

Report of Fatality  
Track/Rubber Tire Haulage Equipment  
Underground Mine

November 6, 2025

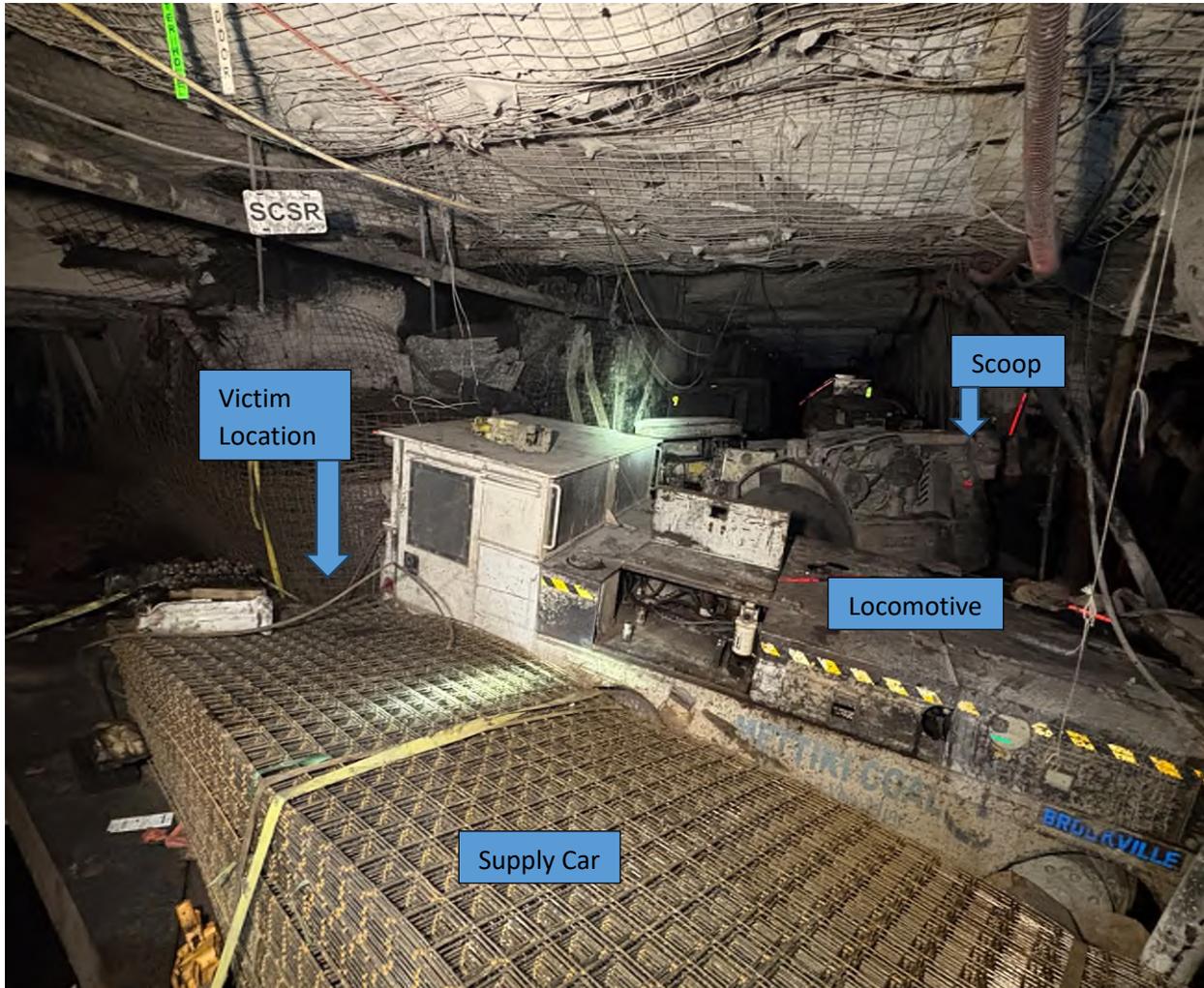
Mettiki Coal WV, LLC.  
Mettiki E-Mine  
Permit Number U00200104  
Near Davis, in Tucker County

