

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF MINES

DISTRICT C

REPORT OF MULTIPLE FATAL ROOF-FALL ACCIDENT
NO. 1 MINE
SHADE AND MILLARD COAL COMPANY
PANTHER, McDOWELL COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

April 18, 1957

By

Edward M. Lewis
Health and Safety Engineer

and

Ward R. Vickers
Federal Coal-Mine Inspector

Originating Office - Bureau of Mines
Mount Hope, West Virginia
W. R. Park, District Supervisor
Health and Safety District C

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INTRODUCTION

~~Four miners were killed instantly by a fall of roof in the No. 1 mine, Shade and Millard Coal Company, at about 4:00 p.m., Thursday, April 18, 1957. The accident occurred near the face of No. 2 barrier pillar off 3 left.~~

Junior Estep, acting foreman, age 27, had 8 years mining experience, 5 years with this company as a loader; he is survived by his widow and 1 dependent child.

Vesper Lester, age 27, cutting-machine operator, had 3 years mining experience, 1 year with this company; he was single and had no dependents.

Anse Estep, age 36, had 10 years mining experience, 5 months of which were with this company as a coal loader; he is survived by his widow and 6 dependent children.

Johnnie Patrick, age 23, had 7 years mining experience, 1 week as a coal loader for this company; he was single and had no dependents.

Personnel of the Princeton office of the Bureau of Mines learned of the accident through a newscast Thursday, April 18, 1957, at 11:00 p.m. An investigation was made the following day.

Information for this report was obtained from a visit to the scene of the accident, from statements of Calvin Lester, who was nearby when the accident occurred, and James Gillespie, mine inspector, West Virginia Department of Mines, who arrived at the scene shortly after the accident occurred and assisted in recovery operations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The No. 1 mine near Panther, West Virginia, was formerly operated by the S. and M. Coal Company. The mine was opened through 2 drifts into the low-volatile bituminous Red Ash coal bed, which averaged 30 inches in thickness locally. The coal dust is explosive. A total of 11 men, 10 underground and 1 on the surface, was employed on 2 shifts a day, 5 days a week, and produced a daily average of 60 tons of coal, all hand-loaded into rubber-tired mine cars and hauled by a battery-powered rubber-tired locomotive.

The mine was scheduled to be abandoned and the equipment removed from the underground workings the day following the accident.

James Gillespie, mine inspector, West Virginia Department of Mines, stated that as quickly as the equipment was removed he would have the entrances to the mine closed by blasting. The last Federal inspection was completed November 20, 1956.

The mine was developed by a room-and-pillar method. The main entries were driven in pairs about 30 feet wide on 60-foot centers. Rooms were driven about 30 feet wide on 50-foot centers. Partial recovery of pillars was obtained by driving pockets 30 to 40 feet wide through the middle of the pillars. The coal was undercut to a depth of about 6 feet by a short-wall mining machine.

The immediate roof consisted of a sandy shale with a bedding plane about 10 inches over the coal. The main roof consisted of a laminated sandstone of undetermined thickness.

State Mine Inspector Gillespie stated that a standard for systematic timbering had been adopted for this mine in January 1957. The timbering standards required 3 rows of posts; a row in the center and on each side of the working places. Timbers were required to be set on 4-foot centers and to within 6 feet of the faces, and at least 4 safety posts were required to be set within 18 inches of the faces. Gillespie also stated that he had had the operation of this mine suspended from March 28 through April 3, 1957, because of coal-dust accumulations, inadequate rock-dusting and timbering.

Preshift examinations of the mine were not made. The last daily report available was dated April 4, 1957; the report, signed by Oscar Roberts, regular mine foreman, who had been off from work several days prior to the accident due to illness, indicated that draw rock in 4 working places was not timbered adequately.

The investigating committee consisted of:

