

0029

April 16, 1985

TO: Coal File, Inspection and Enforcement Folder
FROM: Sandy Pruitt, Mining Field Specialist 
RE: Wilberg Mine, Utah Power and Light Company, ACT/015/019,
Folder #7, Emery County, Utah

A complete inspection of the Wilberg mine site was conducted by Sandy Pruitt, accompanied by Larry Guymon, on March 27, 1985. This is the first inspection of the site since the mine fire started in December, 1984. Access to the mine area is restricted and requires registration at a guard station at the gate.

To control the mine fire and regain access to the mine, several emergency measures were undertaken which significantly changed the mine surface. The Wilberg mine portals west of the man entry were entirely sealed with several layers of gunnite creating a smooth extension of the cliff face. The manway and belt line entries were recently reopened to retrieve the underground sump for use in fire control if necessary. Access required extensive cribbing along the entries, which have caved at the roof and ribs from burnt coal and the stress from pillar deterioration. A portable fan was installed, near the fan housing which was entirely filled with gunnite, to ventilate the sump area. The Wilberg fan is not salvageable and the mine facilities on the portal pad were heavily damaged by the fire. The cliffs above the Wilberg portals are covered with layers of creosote, deposited from burning coal, up to one foot thick.

In sealing the First South entries, the portal access road was covered. Emery Mining Corporation (EMC) built a ramp from the material storage pad, near the trash bin, up to the portal pad. Fill material, which was intended for lining the sediment pond, was available on site during the initial fire control operations and used to construct the ramp.

The bypass diversion at the waterfall was also impacted somewhat by portal sealing. To access the westernmost portal, a ramp was built, of mostly gravel, along the side of the diversion and will remain for maintenance of the seal. Utah Power and Light Co. (UP&L) is making arrangements with the Division of Water Rights to change their approved point of diversion to the waterfall with intentions of building a collection basin at the base of the waterfall to pump water into the mine.

Once the underground sump is full again and the point of diversion established at the waterfall, the emergency waterline and surge basins installed by UP&L along the mine access road from Cottonwood Creek (which was never used) can be removed.

The South Wilberg portals were reopened as the primary access to the 5th Right section, where miners were trapped. An alternate access would be through the north Wilberg mine entries, which are closer to the active mine fire and more hazardous. The fill material used to seal the South Wilberg man entry was retrieved and the adjacent undisturbed drainage diversion was uncovered and is functional. Straw bale sediment control measures are well maintained for the portal pad runoff.

Two portable fans were installed at the South Fan portal and crews were diligently constructing a new fan housing. Just prior to the mine fire, the South Wilberg belt line entry was broke out. An emergency access to seal the breakout was bladed across a small draw between the portals with a D3 cat. The steep slope and large boulders along the intended access made this a very hazardous construction project. EMC did an outstanding job of minimizing the disturbance and impacts to the undisturbed drainage. Once the fire was contained, the belt line entry was developed, with a wooden deck, stairs and cribbing, as an escapeway.

The rest of the mine yard was relatively unaffected by the mine fire. The abatement actions for NOV #N84-7-10-1 and relining the sediment pond were postponed by the fire. In abatement to the NOV, a concrete berm had been installed completely around the pond. A drop drain inlet to the pond will be installed near the truck loadout once the sediment pond is repaired and fully operational again. The sediment pond is bypassed at a manhole into the main bypass drainage culvert which is surrounded by a catch basin, silt fence and straw bales. The silt fence and straw bales have trapped alot of coal fines and sediment. It did not appear that any runoff had overflowed into the bypass culvert.

Water retained in the first cell of the sediment pond was drained into the second cell by a six inch pipeline fitted into the bottom of the standpipe which drains into the second cell of the sediment pond. Since the six inch pipe has a valve at the inlet, EMC intends to keep the pipe in place so it can be used for a bypass into the second cell of the sediment pond instead of pumping water from the first cell over the dike into the second cell. Since the fire, the water in the ponds has only been pumped out and the bypass maintained, no excavation work has been done. The water was disposed into cell #6 of the Wilberg waste rock disposal site. Some of the fill material for lining the sediment pond remains on site adjacent to the pond.

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Sediment and water from the Wilberg and Des-Bee-Dove sediment ponds has been disposed in cell #6 of the Wilberg waste rock disposal site. Ash and waste rock removed from the Wilberg mine and waste rock removed in rehabilitation of the Des-Bee-Dove mines is being disposed in cell #3. Both cells are nearly full to capacity. Waste rock disposal cells #1 and 2 have been backfilled for reclamation. Cells #4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 have yet to be excavated.

The Miller Canyon breakouts were blasted reopen under MSHA's direction. Due to resultant ventilation problems, the breakouts may need to be closed again.

While contending with the mine fire emergency under MSHA's direction, EMC has done a very good job of also maintaining compliance with SMCRA performance standards. No violations or compliance concerns were noted at the time of this inspection.

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cc: Larry Guymon
Donna Griffin
Dianne Nielson
Ron Daniels
Joe Helfrich
John Whitehead

Statistics: See Belina Mine memo dated April 12, 1985.
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