

Report of Fatality
Underground Mine
November 8, 2025

Nicholas Contura, LLC
Rolling Thunder Mine
Permit Number U00300804
Near Vaughn, Nicholas County

Region IV Office
337 Industrial Drive
Oak Hill, WV 25901
Christopher Dawson, Inspector-at-Large

Table of Contents

Photos	1
Timeline	5
General Information	8
Accident Description	10
Findings of Fact	11
Conclusion	12
Enforcement Action	13
Acknowledgement	14
Appendices	15
Mine Information	16
Victim Information	17

Photos

Photo 1



This is a picture of the left-side continuous mining machine and the cut-through into the water-impounded in the Mountain State Mine.

Photo 2



This picture is of the cut-through into the Mountain State Mine (circled in yellow).

Photo 3



This is a picture of the cut-through into the Mountain State Mine in front of the left-side continuous mining machine. (The hole is circled in yellow.)

Photo 4



This is a picture of the cut-through point between Rolling Thunder Mine and the Mountain State Mine. The timbers are set where the continuous mining machine was sitting when it cut into the Mountain State Mine.

Timeline

November 8, 2025

- *The following timeline was gathered from formal witness interviews*

- At 6:00 a.m., the dayshift production crew attended a safety meeting.
- At approximately 6:20 a.m., the day shift production crew started underground.
- At approximately 6:45 a.m., the dayshift production crew arrived at the end of track on the section.
- At approximately 7:10 a.m., the section started to produce coal.
- At approximately 11:30 a.m., the left-side continuous mining machine started cutting in the No. 1 entry and the right-side continuous mining machine was moving to the No. 6 face. During the mining process, four shuttle cars had been loaded in the No. 1 face.
- At approximately 11:40 a.m., the left-side continuous mining machine cut into the Mountain State Mine, releasing water that had impounded since its abandonment. The mine crew was notified, and they began to evacuate the section by traveling outby via the No. 4 entry to the end of the track.
- At approximately 11:45 a.m., as the crew passed the section's electrical distribution center during their evacuation, Mr. Lipscomb, Section Foreman, was observed talking on the mine phone. Tony Belt, Shuttle Car Operator, communicated to Mr. Lipscomb that Mr. Lipscomb should join the rest of the crew in evacuating the mine and that the crew was, at that time, proceeding to the rail mantrip at the end of the track. As the crew proceeded to the rail mantrip, Mr. Belt turned to check if Mr. Lipscomb was coming with them. Mr. Lipscomb was observed leaving the mine phone area, traveling inby and turning towards the feeder in the No. 5 entry.
- As the crew evacuated to the end of the track, they encountered waist to chest deep water rushing across No. 4 entry from the No. 1, 2 and 3 entries. The water was traveling down the No. 4 entry with great force, causing a few miners to stumble and fall during their evacuation.
- At approximately 11:49 a.m., the crew arrived at the rail mantrip and found that it was being overtaken with water and could not be moved. The crew proceeded outby and met with fire bosses and outby electricians who had battery-powered, rubber-tired, 4-wheelers, and continued to evacuate the mine.
- At approximately 11:52 a.m., as the crew was evacuating to the surface, Ryan Johnson, Maintenance Foreman, went back to the area of the rail mantrip, trying to locate Mr. Lipscomb. Mr. Johnson called out to Mr. Lipscomb with his handheld radio and got a reply from Mr. Lipscomb stating, "I'm coming, I'm coming." Mr. Johnson waded into shoulder-deep water when he observed a cap light on the other side of the water (approximately 60 to 80 feet away). Due to the mine roof contour of that area of the mine, there was only approximately two inches of space between the water and the mine roof of the mine in the area between Mr. Johnson and the cap light. Mr. Johnson yelled out in the direction of the cap light for Mr. Lipscomb to go to the No. 3 entry. He lost sight of the cap light and never saw it

again. Mr. Johnson checked No. 3, 4, 5 and No. 6 entries to no avail, so he went back to the No. 3 and No. 4 entries. There was still no sign of Mr. Lipscomb.