West Virginia Department of Mines

D. J. Lee
Hubert Wall

Acting Inspector-at-Large
Mine Inspector

United States Bureau of Mines

Edward M. Lewis
Ward R. Vickers

Health and Safety Engineer
Federal Coal-Mine Inspector

Gus Allison, field representative, District 17, United Mine Workers of America participated in the conference following the investigation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On the day of the accident, April 18, 1957, the mine was in normal operation, and Calvin Lester and Anse Estep were loading coal in No. 1 barrier pillar almost directly opposite No. 2 barrier pillar, the place where the roof fall occurred; Junior Estep, Vesper Lester, and Johnnie Patrick were working in No. 2 barrier pillar. Calvin Lester and Anse Estep had loaded their last car of coal and Estep went into No. 2 barrier pillar to wait for the man-trip. Lester stated that he (Lester) looked at his watch a few minutes after Estep left No. 1 barrier pillar; the time was 4:00 p.m., and immediately thereafter he heard the rock fall in No. 2 barrier pillar. Lester investigated the roof fall and found that all of the men in the place had been caught by the fall and apparently killed instantly. Lester further stated that the motorman returned with the locomotive a few minutes after the fall occurred and upon being informed of the accident went to the surface and obtained help from nearby mines. James Gillispie, State mine inspector, arrived at the mine when the first body was brought to the surface about 30 minutes after the accident. Gillispie traveled to No. 2 barrier pillar where he required several additional posts to be set and supervised the recovery of the remaining bodies; the last body was recovered by 6:30 p.m. The rock that fell was 28 feet in length, 34 feet in width or as wide as the place, and averaged 10 inches in thickness; it broke into several pieces in falling, two of the pieces were about 8 by 10 feet in size. Evidence indicated that the last post set in the place was 31 feet outby the face and that no posts had been set in the place during the last 5 or 6 shifts. The No. 1 barrier pillar place was 35 feet wide and the last post set in the place was 25 feet back from the face. There were several posts lying in each place. Junior Estep, an uncertified person, was acting mine foreman.

CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT

The direct cause of the accident was the failure of the supervisor and employees to provide roof support in the face area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Compliance with the following recommendations may prevent accidents of a similar nature in the future:

1. No person should work or be permitted to work under unsupported roof.
2. Mine officials should see that all areas of the mine in which men work or travel are timbered sufficiently to protect employees from falls of roof.
3. The minimum standards for roof support, which requires permanent posts to be set on 4-foot centers and to within 6 feet of the face and at least 4 safety posts in by the permanent timbers, should be complied with by officials and workmen. Mine officials should see that the working places are timbered according to this standard.
4. Each mine should be supervised by a certified mine foreman. The mine foreman or his assistant should be examined carefully each working place on each shift as frequently as possible.
5. A preshift examination should be made in a nongassy mine at least once in each calendar day during which coal is produced.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The cooperation of the representatives of the West Virginia Department of Mines, the field representative of the United Mine Workers of America, and the employee is gratefully acknowledged.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Edward M. Lewis

