

OUTBURST SEMINAR 4-08-2010

Work Force Perspective
Management of Outburst Potential
Southern District

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History of Outburst Management

- Triple fatality at South Bulli 1991 saw the introduction of O.M.P
 - Fatality at West Cliff 1994, Section 63 issued to Bulli seam mines by the inspectorate re: gas content, structures, threshold levels
1. You are advised that I am of the opinion that development roadway operations in your mine are liable to become dangerous to the safety or health of persons working therein due to the potential for outbursts
 2. Therefore pursuant to subsection 63 (1) (c) I am imposing upon you, as the Manager of ##### the following restrictions, prohibitions and requirements to carry out the following works

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- Since the issuing of the 63 notice there has been some variations to threshold levels
In the early days:
- 5 M3/T for 100% CO₂ to 9 M3/T 100% CH₄, unrestricted mining
- Up to 8 M3/T 100% CO₂ & 12 M3/T 100% CH₄ outburst mining (bomb squad), above these levels remote mining only
Currently in the district:
- Up to 12 M3/T CH₄ with restrictions around, coring, drilling patterns, structures & advance rates

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Where we have come from:

- Outburst mining (bomb squad) is no longer an option
- Original bomb squad miner drivers protection, a piece of 100 m.m square mesh on the cabin windscreen & an oxygen bottle. This developed into an enclosed cabin with 25 m.m. bullet proof glass windscreen
- Its unbelievable we ever did this, a lot of us vividly remember those days, we also remember the outbursts that occurred & the fatalities
- The new generation of face workers are fully aware of the outburst risk
- Protection now for workers is prevention, drain areas below threshold levels or mine these areas by remote mining

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Authority to Mine

- No one should ever underestimate the faith underground workers place in the Authority to Mine, it's seen as their guarantee that it's safe to be at the face cutting coal
- Most upheavals in recent times have been around the accuracy of the A.T.M or information that is missing, i.e. location of drainage holes, drill rods left in holes, this also includes who has or has not signed off on the A.T.M / dotted the i's and crossed the t's

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- I sometimes wonder if all of management fully understand the anxiety it causes workers when there is an issue with an A.T.M
- Workers have to be confident of an A.T.M's accuracy while cutting at the face, it as what protects them from an outburst / gas
- Once confidence is lost by a worker or workers in the A.T.M's process regaining that confidence is near impossible
- Fact; no outburst related fatalities since 1994
- The control of outbursts through O.M.P's has been a success, O.M.P's have set the standard for Management Plans in the N.S.W coal industry

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Threshold Limits

- Discussion around the raising of threshold limits always raises serious concern with the workforce
- If its not f##### why play with it
- With outburst threshold levels there is an invisible line in the sand, recent history records we are below that line
- Question is at what point does a mine step over that line, if it did the consequences could be disastrous
- For any change to be implemented the workforce will insist on greater protection before considering any rise in threshold levels i.e. increased drilling, coring , implementation of grid patterns. They would need to be convinced that any change is providing a higher level of protection & safety
- With the current procedures in place & when being followed I believe the workforce is “generally” comfortable with outburst management