

Report of Fatality
Highwall Miner Accident
Surface Coal Mine
March 7, 2019

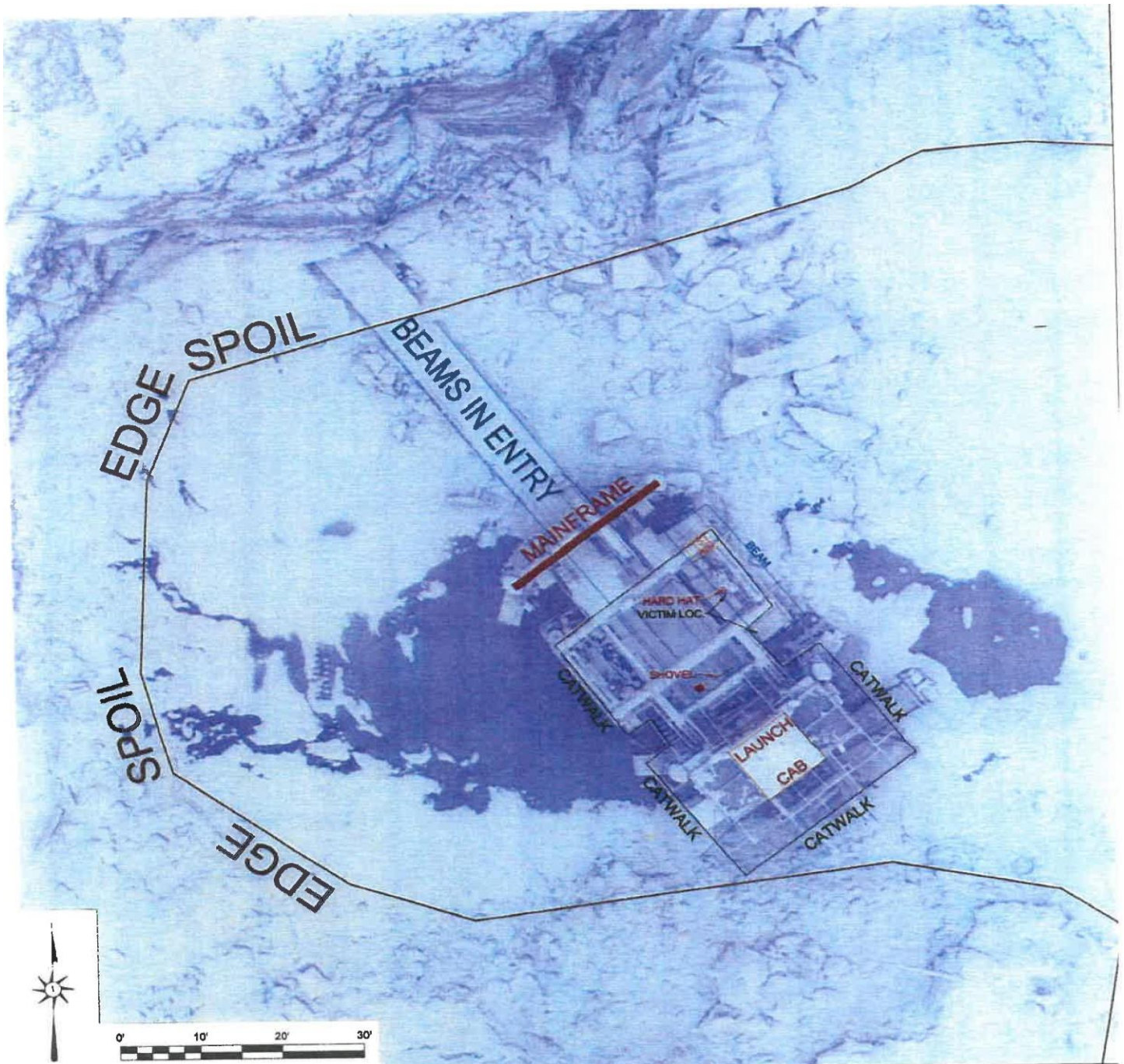
South Fork Coal Co., LLC
Blue Knob Surface Mine
Permit Number S00300511

Region IV Office
550 Industrial Drive
Oak Hill, West Virginia 25901
McKennis P. Browning, Inspector-at-Large

