REI compared the results to additional directional hole data, known elevations in the mine, and surrounding core log data. The survey results showed that the YM-3 directional hole drifted downward from the Powellton Main Bench, through the 15-inch rock parting, the Powellton Lower Split, and another 2.5 feet of fireclay to the Upper Eagle coal seam, which Rolling Thunder did not mine (Appendix F). The YM-3 directional hole ended approximately 7 feet below Mountain State Mine. Target was used to drill an additional directional hole, AMV YM-4 (YM-4), to verify there was 50 feet or more of

barrier between the Mountain State Mine and the Yankee Mains. The YM-4 directional hole verified the 50 feet barrier and intersected Mountain State Mine. Target completed their survey, which included 17 short "sidetracks" to "tag" or locate the top and bottom of the coal seam. A comparison of the drill paths and seams encountered for YM-3 and YM-4 are illustrated in Appendix F.

In addition to drilling the YM-3 directional hole into the wrong coal seam, the survey crew established the YM-3 directional hole using an incorrect azimuth (horizontal angle) 8 degrees off from the projected azimuth plotted on the mine maps. These maps were intended to show the progress of drilling. According to interviews with the engineers, the incorrect azimuth was the result of a notation error. Aracoma used the projected directional hole to plot the progress of the YM-3 directional hole, rather than the actual drill line. The change in azimuth resulted in the directional hole deviating from the projected drill line. Although the azimuth for the YM-3 directional hole was set incorrectly, it would have intersected the Mountain State Mine if the directional hole remained in the Powellton Main Bench rather than drifting down into the Upper Eagle Seam. If the engineers had plotted the actual drill path for the YM-3 directional hole on the map rather than the projected drill path, the mine operator would have had the opportunity to see that the YM-3 directional hole did not intercept the abandoned Mountain State Mine. This would have revealed the drill line was not in the Powellton Main Bench as planned.

Safety precaution No. 2 of the approved alternate drill plan states:

> "Positional surveys are collected every 10 to 20 feet of drilling and provide the operator with positional data in the x, y and z planes along with a compass heading, inclination and tool face alignment. The demonstrated accuracy by the surveying is within approximately 1.0 degree in azimuth and 0.1 degrees in pitch. If the hole is found to be drifting off its established course, the direction will be corrected to maintain the drill."

Investigators determined that positional surveys were improperly conducted. The failure to follow the alternate drill plan contributed to the accident.

Mine Emergency Evacuation and Firefighting Program of Instruction

The Mine Emergency Evacuation and Firefighting Program of Instruction was approved by MSHA on March 31, 2023. Miners are trained quarterly on the evacuation and firefighting program of instruction. Emergency scenarios such as fire, explosion, gas, and water inundation are rotated each quarter to cover each scenario in a calendar year. Lipscomb conducted the most recent quarterly fire and evacuation drill for a water inundation scenario on September 15, 2025. During this drill, the miners evacuated using the alternate escapeway in the No. 4 entry. Investigators determined that the miners evacuated the mine in accordance with the program.

At the time of the accident, the tracking system used by the mine was a wireless mesh system manufactured by Innovative Wireless Technologies. The system is designed to track miners within 200 feet on the working section and strategic areas such as belt drives, power centers, self-contained self-rescuer caches, refuge alternatives, and escape facilities. The system also tracks miners within 2,000 feet in escapeways and 4,000 feet in belt entries. The system uses

electronic nodes installed on the mine roof which are not waterproof. Investigators determined that the nodes impacted by the water inundation became inoperable. On the section, the system showed the last location for the miners was the section power center.

Examinations

The on-shift and pre-shift examinations were conducted on the No. 1 section as required. Larry Prather, section foreman, conducted the pre-shift examination from 4:30 a.m. to 5:15 a.m. on November 8, 2025. Lipscomb conducted the on-shift examination on dayshift November 8, 2025. Prather and Lipscomb did not observe any hazards during these examinations that would have contributed to the accident. The mine operator conducted all examinations of the drill site as required.

Training and Experience

Lipscomb had over 19 years of mining experience including 8 weeks at the Rolling Thunder Mine. Lipscomb received hazard training and experienced miner training on August 4, 2025. Investigators determined Lipscomb received training in accordance with MSHA Part 48 training regulations.

The Aracoma personnel who conducted the drilling in the Rolling Thunder Mine were Jerry Trump, directional drill senior manager, with 20 years of drilling experience; Derrik Pauley, lead driller, with 17 years of drilling experience; and Brian Adkins, drill helper, with 1.5 years of drilling experience. Investigators determined the drill crew received training in accordance with MSHA Part 48 training regulations.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

The accident investigation team conducted an analysis to identify the underlying causes of the accident. The team identified the following root causes, and the mine operator implemented the corresponding corrective actions to prevent a recurrence.