At approximately 11:57 a.m., Greg Baker, Mine Foreman, arrived at the edge of the water, just outby the rail mantrip. Mr. Baker met Mr. Ryan Johnson at the shoreline. Mr. Baker stated, "Oh my god, the water's bad." Mr. Johnson and Mr. Baker started simultaneously checking all the entries again, with no sign of Mr. Lipscomb. Steven Johnson, Fireboss, also arrived at the shoreline. The water was continuing to rise, and they had to evacuate to the surface. As Mr. Baker, Mr. Ryan Johnson and Mr. Steven Johnson proceeded to the surface, they received a call from the dispatcher that Mr. Lipscomb's tracking device showed Mr. Lipscomb in the area around No. 5 belt head. Mr. Ryan Johnson traveled back to the No. 5 belt head, searched the entire area for Mr. Lipscomb and did not find him. Mr. Ryan Johnson went to the mine phone at the belt head, called outside and asked where the tracking system showed the location of Mr. Lipscomb. Greg Cox, Dispatcher, told Mr. Ryan Johnson that there was a mix up and that the last known location was No. 5A belt head. Mr. Ryan Johnson made another attempt to travel back up to the shoreline and encountered water that was not passable in the approximate area between crosscuts twelve and fifteen, in the No. 4 entry, along No. 5 belt line. Mr. Ryan Johnson evacuated to the surface area of the mine. During this evacuation, mine management contacted mine rescue personnel and worked to obtain additional pumps and supplies for dewatering.

At approximately 4:50 p.m., an electrical distribution center was moved underground, wired and energized at the No. 13 crosscut on the No. 4 Belt. The electrical distribution center was needed to energize the pumps used for dewatering.

From 4:50 p.m. on November 8, 2025, until 6:00 a.m. on November 13, 2025, continued efforts and progress was made in dewatering the Rolling Thunder Mine. Additional discharge lines were put together and taken inside the mine. Power was restored outby the affected area to energize the pumps being installed. There were also two dewatering holes, drilled from the surface to install turbine pumps for lessening the restriction of water pressure which increases pumping output capabilities. From the time the first pump was energized, until the time the last pump was energized, water output peaked at approximately 6,000 GPM (Gallons Per Minute).

Between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., a cave diving team was contacted.

At approximately 10:00 p.m., the cave diving team arrived on mine property and were Hazard Trained.

November 9, 2025

Several approaches towards dewatering were made throughout this day, including the installation of additional pumps, eventually allowing up to an estimated 6,000 GPM output was reached.

Two cave diving teams alternated throughout this day, searching flooded portions of the section for Mr. Lipscomb.

November 10, 2025

Mine examinations around the perimeter of the water-roofed areas and dewatering efforts with the installation of pumps and discharge lines continued throughout this day.

➤ At approximately 5:50 a.m., work began on cutting an access road to install a pad for a drill to create a hole for an escape capsule.

➤ At approximately 2:15 p.m., dewatering efforts to this point lowered the water levels in the outby flooded area, exposing an inby flooded area that could not be dewatered, requiring pumps to be moved inby. Dewatering efforts began in the inby flooded area at approximately 3:05 a.m.

November 11, 2025

➤ Mine examinations around the perimeter of the water-roofed areas and dewatering efforts with the extension of discharge lines continued throughout this day.

November 12, 2025

➤ Mine examinations around the perimeter of the water-roofed areas and dewatering efforts with the extension of discharge lines continued throughout this day.

November 13, 2025

➤ At approximately 6:00 a.m., mine rescue personnel began search and rescue efforts for Mr. Lipscomb.

➤ At approximately 7:37 a.m., Mr. Lipscomb was found deceased in the No. 4 entry, approximately 200-feet outby the end of the track, at crosscut No. 51, near Survey Station 1634.

➤ At approximately 2:29 p.m., Jan Care Ambulance Service assumed responsibility for the care of Mr. Lipscomb, after he was brought out of the mine.

➤ At approximately 2:50 p.m., the ambulance left the property with Mr. Lipscomb.