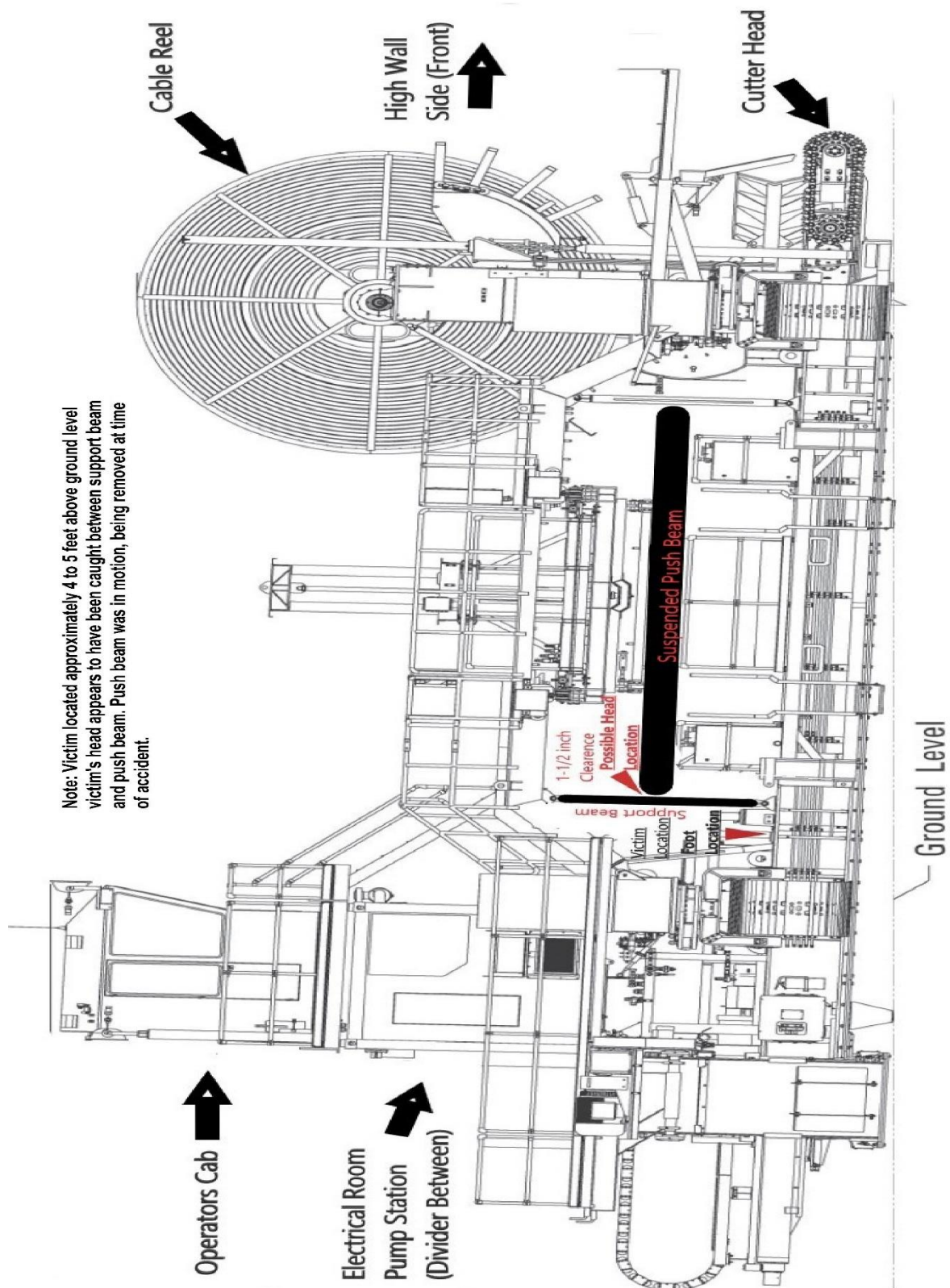
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PHOTOS
Aerial View
Superior Highwall Miner



Superior Highwall Miner



Side View Superior Highwall Miner



Superior Highwall Miner Powerhead



**REPORT OF FATALITY
HIGHWALL MINER ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
SOUTH FORK COAL CO., LLC
BLUE KNOB SURFACE MINE
WV PERMIT NUMBER S00300511**

GENERAL INFORMATION

This report is based on an investigation conducted in accordance with Title 56, Series 3, Section 12 of the West Virginia Code of State Rules.