Region I Office  
14 Commerce Drive, Ste 1  
Westover, WV 26501  
Ed Peddicord, Inspector-at-Large

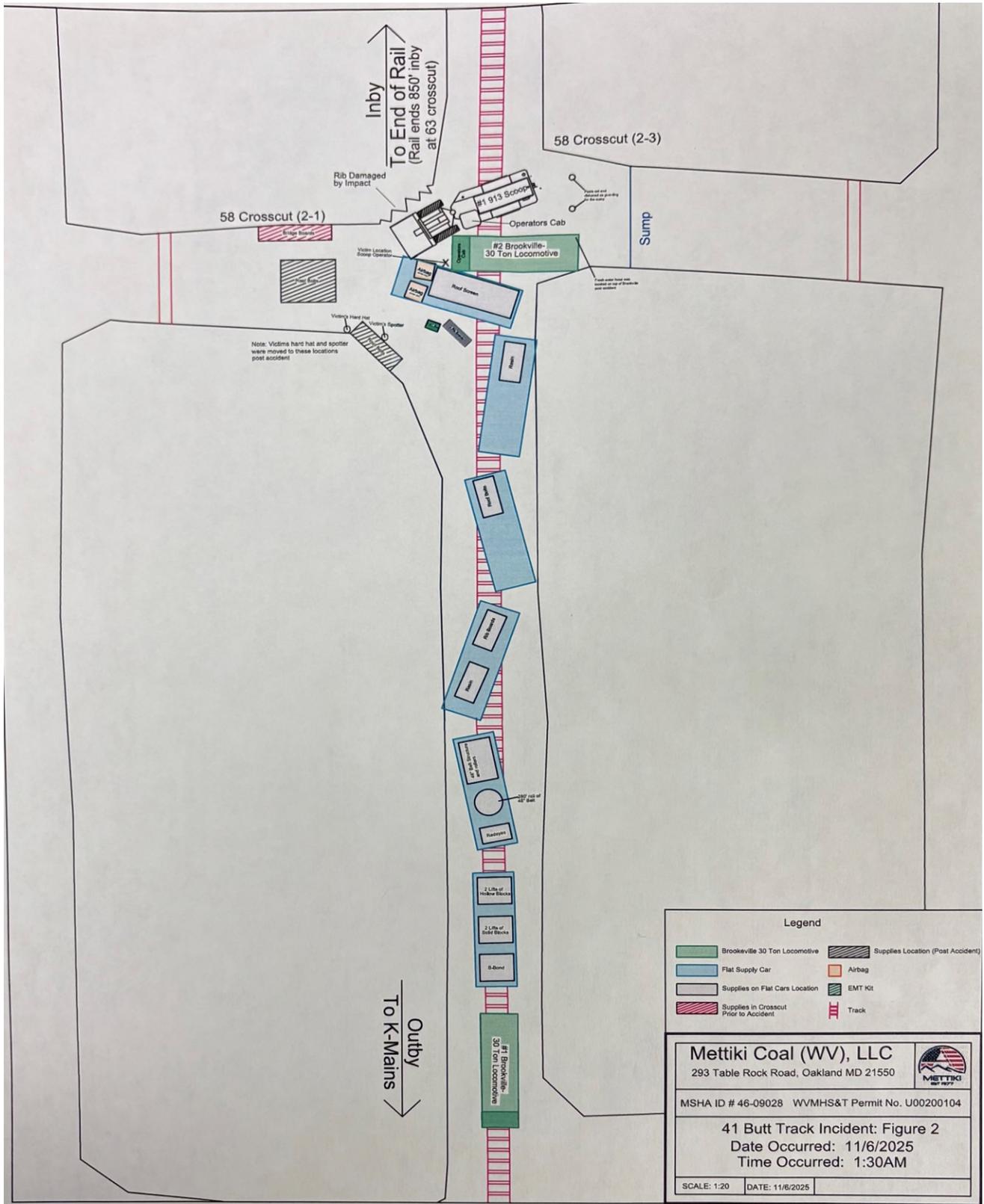
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## Photos



**Photo of the accident scene located at 58-block 41-Butt Section**



CAD drawing of accident scene obtained from Mettiki Coal WV, LLC.