Report of Fatality
Nicholas Contura, LLC
Rolling Thunder Mine
WV Permit Number U00300804

General Information

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

Nicholas Contura, LLC, was permitted to operate the Rolling Thunder Mine on June 5, 2023. They are a subsidiary of Alpha Metallurgical Resources. This mine employs 61 people on three shifts, operating two Mechanized Mining Units (MMU) on one super-section on day and evening shift, with a midnight maintenance shift. The day shift and the evening shift rotate every two weeks. This mine removes coal reserves from the Powellton Seam, via the room and pillar method of mining. This mine utilizes drift openings to access the coal seam.

This mine operates two coal producing shifts each day. The midnight shifts work a 9-hour maintenance shift. This mine utilizes a blowing fan on the surface to ventilate the mine air courses and to provide fresh air to mine workers and to carry away and dilute mine gases in the coal mine. This mine supplies and transfers workers in and out of the mine via battery-powered track/rail equipment. Outby workers and mine management teams utilize battery-powered, rubber-tired, 4-wheelers for transportation.

An Independent Contractor, Aracoma Coal Company, Inc., of Holden, WV, was tasked with drilling the proposed drill holes in Rolling Thunder's ventilation plan. The mine map and ventilation plan stated that the abandoned Mountain State Mine was adjacent to the Rolling Thunder Mine. A "No Mining" safety barrier was established, and a 1,000-foot drilling perimeter was previously placed around the Mountain State Mine in order to ensure that any mining activity within this 1,000-foot zone was drilled and deemed safe from unintentional intersection of mine workings.

Aracoma Coal Company, Inc., operated a 2G-2533A Fletcher drill at this location. The proposed length of the holes was 2,000 feet with a hole diameter of 3.75 inches. Nicholas Contura engineers applied the Ashley formula to determine the barrier between the Mountain State Mine and the Rolling Thunder Mine to ensure the adequacy of the "No Mining" safety barrier, which was established during the initial permitting.

Steven Lipscomb, age 42, was employed as a Section Foreman at the Rolling Thunder Mine at the time of the accident. He started his employment at the Rolling Thunder Mine on August 4, 2025. Mr. Lipscomb had 19 years of mining experience. He held an Underground Mine Foreman Certificate and an EMT-M Certification. Mr. Lipscomb received Experienced Miner Training on August 4, 2025, at the Rolling Thunder Mine.

Mr. Lipscomb was found deceased on November 13, 2025, after a water inundation that occurred on November 8, 2025.

On November 8, 2025, the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training received notice of the accident and began their investigation. A Command Center was set up at the Rolling Thunder Mine Office, near Vaughn, WV.

Formal interviews were conducted on December 2, 3 and 11, 2025, at the WV OMHST Region IV Office located at 337 Industrial Drive in Oak Hill, WV. The following individuals voluntarily testified:

December 2, 2025

Larry Prather-Midnight Shift Mine Foreman	Derek Keyes-Left Side Roof Bolter Operator
Zack Hicks-Left Continuous Miner Operator	Jerry Mullins-Left Side Roof Bolter Operator
Tony Belt-Left Side Center Shuttle Car Operator	Hunter Amick-Right Side Roof Bolter Operator
Anthony Curry-Right Side Shuttle Car Operator	Jake McGough-Right Side Roof Bolter Operator
Bill Taylor-Right Side Center Shuttle Car Operator	Johnny McKinney-Scoop Operator
Jennings Neil-Left Side Shuttle Car Operator	Robbie Moore-Electrician
Caleb Boyce-Right Continuous Miner Operator	

December 3, 2025

Jeff Toler-Superintendent
Greg Baker-General Mine Foreman
James Greathouse-Chief Electrician
Greg Cox-Dispatcher
Ben Johnson-Safety Tech
John Withrow-Fireboss
Steven Johnson-Fireboss

December 11, 2025

Ryan Johnson – Maintenance Foreman

Accident Description

On November 8, 2025, at 6:00 a.m., a safety meeting was conducted with the section production crew, prior to going underground. The section crew, which consisted of 13 miners, proceeded to the super-section via rail mantrip after the conclusion of the safety meeting. They arrived at the end of the track at approximately 6:45 a.m. and began to produce coal at approximately 7:10 a.m.

