




State of West Virginia
Joe Manchin III, Governor

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TO: West Virginia Coal Mine Operations
FROM: Ronald L. Wooten, Director 
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RE: Manufacturer's Specifications on Equipment

A recent fatal accident occurred while mine personnel were replacing a torque shaft in the cutting head motor of a continuous mining machine. An investigation revealed that mine personnel energized the continuous mining machine and engaged "bumped" the cutting head motor in an attempt to free a torque shaft which had become stuck in the motor during the replacement process. The torque shaft then dislodged and began to thrash around violently when the inner spline of the shaft linked up to the outer spline of the cutting head motor as they continued to freewheel after the motor was de-energized. A man was fatally injured when struck by the shaft as he prematurely moved toward the mining machine in an attempt to remove the shaft.

Since this investigation began it has become apparent that the practice of energizing a continuous mining machine and engaging "bumping" the cutting head motor as a means to dislodge a torque shaft during replacement is a somewhat common practice throughout the industry. The WV Office of MHST has determined that this practice is contrary to manufacturer's specifications for continuous mining machine torque shaft replacement. Operations maintenance manuals for continuous mining machines specify that the machine is to be de-energized, locked and tagged out at the section power center while torque shaft replacement is in progress with the machine not to be reenergized until the torque shaft replacement process is complete.

In the future it will be the position of the WV Office of MHST that manufacturer's specifications must be followed when such work is to be performed. The WV Office of MHST will apply and if necessary cite WV Code 22A-2-40 (17) which requires that "all power circuits and electric equipment be de-energized before work is done on such circuits and equipment" to ensure that appropriate safety precautions are followed.

RLW:ks