

**WEST VIRGINIA OFFICE OF MINERS' HEALTH, SAFETY AND
TRAINING**

**REPORT OF FATALITY
Track Haulage Equipment
August 17, 2022**

**Tunnel Ridge, LLC. Tunnel Ridge Mine
PERMIT NO. U00018183**

**REGION ONE
14 COMMERCE DRIVE, SUITE ONE
WESTOVER, WEST VIRGINIA 26501
EDWARD PEDDICORD, INSPECTOR-AT-LARGE**

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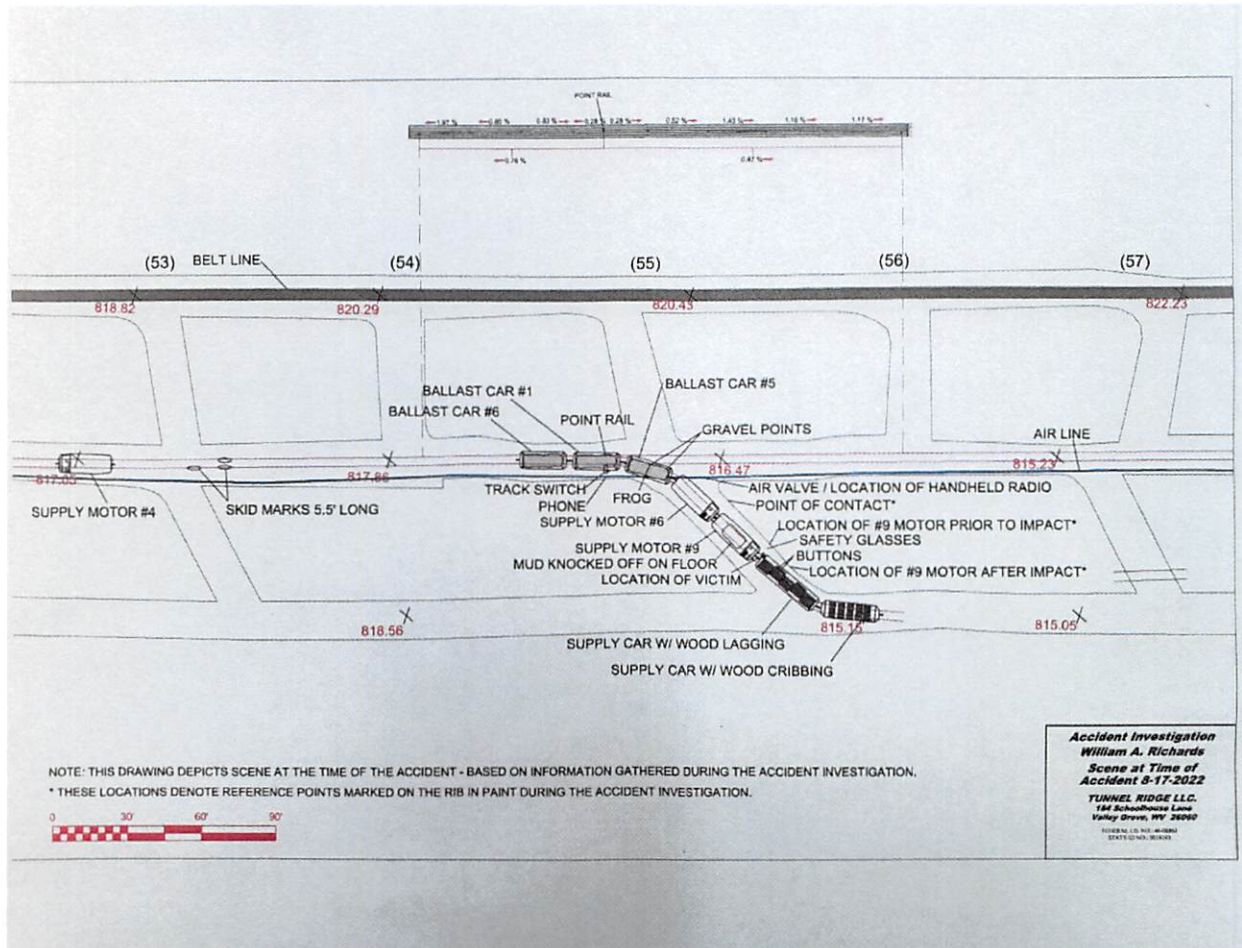
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Photo of the accident scene located at East Main's #1, 55-wall track spur.



CAD drawing obtained from Tunnel Ridge, LLC.