Mr. Adam DeBoard, an employee of South Fork Coal Co., LLC, was fatally injured in an accident which occurred at approximately 1:30 p.m. on March 7, 2019. Mr. Adam De Board was employed as a coal loader operator who assisted the pad man during extraction of the highwall miner push beams when not loading coal. At the time of the accident, Mr. Adam DeBoard was assisting the pad man with the extraction of the highwall miner push beams. The highwall miner had advanced approximately five hundred sixty (560) feet before completing the hole and beginning the extraction process. Approximately thirteen (13) highwall miner push beams had been extracted from the hole. The highwall miner push beams are twenty (20) feet in length with the weight of each highwall miner push beam being approximately eleven thousand seven hundred (11,700) pounds. Mr. James W. Nichols, highwall miner operator / foreman, was located in the highwall miner control room, from where he observed Mr. Adam DeBoard walk up the highwall miner launch and shovel some mud from in front of the powerhead. Mr. DeBoard was standing at the upright steel support beam located near the top of the steps. As the highwall miner push beam was being extracted, traveling up and then out, Mr. James W. Nichols saw Mr. Adam DeBoard fall, at which time Mr. Adam DeBoard's head apparently became caught between the upright steel support beam and the highwall miner push beam being extracted.

The Nicholas County Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management was contacted at 1:30 p.m. by Mr. Joshua Sturgill, Superintendent at South Fork Coal Co., LLC. Redi Care Ambulance Service was dispatched at 1:36 p.m. and arrived on scene at approximately 2:02 p.m. The Redi Care Ambulance Service transported Mr. Adam DeBoard to Greenbrier Valley Medical Center. The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety & Training, Region IV office, was contacted at 1:47 p.m. by Mr. Keith Smith with South Fork Coal Co., LLC to report that an accident had occurred. Mr. McKennis Browning, Inspector-at-Large with the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, Region IV office issued a verbal control order and dispatched Bobbie Harper, Assistant Inspector-at-Large; Steve Phares, Surface Inspector; Tim Fitzwater, Surface Inspector; and Victor Shingler, Surface Inspector to the accident site. A joint investigation with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and management of South Fork Coal Co., LLC was started immediately.

DESCRIPTION

The South Fork Coal Co., LLC, Blue Knob Surface Mine is located on Greenbrier Road near Richwood, West Virginia. The mine was issued a permit on September 9, 2012. The mine employs fifty-six (56) people including salaried personnel. The mine operates two production shifts per day, 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. dayshift, and 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. nightshift. The mine has three (3) active working pits that use various types of surface equipment including a Superior Highwall Miner in the pits. The mine operates in the Sewell A seam that is approximately twenty-six (26) inches high and the Sewell B seam which also is approximately twenty-six (26) inches high. The interval between the two Sewell seams is approximately sixty (60) feet. The mine produces approximately one hundred twenty thousand (120,000) tons of coal per year.

On March 7, 2019, the Blue Knob Surface Mine highwall miner crew began their shift at 6:00 a.m. Based on testimony provided by Mr. James W. Nichols, foreman / highwall miner operator, a brief safety meeting was conducted that morning concerning slips and trip hazards. The highwall miner crew advanced the highwall miner run approximately five hundred sixty (560) feet, at which time conditions warranted abandoning the highwall miner run. The highwall miner crew began extracting the highwall miner push beams and had extracted approximately thirteen (13) highwall miner push beams. Mr. Adam DeBoard normally helped the pad man during the extraction process when his coal loading duties were completed. Mr. Adam DeBoard was on the highwall miner launch assisting the pad man, Mr. Mark Chapman, pulling pins from the highwall miner push beam, shoveling etc.

Mr. James W. Nichols, miner operator / foreman, located in the upper control room witnessed Mr. Adam DeBoard walk up the highwall miner launch and stand between the steps and the upright steel support beam located at the powerhead on the right side of the highwall miner with a shovel in his left hand. As Mr. James W. Nichols, highwall miner operator / foreman, was watching the highwall miner push beam come up from the belly pan, he saw the shovel that Mr. Adam DeBoard was holding in his left-hand fall towards the conveyor chain (belly pan) as the highwall miner push beam was being extracted. Mr. James W. Nichols raised partly up from out of his operators' seat. He saw that Mr. Adam DeBoard's leg had gone into the conveyor chain (belly pan) in front of the powerhead. Mr. Adam DeBoard grabbed the upright steel support beam while the highwall miner push beam was being extracted. Mr. Adam DeBoard's head was caught between the upright steel support beam and the highwall miner push beam.

