



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET DEPARTMENT FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

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SAFETY ALERT BULLETIN No. 3 – 2026

Kentucky Division of Mine Safety SAB No. 3 – Fall of Highwall

A non-injury highwall failure occurred at a surface mine in the Pikeville branch.

On March 17th, a section of a highwall at a surface mining site collapsed onto a Sany SY 135C excavator. The fallen material was roughly 12-feet high, 8-feet wide, and 8-feet thick. A portion of the falling material broke apart when it landed on the safety bench 30-feet below the peak of the highwall, overfilling the bench, causing a portion of the material to land on the excavator approximately 60 feet below the fall area in the coal pit.

Scene of the Incident



Recommendations

1. All employees shall be trained in identifying signs of highwall instability.
2. Perform an adequate number of examinations during fluctuating winter weather, particularly during freezing and thawing conditions and periods of excessive rain.
3. 805 KAR 3:030 (2) All loose and hazardous material shall be stripped for a safe distance from the edge of the highwall.
4. The cabs of track-mounted equipment with side-mounted cabs, such as drills and excavators, will be positioned away from the high wall at times to ensure the cab is not placed between the machine's boom or drill mass and the high wall when the machine is operating near the toe of the high wall, unless it can be demonstrated that the failure of the high wall will not impact the operator.