

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF MINES
COAL MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY DISTRICT 6

COAL FATAL

REPORT OF FATAL COAL-MINE MACHINERY ACCIDENT

REPUBLIC MINE
REPUBLIC STEEL CORPORATION
REGINA, PIKE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Injured: August 7, 1972
Died: August 8, 1972

by

William N. Simpkins
Federal Coal Mine Inspector

Originating Office - Bureau of Mines
Pikeville, Kentucky 41501
Ray G. Ross, District Manager
Coal Mine Health and Safety District 6

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on an investigation made pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 742).

A machinery accident that occurred about 7:45 p.m., Monday, August 7, 1972, in the No. 3 entry of one butt right section off Simms Creek Mains, resulted in the serious injury and subsequent death at 1:45 a.m., August 8, 1972, of Walter Spartman, loading machine operator. Spartman, SS No. [REDACTED], was 46 years old and had a total of 26 years mining experience. He had been employed at this mine for 27 months, 5 months as a roof bolt machine operator, 17 months incapacitated due to an injury, and the last 5 months as a loading machine operator. He is survived by his widow and two dependent children.

The Bureau of Mines was notified of the accident at 7:15 a.m. on August 8, 1972, by Fayette May, Safety Director of the Republic Mine, Republic Steel Corporation. This investigation was made on August 8, 1972.

Information for this report was obtained from statements of company officials and employees, from an investigation at the scene of the accident which had not been disturbed except to the extent necessary for removal of the victim.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Republic Mine, near Regina, Kentucky, is opened by multiple drifts into the Lower Elkhorn coalbed, which averages 81 inches in thickness locally. A total of 235 men, 185 underground and 50 on the surface, was employed on 2 coal producing shifts and one maintenance shift a day, 5 days a week. The average daily production of 3,500 tons of coal was extracted with continuous mining machines which discharged the coal onto the mine floor. Conventional loading machines then loaded the coal into shuttle cars which transported it to belt conveyors. The conveyors discharged the coal into track mounted, drop bottom mine cars for transportation to the surface.

The one butt right section of the mine had been developed to a depth of about 1,100 feet off the Simms Creek Mains. Entries and crosscuts were driven 16 to 18 feet wide, with entries on 70-foot centers and crosscuts on 90-foot centers.

The loading machine involved in the accident was a Joy Model, 14 BU 10-11 BE, Serial No. 8836. The machine was 26 feet long, 7 to 8 feet wide, and 2 feet, 6 inches high. Management had established a program for the examination and maintenance of electrical equipment. The records indicated that the required examinations were being made on equipment in one butt right section.

A safeguard notice was issued requiring the operator to provide cabs or canopies on the electric face equipment in the one butt right section off Simms Creek Mains. The mine floor was relatively level and dry.

The company had not submitted the required training and retraining program to the Bureau of Mines; however, they had submitted a letter on January 1, 1971, stating that they were going to use the 3M company training program, which had been approved by the Bureau of Mines.

Elsworth Rowe, Spartman's immediate supervisor, had 25 years experience as a supervisor, all at this mine. He possessed a first class mine foreman's certificate, No. A-77-60, issued by the State. He had been the recipient of training in First Aid and Roof and Rib Control conducted by Bureau of Mines personnel. His last visit to the area prior to the accident was about 7:35 p.m..

Management structure at the mine consists of a Superintendent, Safety Director, Mine Foreman and Section Foreman for each section on each shift. Fayette May, Safety Director, was designated as being in charge of overall health and safety for the mine. Each section foreman conducted a safety meeting each week on the section. The company had a printed booklet that each foreman followed when conducting the safety meeting.

The investigation was conducted by Bureau of Mines personnel. The following persons furnished information or were present during the investigation.

