

News Release



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MSHA fines Shelby Mining Co. LLC \$280,000 *2 miners seriously injured in 2008 methane ignition*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced it has assessed \$280,000 in civil penalties against Shelby Mining Co. LLC, which operates Coke Mine #1 in Shelby County, Ala. The fines resulted from a methane ignition last October that left two miners seriously burned.

On Oct. 2, 2008, a continuous mining machine operator and a helper were seriously burned when an air-methane mixture was frictionally ignited by worn cutter bits coming into contact with roof rock. Ten bits were worn off on the side of the cutting head where the ignition occurred, and 22 cutting bits were worn or missing.

“The stated obligation of every mine operator is to seek out and eliminate safety and health hazards that may adversely affect its employees,” said Michael A. Davis, MSHA’s deputy assistant secretary for operations. “In this instance, the foreman failed to do that, and a serious yet avoidable accident occurred.”

MSHA’s accident investigators also found that mine management failed to take air readings and to ensure that water sprays and the methane monitor were maintained in functional condition. MSHA has cited three unwarrantable failure violations determined to be reckless disregard and one high negligence unwarrantable failure violation.

This mine has a history of methane ignitions at the face, with eight being reported since October 2006. On Oct. 25, 2006, two miners were seriously burned as a result of such an ignition.

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