## Timeline

**November 5/6, 2025**

-  On November 5, 2025, at 10:15 p.m., Joseph D. Mitchell, Jr. and coworkers prepare for the start of night shift.
-  At 10:30 p.m. Mr. Mitchell and fellow miners start night shift.
-  At 10:30 p.m. Ryan Duckworth, laborer, and Rick Ahern, Locomotive Operator, perform the pre-operational check on the #1 and #2 Brookville 30-ton locomotives.
-  On November 6, at 12:40 a.m., Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern arrive at 41-Butt switch and are told to wait.
-  At 1:05 a.m. Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern receive clearance from 41-Butt mouth switch to 47-block using #1 and #2 locomotives, pulling six (6) Irwin flatcars loaded with section supplies.
-  At 1:25 a.m. Mr. Duckworth, operating the #2 locomotive, approaches 47-block. While attempting to come to a stop, the locomotives lose traction and travel out of control, striking the #1 Eimco 913 Diesel Scoop that Mr. Mitchell was operating.
-  At 1:28 a.m. Mr. Ahern calls Steven High, Dispatcher, on the radio requesting EMS personnel.
-  At 1:30 a.m. Jason Heckler, Fireboss (EMT) and Shawn Devlin, Beltman (EMT), overhear Mr. Ahern call for help on the radio and travel to 41-Butt, 58-block.
-  At 1:32 a.m., Mr. High calls 911.
-  At 1:38 a.m. Mr. Heckler arrives at 58-block and checks Mr. Mitchell for a pulse. None is detected.
-  At 1:40 am. Mr. Devlin arrives at 58-block and checks Mr. Mitchell for a pulse. None is detected. CPR is being performed at this time.

- At 3:05 a.m. Mr. Mitchell is taken to the F-Portal surface and is transferred to the care of Tucker County EMS.
- Later that morning, Mr. Mitchell is pronounced deceased by the Garrett County Maryland Medical Examiner.

## **Report of Fatality**

**Track/Rubber Tire Haulage Equipment  
Mettiki Coal WV, LLC.  
Mettiki E-Mine**

**WV Permit Number U00200104**

### **General Information**

This report is based on an investigation conducted in accordance with Chapter 22A, Article 1, Section 14 of the West Virginia Code.

Mettiki Coal WV, LLC., Mettiki E-Mine, Permit No. U00200104, is located near Davis, Tucker County, West Virginia. The Mettiki E-Mine produces 15,000 raw tons per day and annual production year-to-date is 1,028,526 clean tons from two (2) miner units and one (1) longwall. The coal is transported from the working sections by conveyor belts to the slope belt to the surface loadout, then transferred to the preparation plant. The Mettiki E-Mine employs two hundred (200) people and operates three (3) shifts per day. The Freeport coal seam is accessed by the E-Portal and F-Portal. Mettiki E-Mine utilizes diesel/battery track-mounted and rubber-tired diesel/battery powered haulage equipment.

On November 6, 2025, at approximately 1:25 a.m., Joseph D. Mitchell, Jr., 25 years of age, received fatal injuries while he was located on the 41-Butt section track, near 58-block while working the midnight shift. This area is used for storing section supplies. Mr. Mitchell was an employee of the Mettiki E-Mine.

On November 6, 2025, at 1:32 a.m., Stephen High, Dispatcher, called 911 for assistance. At this time, the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security Mine and Industrial Accident Rapid Response System was notified of the accident. Ed Peddicord, Region One Inspector-at-Large of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety & Training (WVOMHST), was then notified that an accident had occurred at the Mettiki E-Mine. Mr. Peddicord notified Tadd Rankin, Region One Assistant Inspector-at-Large of the WVOMHST, George Brooks and Chris Ray, District Mine

Inspectors, John Nicholson and James Bowman, Electrical Inspectors of the accident. Mr. Rankin issued a verbal control order at 2:19 a.m., to Mike Fulmer Superintendent of Mettiki E-Mine. A joint investigation with the Mine Safety and Health Administration(MSHA), Alliance Coal, LLC and Mettiki Coal WV, LLC began immediately.