At approximately 11:30 a.m., the left-side continuous mining machine started a cut in the No. 1 entry, and the right-side continuous mining machine was moving from the No. 9 entry to the No. 6 entry. According to witness statements, four shuttle cars had been loaded from the No. 1 entry and the continuous mining machine was cutting in at the top of the coal seam, approximately 15 feet in on the curtain side, when the left-side machine cut into the abandoned Mountain State Mine, releasing water that had impounded since its abandonment. Zach Hicks, Continuous Miner Operator, alerted the shuttle car operator that they had cut into water. Mr. Lipscomb was contacted on the radio to come to the No. 1 entry and the Continuous Miner Operator and Shuttle Car Operators alerted the other crew members to evacuate. At this time, the left-side roof bolting crew was bolting in the No. 3 face, the right-side roof bolting crew had moved into the No. 9 face, and the right-side continuous mining machine was moving to the No. 6 face. During this time, the water was rushing in and continued spreading across the left side of the section and draining outby down No. 1, 2, 3 and 4 entries, alongside the section's electrical distribution center.

The crew evacuated the section by traveling down the No. 4 entry and proceeded to the rail mantrip at the end of the track. As the crew passed the section electrical distribution center, they observed Mr. Lipscomb talking on the mine phone. They told him to come and that everyone was proceeding to the rail mantrip. One of the miners looked back to see if Mr. Lipscomb was evacuating with them and saw him leave the phone and proceed inby the section electrical distribution center and turn towards the coal feeder that was in the No. 5 entry. During the crew's evacuation to the end of the track, they encountered waist to chest deep water, rushing across from the No. 1, 2 and 3 entries, traveling down the No. 4 entry with such force that it caused a few miners to stumble and fall during their evacuation. When the crew arrived at the rail mantrip, they observed that it was being overtaken with water and could not be moved. They proceeded outby and met fire bosses and outby electricians, who were working around No. 5A belt head. Battery-powered, rubber-tired, 4-wheelers in this area were used to transport miners to the surface.

During this time, Ryan Johnson, Maintenance Foreman, went back to the area of the rail mantrip, trying to locate Mr. Lipscomb. Mr. Johnson called out to Mr. Lipscomb with his handheld radio and got a reply from Mr. Lipscomb stating, "I'm coming, I'm coming." Mr. Johnson waded deeper into the water and was in shoulder-deep water when he saw a cap light on the other side of the water (approximately 60 to 80 feet away). He yelled to Mr. Lipscomb, urging him to go to the No.

3 entry, because the water was only about two inches from the mine roof in the area between them. He lost sight of the cap light and never saw it again. Mr. Johnson checked No. 3, 4, 5 and No. 6 entries to no avail, so he went back to the No. 3 and No. 4 entries. There was still no sign of Mr. Lipscomb.

During the evacuation of the miners and the search for Mr. Lipscomb, mine management was installing additional pumps as well as gathering additional pumps, water line and other resources from other operations to help with dewatering the flooded areas. They also contacted mine rescue personnel.

A cave diving team was then contacted. After being briefed and Hazard Trained, the cave diving team entered the mine and began their exploration. They traveled through two areas flooded to the mine roof and arrived at the section, which was still flooding. They checked in by up to the last open crosscut near the faces, the SCSR caches, and the Refuge Alternative, with no sign of Mr. Lipscomb. After checking the area with no response, the team communicated to the command center, using a mine phone located at the refuge alternative, then evacuated to the surface and reported their findings to the command center.

From time of the accident on November 8, 2025, until 6:00 a.m. on November 13, 2025, dewatering was being conducted in the mine so mine rescue personnel could enter the flooded area of the mine safely to do a search and rescue mission. At approximately 6:00 a.m., on November 13, 2025, mine rescue personnel entered the mine. At 7:37 a.m., Mr. Lipscomb's body was located at crosscut No. 51 in the track entry, near Survey Station 1634, by a member of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training mine rescue team and a member of Nicholas Contura management, who was trained in mine rescue.

Findings of Fact

Mr. Lipscomb was issued an Underground Apprentice (05) certification card on January 24, 2006.

Mr. Lipscomb was issued an Underground Miner (06) certification on October 13, 2006.