Mr. James W. Nichols activated the emergency stop control. Mr. James W. Nichols traveled from the control room to the highwall miner launch where he saw Mr. Adam DeBoard lying face down in the conveyor chain (belly pan). Mr. James W. Nichols called out to Mr. Mark Chapman, (pad man) and (apprentice miner), who was located at the opposite end of the launch on the left side controlling the highwall miner push beam crane. Mr. Mark Chapman contacted Mr. Richie Miliam, Maintenance Chief / EMT, who was working near the highwall miner. Mr. Mark Chapman retrieved first aid equipment; other EMT's from various parts of the mining operation quickly arrived to render assistance. Mr. Joshua Sturgill, Superintendent, contacted the Nicholas County

Division of Homeland Security Emergency Management at 1:30 p.m. Redi Care ambulance was dispatched at 1:36 p.m. from Craigs ville. The Redi Care ambulance arrived on the scene at 2:02 p.m. The Redi Care Ambulance transported Mr. Adam DeBoard to the Greenbrier Valley Medical Center. Mr. Adam DeBoard was pronounced dead by Dr. Edwards.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Mr. Adam DeBoard was a certified surface miner with ten (10) years total mining experience. He had twenty-two (22) months' experience at this mine.
2. Records show Mr. Adam DeBoard received annual refresher training on September 22, 2018 and was task trained on the highwall miner on May 30, 2017, which duties he was performing at the time of the accident.
3. At approximately 1:30 p.m. on March 7, 2019 while performing duties of assisting the pad man in extracting highwall miner push beam from the Superior number sixty-one (61) Highwall Miner, Mr. Adam DeBoard apparently slipped while standing at the upright steel support beam at the right side of the highwall miner near the powerhead while the highwall miner push beam was being extracted, causing Mr. Adam DeBoard's head to be caught between the upright steel support beam and the highwall miner push beam as it was being extracted.
4. Mr. Adam DeBoard received medical treatment at the highwall miner site by the onsite EMT.
5. Mr. Adam DeBoard was pronounced dead at 4:44 p.m. on March 7, 2019 by Dr. Edwards.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Adam DeBoard received fatal injuries when he was caught between the upright steel support beam located at the right rear side of the highwall miner near the powerhead and the highwall miner push beam being extracted.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The following enforcement actions were taken as a result of the investigation.

A non-assessed control order was issued in accordance with Title 56, Series 3, Section 51.1 of the Code of State Rules to preserve evidence following the accident.

A total of thirty (30) violations were issued during this accident investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The upright steel support beams located at the front and rear of the highwall miner shall be declared red zones. These areas shall be painted brightly and warning placards installed. Eliminate the back-access steps on the magazine side preventing access from the ground. Chains shall be installed across the second level access to the red zone and

across the upright steel support beams front and rear of the highwall miner magazine side preventing access to the red zone.

2. Four (4) cameras shall be installed at various locations with monitors located in the operator's compartment.
3. Highwall miner crew retraining shall be provided from a third party for the entire highwall miner crew. All highwall miner crew members will be re-task trained, which shall include addendums to the comprehensive mine safety program.
4. At the start of each shift one (1) safety precaution from the West Virginia Comprehensive Mine Safety Program Highwall Miner Addendum along with statement number ten (10) located in the highwall miner addendum under Highwall Miner Operation shall be reviewed with employees and recorded in the on-shift report.
5. Two additional emergency stop buttons shall be installed on the highwall miner launch for a total of five (5). All five (5) emergency stop buttons located on the highwall miner shall be tested once each shift. These checks shall be recorded in the on-shift report.
6. Two-way FM radios shall be upgraded at all locations to enhance communications from the highwall miner to the offices, guard shack, and supervisors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training acknowledges the cooperation of employees and management of South Fork Coal Co., LLC, Blue Knob Surface Mine and the Mine Safety and Health Administration during this investigation.

APPENDIX

- Mine Information Sheet
- Victim Information Sheet

MINE INFORMATION

COMPANY South Fork Coal Co., LLC

MINE NAME Blue Knob Surface Mine

WV PERMIT S00300511

ADDRESS 209598 Coal Knob Road – Richwood, WV 26261

COUNTY Greenbrier

DATE PERMIT ISSUED September 09, 2012 WORKING STATUS Active

LOCATION On Greenbrier Road

UNION _____ NON-UNION Yes

DAILY PRODUCTION _____ 1,800 tons

ANNUAL PRODUCTION TO DATE _____ 120,000 tons

TOTAL EMPLOYEES 56 NUMBER OF SHIFTS 2

NAME OF COAL BED Sewell A and Sewell B

SEAM THICKNESS Average twenty-six (26) inches

ACCIDENT INCIDENT RATE 0 LOST TIME ACCIDENTS 0

TYPE OF HAULAGE N/A

WV OMHST INSPECTOR Tim Fitzwater

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION January 2019

NOTIFIED BY Joshua Sturgill

TIME OF NOTIFICATION 1:30 p.m.

CMSP – ANNIVERSARY DATE N/A

CMSP – CONTACT PERSON Joshua Sturgill