

generators, or equivalent protection are required at all belt-conveyor drives by 30 CFR 75.1101—Deluge-type water sprays, foam generators; main and secondary belt-conveyor drives.

—Stopping construction is specified as to the type of blocks, construction method, and coating of joints. A petition *forbids use of Kennedy stoppings and hollow core block* for stopping construction. These issues are substantially covered by existing provisions in 30 CFR 75.333—Ventilation controls.

—A special belt entry maintenance program is required by a petition, and identifies the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. We believe this issue is covered by existing provisions in 30 CFR 75.360—Preshift examination at fixed intervals; 75.362—On-shift examination; and 75.400—Accumulation of combustible materials.

—Equipment considered potential fire sources in the intake escapeway are required to be equipped with fire suppression systems. These are already covered by existing provisions in 30 CFR 75.1107—Fire suppression devices.

Conditions that, based on Agency experience, are adequately addressed in the proposed rule include:

—A few petitions contain very specific language on the placement of sensors. Sensors are required to be *placed as near to the roof as feasible (efforts toward monitoring within 12 inches of the roof)*. We have not included the requirement to monitor within 12 inches of the roof. We consider the requirement of 'as near the roof as feasible' in the proposed rule to be sufficient.

—Patrolling of two adjacent sensors which are inoperative is required each 30 minutes. A complete system failure requires a one-hour period. MSHA is proposing that a one-hour period for all patrolling is sufficient.

There is one condition in some of these atypical petitions that *a directional lifeline shall be installed for the duration of the return escapeway* when return entries are utilized as alternate escapeways. Even though this issue is not germane to the safe use of belt air, we are soliciting comments on the use of lifelines in this proposed rule because the Advisory Committee recommended their use (in Recommendation Number 8).

E. Preamble Summary—Belt Entry Ventilation Review

In 1989, a committee was formed of MSHA staff to review safety questions surrounding the ventilation of belt conveyors in underground coal mines.

The committee was referred to as the Belt Entry Ventilation Review (BEVR) committee. A final report issued by the BEVR committee made ten recommendations. The following discusses the recommendations and subsequent actions taken by MSHA to address the recommendations including proposed provisions included in this rule.

1. Increased emphasis should be placed on belt maintenance, belt entry clean-up, and rock dusting.

Maintenance, cleanup, and rock dusting in the belt entry are important for all mines using belt haulage. However, these items are already covered by existing regulations (§ 75.362(b)—On-shift examination and § 75.400—Accumulation of combustible materials). MSHA issued a Program Information Bulletin (P89–40) in 1989 addressing inspection of belt entries to emphasize proper maintenance and clean-up. We are not proposing any additional regulation for belt entry maintenance, cleanup, or rock dusting.

2. Emphasis should be placed on proper construction and maintenance of stoppings separating intake escapeways from other intake entries.

Again, regulations exist regarding the construction of stoppings, as well as all permanent ventilation controls (§ 75.333—Ventilation controls). MSHA issued a Program Information Bulletin (P89–35) in 1989 addressing inspection of stoppings to emphasize proper stopping construction and maintenance. The Agency believes no additional regulation is needed.

3. Sections should be designed by entry location, number of entries, or pressure differential, to enhance the protection of the intake escapeway from contamination by fires in adjacent separate entries.

The Agency agrees that mine design can provide additional benefits for protecting the intake escapeway. We believe mine operators should explore possible changes to ventilation systems. MSHA and the mine operator should work together in the mine ventilation plan approval process to address these issues. However, there are factors which will limit changes to mine ventilation system design, including methane liberation, geologic considerations, and other mine specific concerns. MSHA believes proposing regulations which dictate mine design are not needed, and thus is not proposing regulations concerning mine design.

4. Intake escapeways should be maintained free of potential fire sources unless such sources are protected by fire suppression or other acceptable devices.

Regulations finalized in 1996 (§ 75.340—Underground electrical installations) require electrical installations located in intake airways to be protected by noncombustible structures, or equipped with fire suppression. Also promulgated in 1996, regulations in § 75.380—Escapeways, prohibit the use of certain equipment in the primary escapeway, and requires the use of fire suppression on most other equipment. Proposed § 75.350(b)(4) would require the monitoring of the intake escapeway by CO sensor(s) as part of the AMS, meeting all of the requirements of proposed § 75.351.

5. Directing air in by through the belt entry and to the return through a restrictive regulator or pipe overcast does not comply with section 75.326 and should be discontinued.

This practice is no longer accepted by MSHA. We released a Program Policy Letter (P89–V–18) in 1989 stating that this practice should not be permitted because it allows belt air to ventilate working places; which was prohibited by former § 75.326.

6. Training should include all drills in communication and evacuation techniques and include precautions to be taken for escape through smoke.

Existing § 75.383—Escapeway maps and drills, requires mine evacuation drills and serves as a training tool for miners. Training issues have been addressed in the proposed regulations for all miners, and is required to be included in Part 48 training programs for new miners, annual retraining, and specific training for AMS operators. Training in smoke has been conducted and is available for many groups by the National Mine Safety and Health Academy in Beaver, West Virginia. MSHA's experience and the feedback from groups participating in this training has been very positive.

While this training is available at the MSHA facility, it is not possible for all companies to train all miners in smoke, as other facilities are not readily available. We are not proposing new regulations in this area. We do expect that training plans will provide mine-specific training applicable to local conditions and concerns.

7. Belt entries used to ventilate working places should be equipped with carbon monoxide monitoring systems or smoke detectors. MSHA and the Bureau of Mines should encourage development and testing of improved smoke detectors. MSHA should initiate the development of performance standards for CO monitors and smoke detectors. MSHA should continue to stress maintenance of CO monitoring systems.