Formal interviews were conducted on November 14, 2025, at Region One, Westover Office. The following individuals voluntarily testified: Jason Scott Heckler, Mine Fireboss; Sean Patrick Devlin, Mine Fireboss; Steven Wayne High, Mine Dispatcher; Milton Holt Scott III, Outby Eimco 913 Scoop Operator; Rickey Ahern, #1 30-ton Brookville Locomotive operator and Ryan Duckworth, #2 30-ton Brookville Locomotive operator.

## Accident Description

On November 5, 2025, 10:30 p.m., miners began entering the mine for midnight shift. Rick Ahern and Ryan Duckworth, Locomotive Operators, went underground and conducted a pre-operational check of the locomotives that they would be operating. Mr. Ahern was to operate the company #1 Brookville 30-ton locomotive; Mr. Duckworth was to operate the company #2 Brookville 30-ton locomotive. Both are track-mounted, diesel-powered locomotives.

Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern were instructed to take seven (7) cars from E-Portal to 41-Butt track spur and to spur up the empty ballast car. Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern then pulled the remaining six (6) supply cars. Two (2) of the supply cars were loaded with belt move supplies and four (4) cars were loaded with section supplies. Mr. Duckworth, Mr. Ahern and Milton Scott III, the outby Scoop Operator, planned to unload the supplies at 41-Butt, 47-block due to the steep grade starting inby 47-block. Mr. Scott traveled to 47-block by use of the Eimco 913 diesel scoop that he was instructed to operate. After Mr. Scott arrived at the 47-block crosscut, he radioed Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern to inform them he was clear for them to travel to 47-block.

Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern received clearance from the dispatcher and began transporting the supply cars from 41-Butt mouth to 47-block. Mr. Duckworth was operating the lead locomotive, pulling the cars, while Mr. Ahern was operating the tail locomotive, which was coupled to the outby end of the trip due to elevation changes in the grade of the track. Mr. Ahern stated that it is part of normal operations due to the steep downward grade of the 41-Butt section. Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern also stated at 42-block, they placed the locomotives in first gear, dropping sand from the locomotive's sanding devices on the rails preparing for the downhill grade in this area. When arriving at 47-block, Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern had begun coming to a stop with the locomotive train when the locomotives lost traction and began traveling out of the control of the operators. Mr. Scott witnessed the locomotives traveling out of control and immediately called on the mine radio system to clear the 41-Butt rail due to the locomotive train traveling out of control (runaway). The locomotives and supply cars traveled toward the 58-block crosscut at an accelerated speed.

Joseph D. Mitchell, Jr., Scoop Operator/Utility Man, was traveling in the #1 913 Eimco diesel scoop from 57-block to 58-block, after loading roof bolting supplies. Mr. Mitchell was last seen operating the #1 913 Eimco scoop at 58-block by Mr. Duckworth before the collision.

The impact of this collision caused Mr. Mitchell to be ejected from the operator's compartment and caused the #2 locomotive and the six (6) Irwin flat cars to push the #1 Eimco scoop inby. The scoop bucket struck the left rib corner and was pushed horizontally across the track entry. The inby car, loaded with roof bolts, uncoupled from the #2 locomotive and struck Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Ahern went to check on Mr. Duckworth. Mr. Duckworth was trapped in the #2 locomotive's operator compartment. Mr. Duckworth had to break the window to get out of the cab due to the door being blocked by part of the wreckage of supplies. On exiting, Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Ahern started looking for Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Duckworth located Mr. Mitchell. His legs were positioned toward the #2 locomotive and his upper body was pinned under the Irwin flatcar. Mr. Ahern called Mr. High for help, requesting Emergency Medical Services personnel. Mr. High called 911. Jason Heckler, Fireboss (EMT) and Sean Devlin, Beltman (EMT), overheard Mr. Ahern call for help on the radio and traveled to 41-Butt, 58-block. When Mr. Heckler arrived, he immediately checked Mr. Mitchell for a pulse but none was detected.