- 7:00 a.m. •William Richards and fellow miners prepare for the start of day shift.
- 7:50 a.m. •Mr. Richards and fellow miners start day shift late due to ventilation change at beginning of the shift.
- 8:30 a.m. •Todd Harding and Mr. Richards perform the preoperational check on the #9 locomotive.
- 9:00 a.m. •Mr. Richards and Mr. Harding arrive at the 55 - wall track spur to start switching the flat cars loaded with wood cribs and wood lagging for steel set construction.
- 9:37 a.m. •James Wheeler and Jennifer Millhouse receive clearance from Walker Portal to Battle Run Portal using #6 and #4 Brookville locomotives, pulling (3) bottom dump ballast cars loaded with gravel.
- 9:54 a.m. •Mr. Wheeler operating the #6 locomotive enters the 55-wall track spur and strikes the #9 locomotive that Mr. Harding was operating and Mr. Richards was in close proximity.
- 9:57 a.m. •Mrs. Millhouse calls Tim Scott, Dispatcher, on the radio requesting Emergency Medical Services Personnel.
- 9:59 a.m. •Bailey Evans, EMT, hears Mrs. Millhouse call for help. He and Dustin Peppel, Assistant Mine Foreman, travel to 55-wall track spur to render aid to Mr. Richards.
- 10:00 a.m. •Mr. Scott calls 911.
- 10:05 a.m. •Mr. Evans arrives at 55-wall track spur and checks Mr. Richards for a pulse, none is detected.
- 11:19 a.m. •John Borkoski, EMT, travels to 55-wall track spur to assist with transporting Mr. Richards to the Battle Run Portal.
- 12:03 p.m. •Mr. Richards is brought to the Battle Run Portal surface and transferred to the care of Valley Grove EMS.
- 12:07 p.m. •Mr. Richards is pronounced deceased by the Ohio County Medical Examiner.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Tunnel Ridge, LLC., Tunnel Ridge Mine, Permit No. U00018183, is located near Valley Grove, Ohio County, West Virginia. The Tunnel Ridge Mine produces 60,000 raw tons per day and annual production year to date is 4,138,278 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 and then by overland belts to the preparation plant. The Tunnel Ridge Mine employs four-hundred and twenty-six (426) employees and operates three (3) shifts per day. The Pittsburgh No.8 coal seam is accessed by the Walker, Battle Run and School House Portals. Tunnel Ridge Mine utilizes diesel/battery track mounted and rubber-tired battery powered haulage equipment.

On August 17, 2022, at approximately 9:54 a.m., William A. Richards, 38 years of age, received fatal injuries while he was located in the East Mains #1 track at 55-wall track spur on day shift. This track spur is used for switching or storing supply cars and equipment. Mr. Richards was an employee of the Tunnel Ridge Mine.

On August 17, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., Tim Scott, 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. John Meadows, Region One Assistant Inspector-at-Large of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety & Training, was then notified that an accident had occurred at the Tunnel Ridge Mine. Mr. Meadows notified James Bowman, Electrical Inspector, William Coen, Jeffrey Bennett, Charles Simms and Robert Mundy, District Mine Inspectors of the accident. Mr. Meadows issued a verbal order at 11:45 a.m., to Tracy Gilbert, Safety Manager of Tunnel Ridge Mine. A joint investigation with the Mine Safety and Health Administration, Alliance Coal, LLC and Tunnel Ridge, LLC began immediately.

DESCRIPTION

On August 17, 2022, the 7:00 a.m., start of day shift was delayed due to an air change that was being performed. After the completion of this air change, miners began entering the mine at 7:50 a.m.. Todd Harding, James Wheeler and Jennifer Millhouse, locomotive operators went underground and conducted a preoperational check of the locomotives that they would be operating. Mr. Harding was to operate the company #9 locomotive; Mr. Wheeler was to operate the company #6 locomotive and Mrs. Millhouse was to operate the company #4 locomotive. All three (3) are track-mounted diesel-powered Brookville 30-ton locomotives.

Mr. Wheeler and Mrs. Millhouse were instructed to take three (3) empty ballast cars from Battle Run Portal to Walker Portal. Mrs. Millhouse pulled the empties while Mr. Wheeler operated the trail locomotive. The ballast cars were to be loaded on the surface at Walker Portal. During this time, Mr. Harding and his brakeman, William Richards, were instructed to go to East Mains #1 track at 55-wall track spur and take the wood lagging that had been loaded on an Irwin super flat car to East Mains #1 track 44-wall. When they arrived at the spur, they found that there were two (2) Irwin super flat cars loaded with wood materials. The car loaded with wood lagging that was needed for the construction of steel sets was located in by the car loaded with wooden cribs. They switched these cars around on the main line so the car loaded with wood lagging would be coupled to the #9 locomotive.