1. Root Cause: The mine operator did not have an accurate and up to date map identifying adjacent mine works within 1,000 feet of mining.

   Corrective Action: The mine operator drilled the perimeter of the abandoned adjacent Mountain State Mine using updated drilling procedures. A certified map with the updated drilling has been provided.

2. Root Cause: The mine operator and contractor did not follow the approved Alternate Drill Plan.

   Corrective Action: The mine operator and contractor developed enhanced written procedures for effectively drilling in the minable reserve and to accurately verify the absence of adjacent mine works. The new procedures require that drillers:

   (a) "Sidetrack" to "tag" or locate the top and bottom of the targeted coal seam at 200-foot intervals,
   (b) Complete the entire directional hole and have it certified by an engineer before advancing

the mine,
(c) Perform vertical core drilling to determine the location of the coal seam, and
(d) Drill into the abandoned mine while using a blowout device to ensure that miners are protected.

The mine operator trained all miners on these written procedures.

CONCLUSION

On November 8, 2025, at 12:05 p.m., Steven Lipscomb, a 42-year-old section foreman with over 19 years of mining experience, died after the mine was inundated with water when the active workings mined into an adjacent abandoned mine. Lipscomb was found on November 13, 2025, after the water level in the mine was pumped down.

The accident occurred because the mine operator did not: 1) have an accurate and up to date map identifying the adjacent mine works within 1,000 feet of the active mine; and 2) follow the approved Alternate Drill Plan to verify the absence of the adjacent mine works to allow safe development of Rolling Thunder Mine.

Approved By:

_____ _____

Craig Plumley Date
District Manager

ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

1. A 103(k) order was issued to Nicholas-Contura, LLC.

   A fatal accident occurred on November 8, 2025, at 12:05 p.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.

2. A 104(a) citation was issued to Nicholas-Contura, LLC for a violation of 30 CFR 75.1200(h).

   On November 8, 2025, a section foreman died when the mine was inundated with water after cutting into adjacent abandoned mine works. The mine operator did not have an accurate and up to date map identifying adjacent mine works within 1,000 feet of mining.

3. A 104(d)(1) citation was issued to Nicholas-Contura, LLC for a violation of 30 CFR 75.388(g).

   On November 8, 2025, a section foreman died when the mine was inundated with water after cutting into adjacent abandoned mine works. The mine operator did not follow the approved Alternate Drill Plan. This plan states in paragraph 2 under “Specifications/Safety Precautions”:

   > “Positional surveys are collected every 10 to 20 feet of drilling and provide the operator with positional data in the x, y and z planes along with a compass heading, inclination and tool face alignment. The demonstrated accuracy by the surveying is within approximately 1.0 degree in azimuth and 0.1 degrees in pitch. If the hole is found to be drifting off its established course, the direction will be corrected to maintain the drill.”

   This violation is an unwarrantable failure to comply with a mandatory standard.