REPUBLIC STEEL CORPORATION

E. R. Elswick	Superintendent
Howard Hall	Mine Foreman
John C. Pergrem	Mine Foreman (Second Shift)
Elsworth Rowe	Assistant Mine Foreman
Fayette May	Safety Director
D. W. Thacker	Engineer
Gary Adkins	Engineer

UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
DISTRICT 30

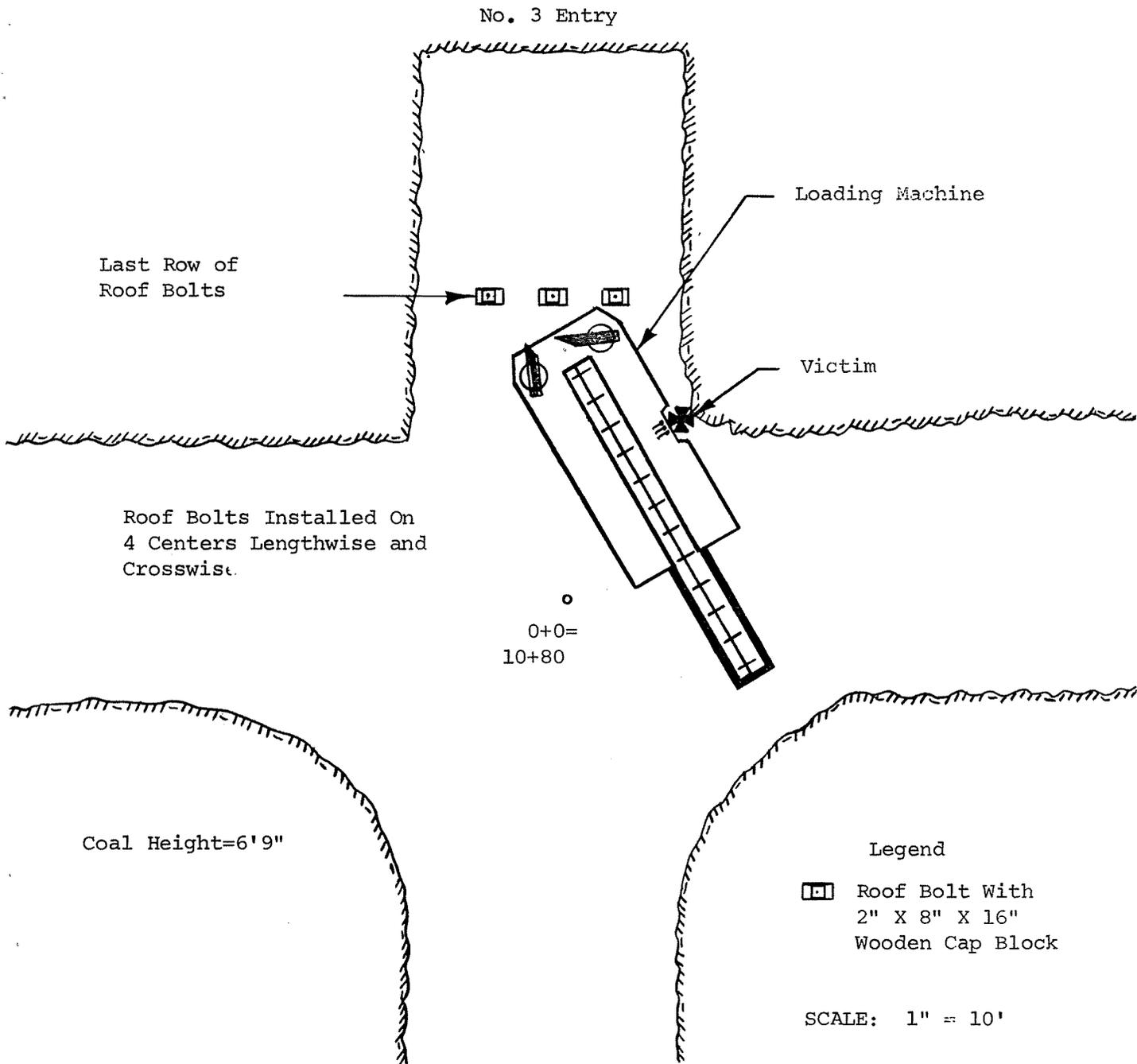
Squire Feltner	Safety Coordinator
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Local Union 8045

Marvin Hopkins	Safety Committee
Geroyd Morgan	Safety Committee
Henry Ratliff	Safety Committee
Manuel Belcher	Shuttle Car Operator
James Swiney	Mechanic

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND MINERALS

Elihu Coyer	Coal Mine Inspector
Ray Chapman	Coal Mine Inspector



FATAL COAL MINE MACHINERY ACCIDENT

REPUBLIC MINE
 REPUBLIC STEEL CORPORATION
 REGINA, PIKE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Injured: August 7, 1972
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UNITED STATES BUREAU OF MINES

Andy Lycans	Federal Coal Mine Inspector (Electrical)
Jack D. Fraley	Federal Coal Mine Inspector
William N. Simpkins	Federal Coal Mine Inspector

The last regular Federal inspection of the mine was completed on June 6, 1972, and the last spot inspection was July 10, 1972.

