



State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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July 5, 2000

TO: Internal File
THRU: Pamela Grubaugh-Littig, Permit Supervisor *PG*
FROM: Pete H. Hess, Senior Reclamation Specialist *PHH*
RE: Partial Inspection, Canyon Fuel Company, LLC, Soldier Canyon Mine,
ACT/007/018

Shortly after 3:00 P.M. on July 1, 2000, a mixture of methane and oxygen was ignited by what is believed to have been a lightning strike adjacent to the capped #2 air shaft of the sealed Soldier Canyon Mine. Company personnel are not positive what the ignition source was which ignited the combustible mixture, but it is known that a thunderstorm was passing through the area at the time of the ignition. It seems apparent that a methane/oxygen mix had been exhaled through the concrete shaft cap, and a lack of rapid dispersion allowed the mixture to accumulate, and/or dilute to within the combustibility range of 5-15% CH4.

The resulting explosion was powerful enough to blow out a cement block seal from the intake portal located in the side canyon off of the main Mine yard. Also the two eight inch thick concrete slabs which had been placed over the #2 air shaft as temporary seals were ejected, with one landing on the County road and the other on the south side of the cyclone fence surrounding the fan installation. Concrete block seals in the #1 and #3 portals located on the east side of the County road were also blown out, as well as a seal in the portal located in the material yard. The supply yard portal had extensive soot on it's inner walls.

The Price Field Office received notification of the incident on Monday, July 3 at about 11:56 A.M. Unfortunately, the reclamation specialist assigned to the Soldier Canyon Mine did not receive notification until July 5, when returning form an inspection at the Willow Creek Mine.

Upon learning of the incident Canyon Fuel Company personnel immediately notified the U. S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration, Price Field Office. MSHA personnel and CFC management proceeded with the backfilling of the ruptured seals; as of 2 P.M. on 7/5, the #2 air shaft had been backfilled with 95 tractor-trailer loads of noncombustible material and the #1 and #3 east portals had been backfilled. In order to expedite the proceedings, CFC in cooperation with the County, MSHA and the Carbon County Sheriff's

Office closed the County road. Work was still progressing on the mine yard portal with two track hoes operating in the area around and above the concrete portal lining located in the supply yard. Polyurethane foam had been used as an attempt to seal cracks about this structure, but with limited success. Mr. Ken Payne was concerned that during the work, the machinery may have gotten outside of the Mine's disturbed area perimeter. Mr. Payne was told by both Mr. Daron Haddock and this individual that the seriousness of the situation was far more imperative than the disturbance of some additional vegetation and that any changes which may be necessary relative to the mining and reclamation plan could be made at a later time. CFC personnel were observed monitoring the methane levels about the seals in the upper Mine yard.

Upon returning to the Price Field Office, the Central Mine Facilities Map for the site, drawing #D-461 was checked to determine the location of the disturbed area perimeter above the supply yard portal. The boundary is located about fifty feet (on the horizontal) northwest of the concrete head wall at this portal. The complete inspection which will be conducted during July will determine if the backfilling of this area disturbed vegetation outside of the perimeter.

It should be noted that methane levels were reported to be in excess of 10% as the #2 air shaft was being filled in, indicating that this situation is still very volatile.

No violations were issued to the permittee as a result of this situation, or for the expedient methods used to devolatilize same.