4. A 104(d)(1) citation was issued to Aracoma Coal Company, Inc for a violation of 30 CFR 75.388(g).

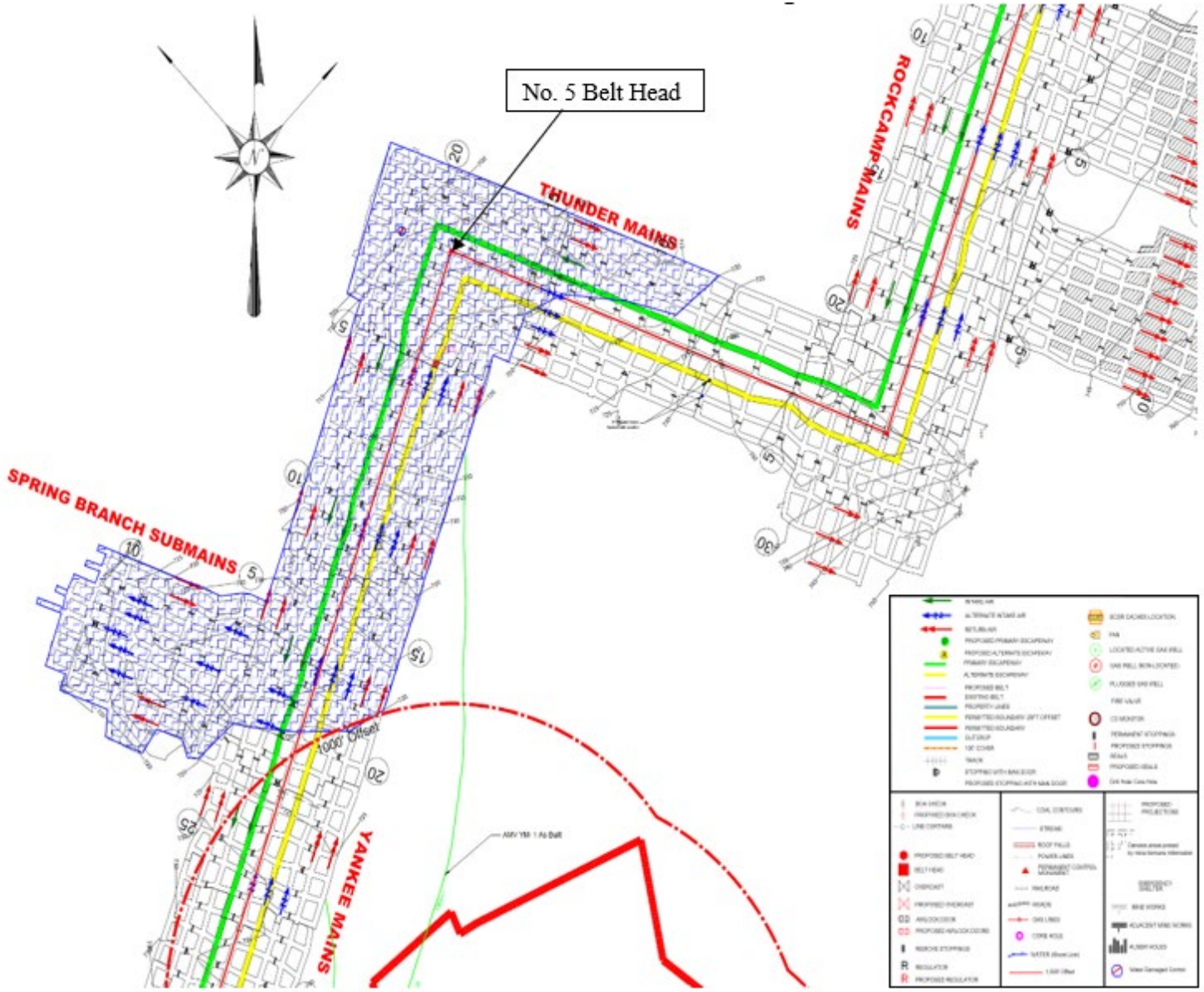
   On November 8, 2025, a section foreman died when the mine was inundated with water after cutting into adjacent abandoned mine works. The contractor did not follow the approved Alternate Drill Plan. This plan states in paragraph 2 under “Specifications/Safety Precautions”:

   > “Positional surveys are collected every 10 to 20 feet of drilling and provide the operator with positional data in the x, y and z planes along with a compass heading, inclination and tool face alignment. The demonstrated accuracy by the surveying is within approximately 1.0 degree in azimuth and 0.1 degrees in pitch. If the hole is found to be

drifting off its established course, the direction will be corrected to maintain the drill."

This violation is an unwarrantable failure to comply with a mandatory standard.

APPENDIX A – Maximum Water Pooling



APPENDIX B – Persons Participating in the Investigation

Alpha Metallurgical Resources

Jason Whitehead	President/COO Alpha Natural Resources
Barrett Justice	President of Operations Mid-WV Underground
Logan Hall	Vice President Mid-WV Surface/Kingston
Scott Toler	Vice President of Operations Mid-WV Underground
Brian Keaton	Senior Vice President of Safety
John Jones	President of Special Projects
Mitchell Boland	Engineering Director for WV Southeast
Kris Burke	Director of Maintenance

Nicholas-Contura, LLC

Jeffrey Toler	Superintendent
Gregory Baker	General Mine Foreman
Michael Vaught	Safety Director
Ryan Johnson	Block Maintenance Foreman
Steve Johnson	Outby Foreman
John Withrow	Outby Foreman
Seth Porter	Safety Supervisor
Zachary Hicks	Continuous Mining Machine Operator
Derek Keyes	Roof Bolter
Toney Belt	Shuttle Car Operator
Jenning Neil	Shuttle Car Operator

Aracoma Coal Company, Inc

Jerry Trump	Directional Drill Senior Manager
Derrik Pauley	Lead Driller
Brian Adkins	Drill Helper