Edward M. Lewis
Health and Safety Engineer

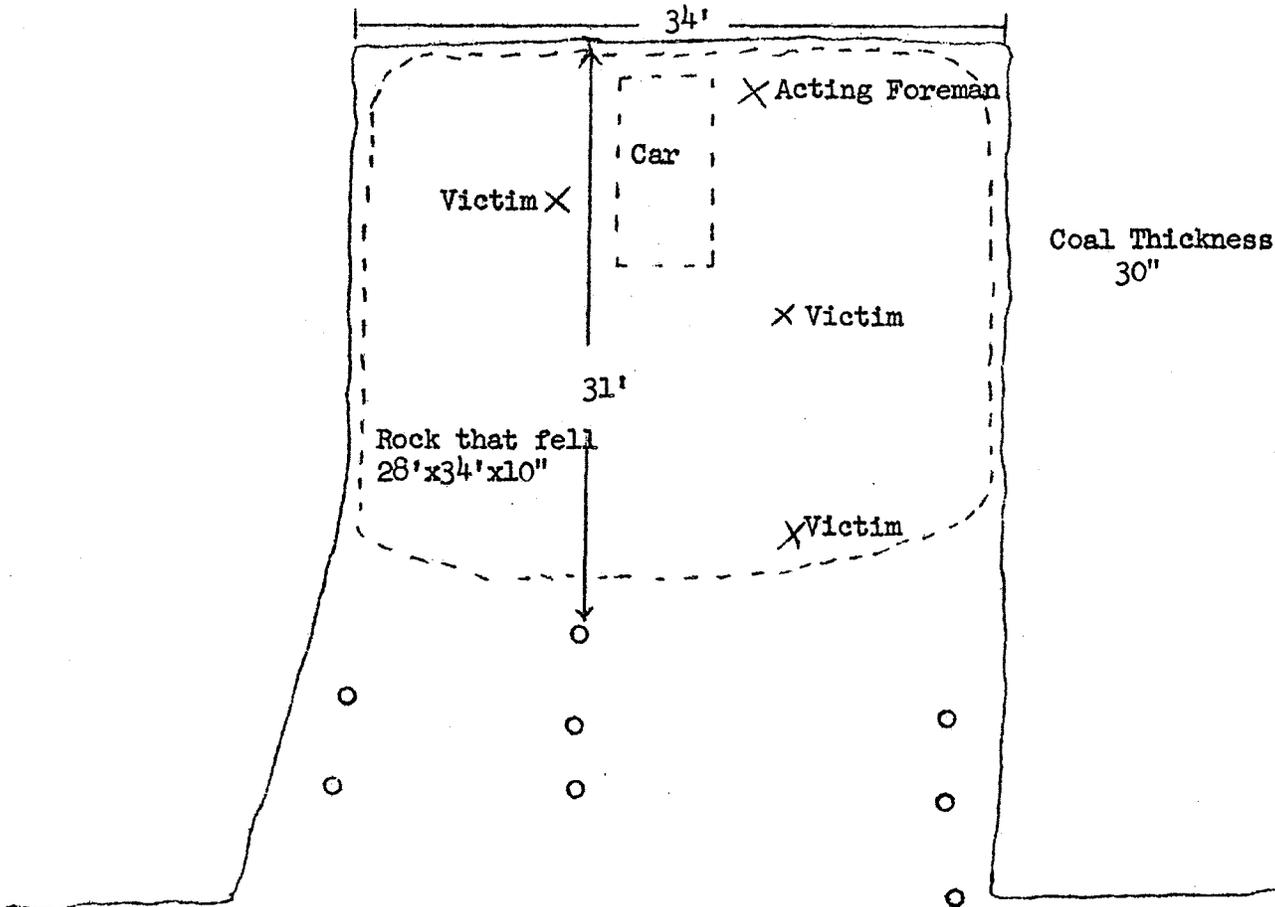
/s/ Ward R. Vickers

Ward R. Vickers
Federal Coal-Mine Inspector

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Scale 1" = 10'



Junior Estep

MULTIPLE FATAL ROOF-FALL ACCIDENT DATA SHEET

1. Daily employment: 11 Time: 4:00 p.m. Date: April 18, 1957
2. General location of accident: Near the face of No. 2 barrier pillar off
3 left
3. Job when injured: Acting Mine Foreman Regular job: Coal Loader
4. Age: 27 Years experience: Regular job 5 In mines 8
5. Dependents: Widow x Number of children under eighteen 1 Others
6. Method of loading in place where accident occurred: Mechanical
Hand into cars x Other
7. Location: Face x Room Haulageway Idle Workings Pillar x
8. Type of permanent support in use at location where accident occurred:
Posts x Crossbars Bolts None
9. Type of temporary support in use in place where accident occurred:
Posts Crossbars Jacks None x
10. Did injury occur inby last permanent roof support? Yes x No
11. Average distances from last supports to face: Permanent 31' Temporary
12. Was standard support plan adopted? Yes Was it followed in this place? No
13. Last prior visit by mine officials: Official killed
14. Approximate size of fall in inches: Width 408 Length 136 Max. thickness 10

Vesper Lester

MULTIPLE FATAL ROOF-FALL ACCIDENT DATA SHEET

1. Daily employment: 11 Time: 4:00 p.m. Date: April 18, 1957
2. General location of accident: Near the face of No. 2 barrier pillar off
3 left
3. Job when injured: Cutting-Machine Operator Regular job: Same
4. Age: 27 Years experience: Regular job 1 In mines 3
5. Dependents: Widow Number of children under eighteen Others

Anse Estep

MULTIPLE FATAL ROOF-FALL ACCIDENT DATA SHEET

1. Daily employment: 11 Time: 4:00 p.m. Date: April 18, 1957
2. General location of accident: Near the face of No. 2 barrier pillar off
3 left
3. Job when injured: Coal Loader Regular job: Same
4. Age: 36 Years experience: Regular job 5 months In mines 10
5. Dependents: Widow x Number of children under eighteen 6 Others

Johnnie Patrick

MULTIPLE FATAL ROOF-FALL ACCIDENT DATA SHEET

1. Daily employment: 11 Time: 4:00 p.m. Date: April 18, 1957
2. General location of accident: Near the face of No. 2 barrier pillar off
3 left
3. Job when injured: Coal Loader Regular job: Same
4. Age: 23 Years experience: Regular job 1 week In mines 7
5. Dependents: Widow Number of children under eighteen Others