



# Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Bruce Rauner, Governor

Wayne A. Rosenthal, Director

## Operator Memorandum No. 2017-09

To: All Coal Mine Operators/Consultants

From: Scott K. Fowler, Supervisor  
Land Reclamation Division

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott K. Fowler".

Date: November 8, 2017

Re: Reclamation of Shafts, Slopes and Other Underground Mine Openings

It has come to the Department's attention that after time has passed, methane gas builds up in abandoned underground works and can work its way to the surface through underground mine openings that have been backfilled. This situation can result in future safety hazards.

The regulations at 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1817.15 require that all openings to the surface from underground mines shall be capped, sealed, backfilled, or otherwise properly managed. Therefore, the Department has determined that the reclamation plan for all underground mine openings including, but not limited to slopes, shafts and ventilation holes, must consider the installation of a properly sized vent to control such methane buildup.

As a result, prior to reclamation of a given opening, the reclamation plan must be updated to include either a vent to control methane buildup or to provide justification as to why the particular opening does not require ventilation. Please note that if multiple openings exist in a given area of underground workings, not all sites need a ventilation pipe to properly control the release of methane. When developing such plans, consideration should be given to the effect of panel seals and elevational changes in the mine floor that may impact methane build up and pathways of escape. Plans shall address the location, size, length, material and method of installation of the vent. Plans to protect the vent long term after bond is released shall also be addressed.

Please note that Operator Memorandum 00-1 (copy attached) also addresses the reclamation of such openings and is still in effect.

Enclosure

**Land Reclamation Division  
Memorandum 00-01**

To: Illinois Coal Operators

From: Alfred L. Clayborne  
Acting Supervisor

Date: February 18, 2000

Re: Reclamation of Shafts and Underground Mine Openings

Department regulations at 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1817.15 require that all openings to the surface from underground mines shall be capped, sealed, backfilled, or otherwise properly managed to prevent access to the mine workings. The Department has determined that a combination of backfilling and sealing is the only way to ensure that access to the mine workings is prevented.

The following provisions shall apply:

1. Back fill material shall consist of concrete, rip-rap, aggregates, and/or soil material only. The use of any other material as backfill is prohibited unless approval is first granted by the Department.
2. The concrete seal shall be left exposed on the surface and a permanent monument shall be affixed to the seal to allow for future identification of the site.

The Department highly recommends that the fill material be allowed to settle for an extended period of time prior to topping off the fill and constructing the seal. It is also recommended that the location of all sealed shafts or slopes be recorded with the appropriate recorder of deeds.

Please be aware that nearly all permits were approved with the provision that final slope and shaft reclamation plans would be submitted for approval prior to implementation. So, unless your permit contains specific language concerning the reclamation of slopes and shafts, a plan must be submitted and approved by the Department prior to reclamation of slopes or shafts.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact your field representative or this office.