Mr. Mitchell was transported to the surface. Once on the surface, Mr. Mitchell was transferred to the care of Tucker County EMS. Mr. Mitchell was pronounced deceased on November 06, 2025, by the Garret County, Maryland Medical Examiner.

## Findings of Fact

1. Mr. Mitchell was an employee of Mettiki Coal WV, LLC., Mettiki E-Mine for three (3) years, four (4) months. Total mining experience of three (3) years four (4) months. His classification was Scoop Operator/Utility Man.
2. Mr. Mitchell possessed a WVOMHST Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-25197 received on July 5, 2022.
3. Mr. Mitchell received Task Training for the Eimco 913 Scoop on April 15, 2023.
4. Mr. Mitchell received Annual Miner retraining on March 28, 2025.
5. Mr. Duckworth possesses a WVOMHST Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-16682 received on August 22, 2008.
6. Mr. Duckworth has four (4) years, four (4) months with Mettiki E-Mine and seventeen (17) years of mining experience.
7. Mr. Duckworth received Task Training for the Brookville 30-ton locomotive on April 07, 2025.
8. Mr. Duckworth received Annual Miner retraining on March 21, 2025.

9. Mr. Ahern has three (3) years, ten (10) months with Mettiki E-Mine and thirty-two (32) years of mining experience.
10. Mr. Ahern possesses a WVOMHST Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-12491 received on March 12, 1993.
11. Mr. Ahern received Task Training for the Brookville 30-ton locomotive on April 23, 2024.
12. Mr. Ahern received Annual Miner retraining on March 21, 2025.
13. The trail locomotive #1 is a Brookville 30-ton with serial #8036, model# BCC-30UP, WV diesel approval WV06-157. When inspected after the collision, three (3) of the four (4) sanders would not discharge sand on the rail.
14. The lead locomotive #2 is a Brookville 30-ton with serial #8037 model #BCC-30UP, WV diesel approval WV06-158C. When inspected after the collision, three (3) of the four (4) sanders would not discharge sand on the rail.
15. The Brookville 30-ton locomotives weigh 60,730 pounds each.
16. The Eimco 913 diesel scoop with serial #2B7848, is a model #3304 PCNA, WV diesel approval #WV05-046. When inspected after the collision, the safety chain was not long enough to attach across the operator's compartment entrance.
17. The locomotives had six (6) Irwin flatcars loaded with section supplies.
18. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar weighs 5.75-tons empty.
19. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #1 contained four (4) bundles of hollow cement block, four (4) bundles of solid cement block, one (1) lift of B-bond.
20. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #2 contained 208 feet of 48" mining belt, 140 feet of belt conveyor structure, one (1) bundle of red eyes (belt and monorail hangers).
21. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #3 contained four (4) lifts of roof bolt resin M-50 J-Lock and four (4) bundles of rib boards.
22. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #4 contained six (6) bundles of six-foot roof bolts.
23. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #5 contained three (3) lifts of roof bolt resin M-50 J-Lock.
24. The Irwin 20-ton flatcar Car #6 contained one (1) bundle of metal screen and six (6) bundles of six-foot roof bolts.
25. The total trip weight was approximately 307,210 pounds.
26. The 41-Butt track was wet at the time the investigation team traveled to the accident site.
27. The 41-Butt track is walking height (approximately 10 feet).
28. The 41-Butt track entry bottom conditions are wet and muddy and ballasted to the height of the rail.

29. The 41-Butt track entry is sloped toward the inby section with grades up to 7.2%.
30. The 41-Butt track entry track steep grade locations were not equipped with a derail or positive stop block when the accident team started their investigation.
31. After the collision, the rail was found to be wet and muddy from 47 block to 58 block at the accident area.
32. After conducting interviews with the mine dispatcher and other mine employees, it was found that Mr. Mitchell, Scoop Operator/Utility Man, did not obtain track clearance to be on the 41-Butt track entry rail.