The mine had worked 634 days and had produced approximately 1,800,000 tons of coal without a lost time accident. The last fatality at this mine occurred June 27, 1962.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

On the day of the accident the one butt right section crew, under the supervision of Elsworth Rowe, entered the mine at 4:00 p.m. and arrived on the section at approximately 4:25 p.m.. Upon arrival, Rowe made the required examinations of the working places, and the face equipment was energized. Production of coal was started in the right crosscut off No. 3 entry where the continuous mining machine was left by the previous crew. Walter Spartman (victim) assumed his regular duties of operating the loading machine which loaded the loose coal the continuous mining machine discharged onto the mine floor. Mining operations were then performed in the face of No. 3 entry and the left crosscut off No. 3 entry. At approximately 7:35 p.m. Rowe visited the left crosscut as the crew was finishing mining operations in this place. He instructed Salyers, miner operator, to take the continuous mining machine to the conveyor belt loading point and load an accumulation of compacted coal from around the loading point. While this work was in progress, Spartman (victim) remained in the No. 3 entry to clean up accumulations of loose coal left by the continuous miner along the face and ribs. He began this work in the right crosscut. At 7:45 p.m., Salyers completed his task at the conveyor belt loading point, and he and Swiney, repairman, began to move the continuous miner toward the face of No. 4 entry. While this work was in progress, they heard Spartman call for help. They went to investigate and found him caught between the loading machine and the right rib.

Salyers and Swiney immediately summoned help, obtained a jack and jacked the loading machine away from the rib. After Spartman was freed, first aid was administered by Rowe. Spartman retained consciousness and was brought to the surface at approximately 8:20 p.m.. He lost consciousness while being transported by ambulance to the Methodist Hospital in Pikeville, Kentucky, where he expired at 1:45 a.m. on August 8, 1972, as a result of crushing injuries to the lower abdominal area of the body, internal bleeding and profound shock.

It was apparent that Spartman, while cleaning up the loose coal in No. 3 entry, had inadvertently maneuvered the loading machine too close to the right rib at the inby corner of the right crosscut and was caught between the loading machine and the rib.

CAUSE OF ACCIDENT

The cause of this accident was Spartman's failure to remain alert to the inherent dangers involved in the operation of the loading machine.

NOTICES AND ORDER

1. Violation - Section 75.160

A plan for training of certified and qualified persons had not been submitted to the District Manager for approval. A Notice of Violation, No. 1 JDF, was issued August 11, 1972, on Form 104(b) requiring that this Violation be abated on August 14, 1972.

2. Violation - Section 75.512

Records of examinations and tests of the electric face equipment were incomplete in that the potentially dangerous condition of the loading machine of 5 right section had not been recorded. (Safety circuit bridged out). A Notice of Violation, No. 1 AL, was issued August 8, 1972, on Form 104(b) requiring that this Violation be abated by 8:00 a.m. on August 9, 1972. This Violation was abated on August 9, 1972.

3. Imminent Danger - Section 104(a).

A fatal machinery accident occurred in the No. 1 Section, in No. 3 entry on August 7, 1972. This Order is issued pending the determination and correction of unsafe conditions and/or practices relating thereto.

Action taken.

Order No. 1 AL was issued August 8, 1972, on Form 1 requiring that all persons, except persons referred to in Section 104(d) of the Act be withdrawn from and prohibited from entering the mine. Men had been withdrawn prior to the issuance of this Order. The Order was modified on August 8, 1972, to allow the mining operations to resume in order to observe the operations of the electric face equipment.

It was vacated on August 9, 1972, after an investigation disclosed that the cause of the accident was not the result of a failure on the part of mine management.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Management shall instruct employees in the proper operations and handling of equipment and inherent dangers involved in the operation of such equipment.
2. The operator shall submit to the District Manager a program for the training and retraining of persons whose work assignments require that they be certified or qualified.
3. Operators of equipment shall be alert to the hazards involved in the operations of such equipment.

Respectfully submitted.

William N. Simpkins
Federal Coal Mine Inspector