Mr. Lipscomb was issued an Underground Mine Foreman certification on December 16, 2015, and attended his last Mine Foreman Continuing Education on February 17, 2025.

Mr. Lipscomb was issued an EMT-M (33) certification on December 16, 2016. Mr. Lipscomb attended his last EMT-M Module (1) on October 18, 2025.

Mr. Lipscomb was given Experienced Miner Training, Mine Tour, Escapeway and Strata Refuge Alternative Training at the Rolling Thunder Mine on August 4, 2025.

On September 15, 2025, Mr. Lipscomb conducted an escapeway drill with his crew for a water inundation scenario. The secondary escapeway, through the No. 4 entry, was the route for the evacuation drill.

Mr. Lipscomb was found two crosscuts outby the end of the track, in approximately 30 inches of water that was remaining in the previously flooded area.

On November 13, 2025, after the ambulance left, a modification to the control order was given, to continue dewatering efforts and make examinations up to the shoreline.

On November 19, 2025, a modification to the control order was given, to conduct examinations and fix ventilation controls. This was to allow the investigative teams to reach the water inundation site and also, to retrieve the Aracoma Coal Co., Inc. data, stored at the drilling station.

On November 20, 2025, the investigation team went to the water inundation site and retrieved the drill data computer.

On December 3, 2025, a modification to the control order was given to allow repair of electrical, hydraulic and mechanical damage to the long hole drill.

On December 4, 2025, the drill steel was removed from the hole with the investigative team in attendance.

On December 9, 2025, a seal plan was submitted for approval. The plan was approved on December 19, 2025, and the seals in the No. 1 entry were completed on January 4, 2026.

On December 17, 18 and 19, REI Drilling's drill team came in and re-surveyed the original drill hole.

On January 8, 2026, a meeting was held at the WV OMHST Region IV office with the Alpha Metallurgical Resources management and engineers and the WV OMHST and MSHA investigative teams to review the drill hole re-survey data and their corrective actions. During this meeting, core hole analysis from the nearby BL-76-2 Hole and post-accident drilling and surveying of the original long hole revealed the presence of a dip in the coal seam. During the long hole drilling operation, the drill entered the dip but failed to follow the seam as the dip rose in elevation. As a result, the long hole drill continued on its path and hit a fireclay bottom with coal streaks and continued until the Upper Eagle Rider Seam was intersected. This resulted in the drill being beneath the Mountain State Mine, and therefore the Mountain State Mine was not detected by the long hole drill. The net result was that Rolling Thunder Mine operations cut-through, into the abandoned, water-inundated Mountain State Mine due to the long hole not intersecting the abandoned works.

Conclusion

An unintentional cut-through from the Rolling Thunder Mine into the abandoned Mountain State Mine occurred, resulting in a water inundation of the Rolling Thunder Mine and an evacuation of the miners. Mr. Lipscomb did not evacuate with the crew. As part of the approved ventilation plan, Aracoma Coal Company, Inc., was being used to ensure that the adjacent Mountain State Mine was not present in the area of the current development workings of the Rolling Thunder

Mine. It was later found that the Aracoma Coal Co., Inc. team's drill encountered a dip in the mine floor that resulted in the drill being in the lower split of the Powellton Seam and as the coal seam turned uphill, the drill encountered a fireclay bottom with coal streaks and continued until entering the upper split of the Eagle Seam beneath the Powellton Seam. This being beneath the Powellton Seam caused the drill to miss the Mountain State Mine workings.

Enforcement Action

A non-assessed Control Order was issued, in accordance with Title 36, Series 19, Section 7.1 of the West Virginia Code of State Rules.

There were two Notices of Violation issued during the investigation to the Rolling Thunder Mine and one to Aracoma Coal Company, Inc.