## Conclusion

Mr. Joseph D. Mitchell, Jr. was fatally injured after the #2 Brookville 30-ton locomotive collided with the #1 Eimco scoop. During this collision, Mr. Mitchell was ejected from the scoop operator's compartment. The Irwin flatcar that uncoupled from the #2 Locomotive during the collision contacted Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell was last observed sitting in the operator's deck of the #1 Eimco scoop.

## Enforcement Action

In accordance with W.Va. Code §22A-2-68, following an accident at the Mettiki E-Mine that resulted in a death of a miner on November 6, 2025, this non-assessed order was issued for the accident scene preservation until WVOMHST completed this investigation.

Six (6) contributing violations have been issued during this investigation.

## Recommendations

The following will be included in the Mettiki E-Mine Comprehensive Mine Safety Program:

An addition to the Mettiki E-Mine Comprehensive Mine Safety Program to include a four (4) car limit to transport supplies about the mine, via the mine rail system. (and a particular requirement that the combined weight of said cars does not exceed the theoretical tonnage chart, for the appropriate conditions, that is provided by Brookville for the 30-ton locomotive.)

Train and review with Locomotive operators' procedures of preoperational check list and call out to mine dispatcher on condition of sanders at the start of the shift.

Train and review with employees about obtaining track entry clearance to access rail /rubber tire haulage of all areas of the mine before traveling in the mine track entry.

Train and review with employees about performing a pre-operational check before operating any haulage equipment and correcting any deficiencies found during those checks.

Review with mine employees the findings of the fatality report involving the collision on the 41-Butt section.

It is recommended that the Company perform on-site testing of various sands to determine maximum friction inducing traction sands for use in actual conditions and select appropriate traction sand based on testing results. It is further recommended that the testing be done with the cooperation of the company engineering department and WVOMHS&T representatives

## Acknowledgement

The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the management and employees of Alliance Coal, LLC., Mettiki Coal WV, LLC., Mettiki E-Mine and the Mine Safety and Health Administration during this investigation.

Colton Cook, General Mine Manager; Mike Fulmer, Superintendent; Matthew Robb, VP of Northern Appalachia; Daniel Ramsey, Safety Director and Kenny Murry, Alliance Coal Vice President of Operations.

MSHA employees Rodney Fultz, Dave Wamsley, Mike Stark and Tyler Peddicord.

## Appendices

- Mine Information Sheet
- Victim Information Sheet

## Mine Information

Company Mettiki Coal WV, LLCMine Name Mettiki E-MineWV Permit U00200104Address 180 E-Portal Road Davis, WV 26260County TuckerDate Permit Issued September 20, 2004 Working Status ActiveLocation Davis, WVUnion \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Union YesDaily Production 15,000 tonsAnnual Production to Date 1,028,526 tonsTotal Employees 200 Number of Shifts 3Name of Coal Bed Upper FreeportSeam Thickness 100 InchesAccident Incident Rate 2.06 Lost Time Accidents 4Type of Haulage Track, Rubber-Tired Equipment and Belt Conveyor SystemWV OMHST Inspector George BrooksDate of Last Inspection November 5, 2025Notified by West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Industrial Accident Rapid Response SystemTime of Notification 1:47 a.m.CMSP – Contact Person Daniel Ramsey

## Victim Information

Name of Victim Joseph Leroy Mitchell, Jr.Age of Victim 25 yearsTotal Mining Experience 3 years, 4 monthsExperience at This Mine 3 years, 4 monthsAverage Number of Days Worked Per Week 5Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week 40Length of Shifts at Mine 8 hoursTravel Time To/From Work 1 hourOccupation at Time of Accident Scoop Operator/Utility ManRegular Occupation Scoop Operator/Utility ManMiner's Certification 1-25197Other Certifications n/aDate of Accident 6<sup>th</sup> Day of November 2025At 1:30 O'clock a.m.Location of Accident Mettiki E-Mine, 41-Butt Section at 58 block