American Sump Diving Team

Zeb Lilly	National Cave Rescue Commission Coordinator
Christopher Howell	Dive Team 1
Jon Lillestolen	Dive Team 1
Tucker Palmatier	Dive Team 1
Ian Flom	Dive Team 2
Michael Raymond	Dive Team 2
Aaron Thomas	Dive Team 2
Chris Garguilo	On Site Surface Support
Ashley Lewis	On Site Surface Support
Vanessa Pinter	On Site Surface Support
Christina Richards	On Site Surface Support
Dustin Schleifer	On Site Surface Support

West Virginia Office of Miners' Health and Safety Training

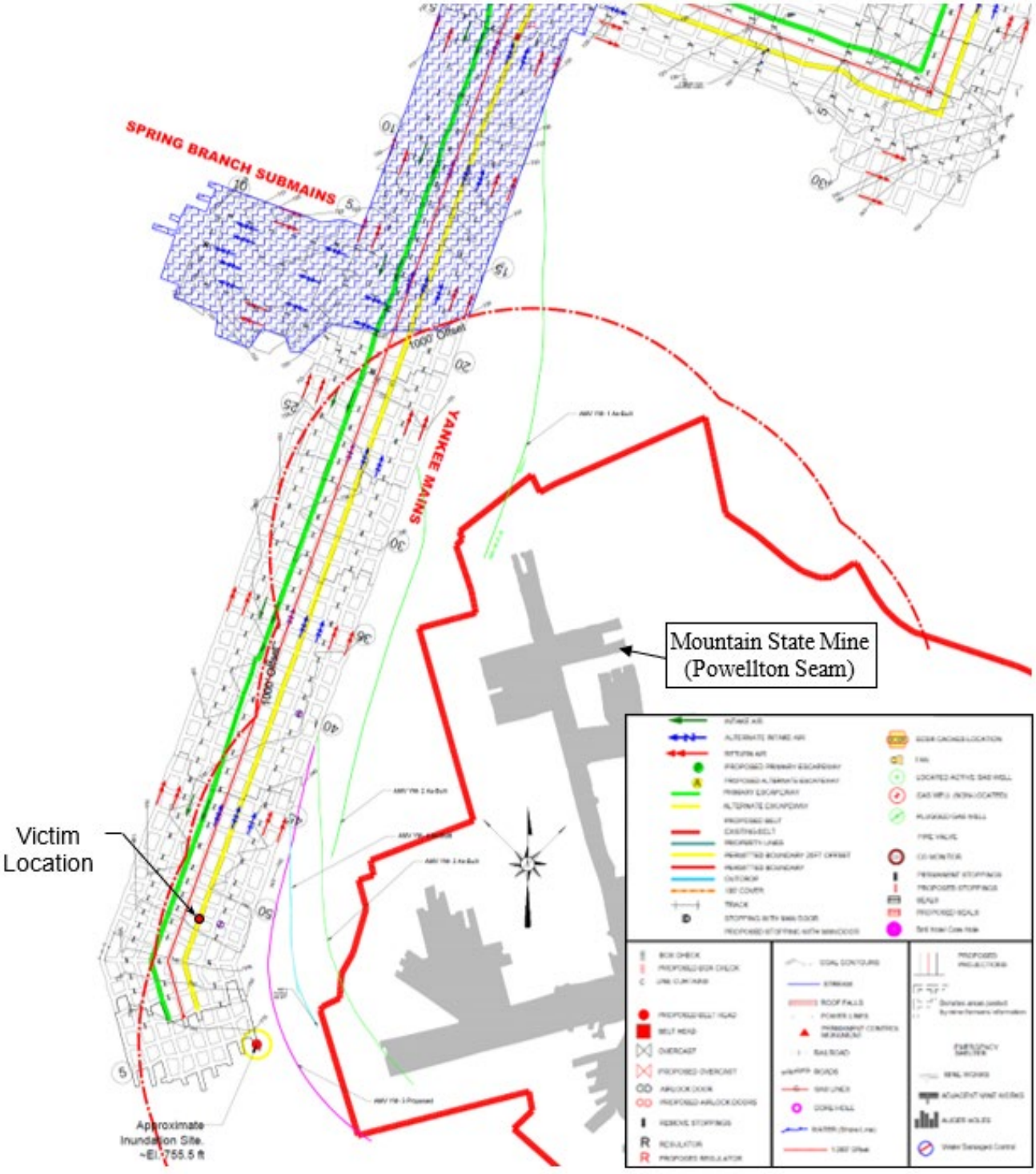
Frank Foster	Director
William Stewart	Roof Control and Ventilation Specialist
Christopher Dawson	Inspector at Large
Charles Moles	Assistant Inspector at Large
Jeremy Ball	District Mine Inspector
Gregory Davis	District Mine Inspector
Jeffory Davis	Chief Electrical Inspector
Kermit Fincham	Chief Engineer