Recommendations

The following will be included in the Rolling Thunder Mine Comprehensive Mine Safety Program:

Rolling Thunder Mine Management submitted a plan to prevent recurrence, which was accepted as an addendum to the Comprehensive Mine Safety Program. There were seven new precautions to follow during long hole drilling:

1. Prior to drilling, technical staff (Engineer/Geologist) will review the entire drilling plan with drill crews and provide drillers with training on a summary of all potential seams and interburden thickness. Records of this training will be maintained at the mine office.
2. Available core drilling logs, crop measurements, mine measurements etc., will be reviewed and fence diagrams or similar visual aids will be created to better identify and communicate what (if any) seams that may be present near the target seam.
3. Positional information will be gathered from the drill daily and plotted for review. To prevent disruption of mining, interim certifications may be provided and acknowledged, prior to the hole being developed to its planned extents. When interim certifications are used, mining will not advance within 500' of the certified extents of drilling. This 500' barrier is not applicable once the hole is completed, and the final certification is acknowledged by MSHA.
4. Floor and roof sweeps will be conducted at intervals not to exceed 200'. These sweeps will be strategically located to contact known works or to target a specific area of interest. The sweep penetration depths will be based on the review of geologic information and may be associated with a target stratum or a minimum assigned depth, depending on the circumstances.
5. Drilling plans will be designed to encompass old works without a final map or if there is any doubt about the old works' position and extent of mining. Drilling plans will be developed to intentionally contact the adjacent old workings to verify position and location.
6. Once drilling is complete, a certified map and drill profile will be provided along with any additional site-specific mining plans that may be needed.

7. All drills will be maintained and calibrated according to manufacturer specifications

Acknowledgement

The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training acknowledges the cooperation of the employees and management of Alpha Metallurgical Resources – Rolling Thunder Mine and the Mine Safety and Health Administration during this investigation. We would like to thank the following individuals for their cooperation during this investigation:

Alpha Metallurgical Resources

Jason Whitehead	President/COO of Alpha Metallurgical Resources
Barrett Justice	President of Operations Mid-WV Underground
Scott Toler	Vice President of Operations Mid-WV Underground
Brian Keaton	Senior Vice President of Safety of Alpha Metallurgical
Kris Burke	Director of Maintenance
Logan Hall	VP Mid-WV Surface/Kingston
Michael Vaught	Safety Director
Jeff Toler	Superintendent
Greg Baker	General Mine Foreman
Mitch Boland	Engineering Director for WV Southeast, Alpha Metallurgical
Seth Porter	Safety Supervisor
John Jones	President of Special Projects of Alpha Metallurgical

Mine Safety and Health Administration

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

West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training

William Stewart	Roof and Ventilation Specialist
Christopher Dawson	Inspector-At-Large
Jeffory Davis	Chief Electrical Inspector
Kermit Fincham, Jr.	Chief Engineer

The WV OMHST would like to thank the Alpha Metallurgical Resources' and the WV OMHST's mine rescue Teams.

Appendices

- Mine Information Sheet
- Victim Information Sheet

Mine Information

Company Nicholas Contura, LLCMine Name Rolling Thunder MineWV Permit U00300804Address P.O. Box 707County NicholasDate Permit Issued June 5, 2023 Working Status ActiveLocation Near Vaughn, WVUnion _____ Non-Union XDaily Production 2,070 Raw TonsAnnual Production to Date 241,000 TonsTotal Employees 61 Number of Shifts 3Name of Coal Bed PowelltonSeam Thickness 3.8 feetAccident Incident Rate 5.06 Lost Time Accidents 3Type of Haulage ContinuousWV OMHST Inspector Kevin WristonDate of Last Inspection November 6, 2025Notified by John WithrowTime of Notification 12:27 p.m.CMSP – Contact Person Terreall Blankenship

Victim Information

Name of Victim Steven Lipscomb

Age of Victim 42

Total Mining Experience 19 Years, 10 Months

Experience at This Mine 3 Months

Average Number of Days Worked Per Week 5.5

Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week 55

Length of Shifts at Mine 10 Hours

Travel Time To/From Work Approximately 1 Hour, 10 Minutes (One way)

Occupation at Time of Accident Section Foreman

Regular Occupation Section Foreman

Miner's Certification 4-11508

Other Certifications Underground Mine Foreman, EMT-M

Date of Accident 8th Day of November, 2025

At 11:45 a.m.

Location of Accident No.4 entry approximately 200-feet outby the end of the track at crosscut No. 51, near Survey Station 1634