The #9 locomotive entered the 55-wall track spur coupled to the two (2) Irwin flat cars. Mr. Scott informed Mr. Harding that a locomotive crew was leaving Walker Portal to return to Battle Run Portal and to remain in the spur until that locomotive crew cleared the 55-wall track spur. The #9 locomotive had been turned off and the brakes were applied. The outby end of the #9 locomotive measured sixteen feet (16') inby the rib line. The supply car loaded with wooden cribs was to be chained down and left in the spur. Mr. Richards hung his hand-held radio on an air shut off valve on the main line, inby the 55-wall track spur, near the leaky feeder system so they could monitor communications.

Mr. Wheeler and Mrs. Millhouse received clearance from the dispatcher and began transporting the ballast cars from Walker Portal to Battle Run Portal. Mr. Wheeler was pulling the cars and Mrs. Millhouse, now the trail locomotive, was coupled to the outby end of the trip due to elevation changes in the grade of the track. Mrs. Millhouse stated that at 34-wall, as part of normal operations due to lessening of the grade, she uncoupled from the trip.

At 52-wall, Mr. Wheeler, whose locomotive was in second gear, dropped sand from the locomotive's sanding devices on the rails preparing for the slight uphill grade in this area. As he was doing this, visibility was limited due to sand dust being suspended in the entry. The operators compartment of the #6 locomotive that Mr. Wheeler was operating is located on the inby end, opposite the end of the ballast cars that he was pulling. At the 55-wall track spur, Mr. Wheeler felt a sudden jerk and realized that he was entering the 55-wall track spur. The switch throw for the 55-wall track spur had not been realigned for the mainline. He saw the cap light of Mr. Harding and immediately yelled, dropped sand, and applied the brakes. The #6 locomotive pulling the ballast cars struck the #9 locomotive.

Mr. Harding was positioned in the operator's seat. The operator's compartment on the #9 locomotive is located on the inby end, walkway side. Mr. Richards was positioned on the outby end, tight side of the wood lagging supply car that the #9 locomotive was coupled to. A sharp turn is present near the end of this track spur and a stop block was provided near the end of the track.

The impact of this collision caused the #9 locomotive and the two Irwin flat cars to travel inby in the spur for a distance that measured eleven feet six inches (11'6"). The inby car loaded with cribs went over the stop block and derailed. Mr. Harding and Mr. Wheeler found Mr. Richards between the #9 locomotive and the car loaded with lagging. His legs were positioned on the tight side. Mrs. Millhouse stopped the #4 locomotive outby the ballast cars and radioed Mr. Wheeler to see if he needed assistance. Mrs. Millhouse called Mr. Scott for help requesting Emergency Medical Services Personnel. Mr. Scott called 911. Baily Evans (EMT) and Dustin Peppel, Assistant Mine Foreman, overheard Mrs. Millhouse's call for help on the radio and traveled to 55-wall track spur. When Mr. Evans arrived, he immediately checked Mr. Richards for a pulse but none was detected.

Mr. Peppel contacted Mr. Scott and informed him of the severity of the accident at which time Josh Duncan, Mine Manager, instructed Mr. Scott to evacuate the mine. John Borkoski (EMT) evacuated to the surface from East Mains #2 at 37-wall. Once on the surface, Mr. Borkoski was informed of the fatality at 55-wall track spur and was asked for his assistance. Mr. Borkoski gathered medical recovery supplies and reentered the mine with Bill Curry, Josh Duncan, Damion Rihel and Jason Balabon to recover and transport Mr. Richards to the surface. When the recovery crew arrived on the surface, Mr. Richards was transferred to the care of the Valley Grove EMS. Mr. Richards was pronounced deceased at 12:07 p.m., on August 17, 2022 by Carol Robinson, Ohio County Medical Examiner.

FINDINGS OF FACTS

1. Mr. Richards was an employee of Tunnel Ridge, LLC., Tunnel Ridge Mine for five (5) years, five (5) months. With experience of thirteen (13) years one (1) month. His classification was General Laborer.
2. Mr. Richards possessed a WVMHS&T Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-22983 received on 08/26/2016.
3. Mr. Richards possessed a WVMHS&T Underground Mine Foreman Certification Number 41659-16 received on 08/26/2016.
4. Mr. Richards possessed a WVMHS&T Shot Firer Certification Number 1-4484 received on 08/26/2016.
5. Mr. Richards task training for the locomotive was received on 04/06/2022.
6. Mr. Richards received annual miner retraining on 02/05/2022.
7. Mr. Harding possesses a WVMHS&T Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-17750 received on 02/19/2010.
8. Mr. Harding has eleven (11) years with Tunnel Ridge Mine and seventeen (17) years of mining experience.
9. Mr. Harding received task training for the locomotive on 01/07/2013.
10. Mr. Harding received annual miner retraining on 02/05/2022.
11. Mr. Wheeler has seven (7) years with Tunnel Ridge Mine and eleven (11) years of mining experience.
12. Mr. Wheeler possesses a WVMHS&T Underground Coal Miner's Certification Number 1-19239 received on 08/23/2011.

