



Fatality #1 - January 3, 2004
Machinery - Underground - UT
Canyon Fuel, LLC - Sufco Mine

COAL MINE FATALITY - On Saturday, January 3, 2004, a 44-year old longwall shearer operator with 26 years of mining experience was fatally injured while attempting to advance a longwall shield. The longwall face was being mined through a setup room containing cementitious "cutable" cribs. These cribs failed, causing many of the shields to fully collapse. To advance the longwall, chains were attached from the collapsed shields to the panline. Using two adjacent shields to push the panline, the collapsed shield was pulled forward with the attached chains and the shield's double-acting ram. Miners were positioned on each of the three affected shields to manually operate them. During this process, the chain hook broke. The remaining part of the hook and the chain assembly recoiled, striking the miner operating the collapsed shield in the head.



Best Practices

- Ensure that chain assemblies (rigging) are rated for the loads being pulled. Consult the chain manufacturer to determine chain assembly rated capacities and also required de-ratings due to the geometry of the final rigging arrangement.
- Ensure persons are positioned in a safe location before tension is applied when dragging or towing equipment with chains, wire rope, or any other rigging.
- Ensure that chains and hooks are properly attached or rigged.
- Evaluate pillar strength and design before second mining areas containing unusual circumstances, such as setup rooms.

This machinery accident is the first fatality reported in calendar year 2004 in the coal mining industry. As of the accident date in 2003, there were no fatalities reported in the coal mining industry. There were six fatalities classified as machinery in 2003.