Mine Safety and Health Administration

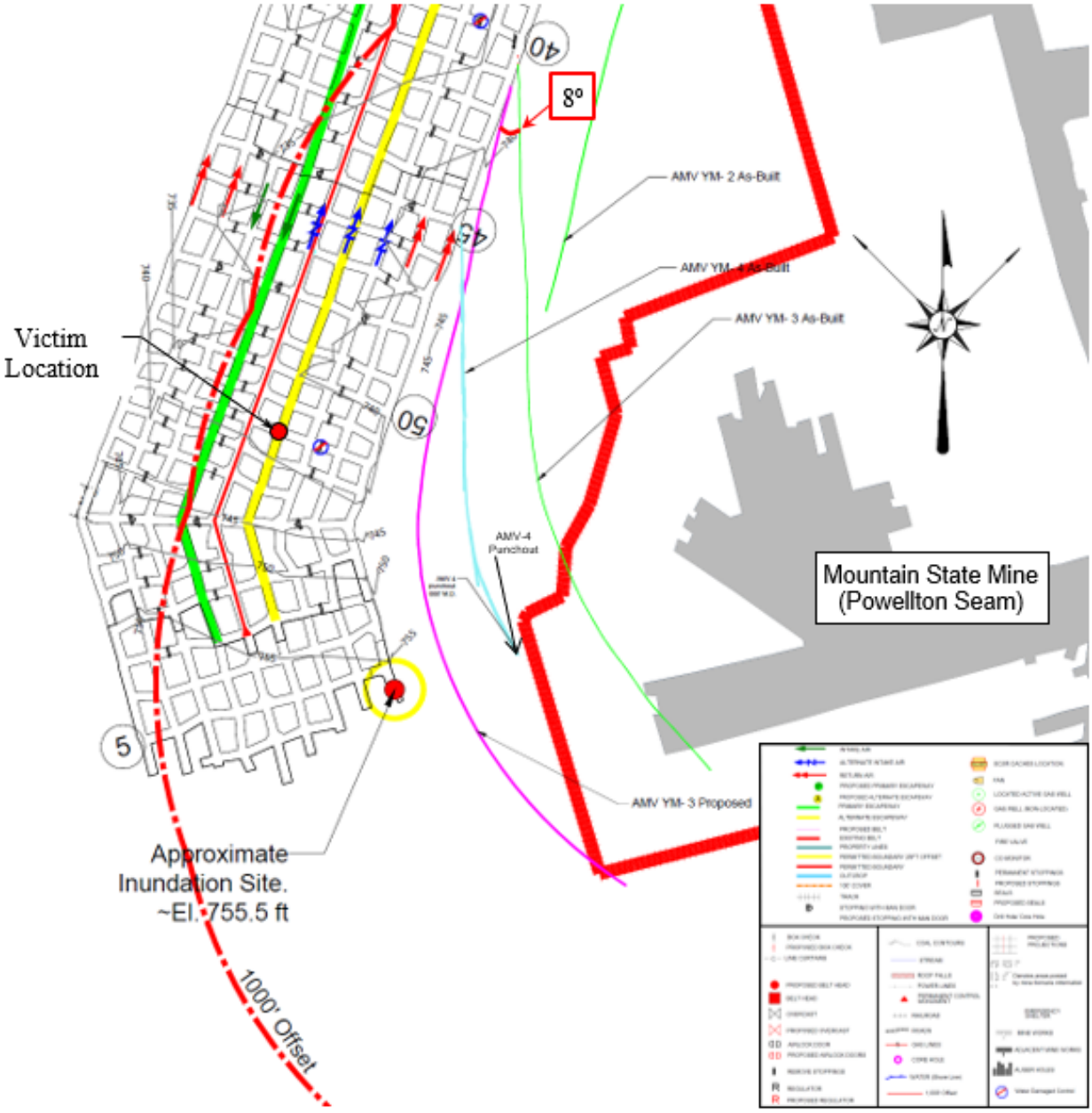
Larry Bailey	Acting District Manager
Michael Moten	Assistant District Manager
Derrick Kiblinger	Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Specialist
Martin Carver	Supervisory Mine Safety and Health Inspector
Christopher Dodson	Mine Safety and Health Specialist
Joseph Morris	Mine Safety and Health Inspector
George Aul	Geologist, Technical Support

APPENDIX C –No.1 Section Face

APPENDIX D – Map with Location of AMV Directional Holes



APPENDIX E – Map with Location of Mine-Through Site



APPENDIX F – Vertical Comparison of Drill Paths and Seams