13. Mr. Wheeler received task training for the locomotive on 9/5/2018.
14. Mr. Wheeler received annual miner retraining on 3/5/2022.
15. The trail locomotive, #4, is a Brookville 30-ton with serial # RB9686.
16. The lead locomotive, #6, is a Brookville 30-ton with serial # RB9688.
17. The parked locomotive, #9, is a Brookville 30-ton with serial #15010.
18. The three locomotives involved were inspected after the accident, no defects were detected.
19. The Rohmac Inc., BD 20T Bottom Dump Ballast cars with the company identification #1, #5 and #6 weigh approximately 16,500 pounds each, per empty car.
20. All bottom dump cars were loaded with gravel ballast and coupled to the #6 Brookville 30-ton locomotive. The estimated total trip weight is 202,500 pounds.
21. The East Mains #1 track was dry at the time the investigation team traveled to the accident site approximately five (5) hours after the accident.
22. The 55-wall track spur and the East Mains #1 track are walking height (approximately 6.5 feet).
23. At the 55-wall track spur, bottom conditions are dry and ballasted to the height of the rail.
24. The 55-wall track spur switch throw worked properly when tested after the accident.
25. The 55-wall track spur switch throw handle red reflective indicator had been damaged. Approximately three quarters of the red reflective material had been removed.
26. Radio signal is intermittent in the 55-wall track spur. To assure accurate communications it has been a common practice while parked in track spurs, to place a handheld radio near the leaky feeder cable.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Richards was fatally injured after the #6 Brookville 30-ton locomotive entered the 55-wall track spur, striking the #9 Brookville 30-ton locomotive. Mr. Richards was last observed sitting on the front, tight side, corner, between the Irwin RB7227 flatcar and the #9 Brookville 30-ton locomotive.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

36-18-4.1 A fatal track haulage accident occurred at the 55 – wall track spur. Equipment operators did not exercise reasonable care in the operation of equipment entrusted to them in that: The #9 locomotive operators failed to throw the manual track switch back to mainline travel after they parked the trip they were operating in the spur to allow the oncoming trip to pass. The operators also failed to get into an area of safety when trips are approaching. The operator of the #6 locomotive failed to observe the track spur throw handle's red reflective indicator that warned that the switch was positioned for the spur.

36-19-4.1 Following an accident that occurred at the Tunnel Ridge Mine that resulted in a death of a miner at approximately 9:54 a.m. on 8/17/2022. The regional office of WV Miners' Health Safety & Training was not notified until 11:45 a.m. by the operator.

22A-2-68 Following an accident at the Tunnel Ridge Mine that resulted in a death of a miner on 8/17/2022, this order is issued for the accident scene preservation, until the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training has completed this investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the management and employees of Alliance Coal, LLC., Tunnel Ridge, LLC., Tunnel Ridge Mine and the Mine Safety and Health Administration during this investigation.

MINE INFORMATION

COMPANY Tunnel Ridge, LLC.

MINE NAME Tunnel Ridge Mine

WV PERMIT U00018183 MSHA PERMIT NO. 46-08864

ADDRESS 2596 Battle Run Rd. Triadelphia, WV 26059

COUNTY Ohio PHONE NO. 304-547-2900

DATE PERMIT ISSUED 11/04/2008

WORKING STATUS Active

UNION _____ NON-UNION Yes

DAILY PRODUCTION 60,000 tons ANNUAL PRODUCTION TO DATE 4,138,278 tons

TOTAL EMPLOYEES 426 NUMBER OF SHIFTS 3

COAL SEAM NAME AND THICKNESS Pittsburgh #8, 60 inches

ACCIDENT INCIDENT RATE 3.26 LOST TIME ACCIDENTS 9

TYPE OF HAULAGE Track, Rubber Tired Equipment and Belt Conveyor System

WVOMHST INSPECTOR William Coen

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION 8/03/2022

NOTIFIED BY Tracy Gilbert

NOTIFICATION TIME 10:23 am

CMSP – CONTACT PERSON Tracy Gilbert