

# **FATAL ACCIDENTS**

## REPORT OF FATAL ACCIDENT

Name of Victim: Frederick James Gallaher  
Address: R.R. 2, Box 349, Curwensville, PA 16833  
Name of Mine: Surface Mine Permit No. 14743007 and 14860103  
Name of Company: Lobb Mining Co.  
Date of Accident: April 5, 1989 - Curtin Township - Centre Co.

James McDonald  
Surface Mine Conservation Inspector -- Hawk Run District Office - Bituminous

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On April 5, 1989 at approximately 7:30 a.m., Frederick James Gallaher, age 24, truck driver with eight months experience was fatally injured at a stripping operation in Curtin Township, Centre County.

Nature of injury was drowning. County Corner Robert Neff reported no injuries.

The victim attempted to drive a loaded 1984 model T 9000 coal truck across a railroad bridge. The truck went off the bridge and landed upside down in the stream below. Drowning occurred as the result of the victim being trapped or knocked unconscious under water.

### CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT

The truck is owned by Brink Trucking and contracted by Lobb Mining Company. The Pennsylvania State Police examined the truck and found nothing wrong with the steering or brakes. There were no violations with the truck.

The bridge is one of five old railroad bridges used as a haul road between surface mining permits 14743007 and 14860103. Some work had been done by the coal company to improve the bridges for their use. Bumping blocks were installed twelve inches high on the sides of all bridges to serve as a guide. The bridges have no guard rails sufficient to hold a coal truck. Drivers were instructed not to use the blocks as guard rails. It was reported that the victim had been advised of this and directed to drive slow. The bridges have been used by Lobb Mining Company since July, 1987. The haul road and bridges were bonded and made a part of permit 14743007 on January 11, 1988.

Name of Victim:

Frederick James Gallaher

(continued)

Although wet conditions prevailed, the accident does not appear to be weather related. The approach to the bridge is straight and level. Tire tracks at the approach to the bridge indicate that the truck was off center as it started onto the bridge. The width of the bridge is nine feet, five inches between bumping blocks, seven feet, eleven inches between running boards. The width of the truck is seven feet, nine inches. There were no witnesses of the accident. The cause could not be determined.

MEANS OF PREVENTING A SIMILAR ACCIDENT

Stop using the railroad bridges as a haul road.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ACCIDENT

The responsibility could not be determined.

## REPORT OF FATAL ACCIDENT

Name of Victim:	Gerald Wetzel
Address:	R. D. #1, Box 554, Shamokin, PA 17872
Name of Mine:	M & R Slope, Zero Vein Mine
Name of Company:	S. B. & M. Coal Co.
Date of Accident:	July 25, 1989 - South of Trevorton Northumberland County

Richard P Lesser, Mine Inspector

3rd Anthracite District

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On July 25, 1989 at approximately 11:30 a.m., coroner's estimate, an accident occurred at the S.B. & M. Coal Company, M & R Slope, Zero Vein Mine, located South of Trevorton, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. The victim Gerald Wetzel, 51 years old, employed as a hoisting engineer, lost his life while operating a Hough pay loader approximately 90 feet East of the Slope Portal. Nature of injury was massive chest and head injuries.

Victim was operating pay loader alone, unknown to mine owner who was underground. Investigation reveals that for some unknown reason the loader ran off the roadway, no berms were in this area, and traveled down the mountain 50 feet on 40° pitch, tumbled across a roadway leading to the slope portal 36 feet wide and down the mountain 38 feet on 45° pitch where the loader and the victim in the cab, were found.

### CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT

No berms along roadway causing payloader to slip off roadway. Evidence that the brake system had been altered which could be related to the accident. The brake hose leading to the left rear wheel was disconnected and crimped causing lose of brake to above mentioned wheel.

### MEANS OF PREVENTING A SIMILAR ACCIDENT

All operating equipment should be properly maintained in safe working order. Berms should be provided along all travelways where machine is operating.

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ACCIDENT

Victim is held responsible in regards that he was not a qualified pay loader operator.

## REPORT OF FATAL ACCIDENT

Name of Victim:	John A. Momeyer
Address:	R.D. 2, Box 325, Jeannette, PA 15644
Name of Mine:	Homer City Mine
Name of Company:	Helen Mining Company
Date of Accident:	November 4, 1989 - Homer City Area Indiana County

Anthony L. Scarton

5th Bituminous District

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT

On November 4, 1989 at approximately 12:50 p.m., an accident occurred at the Helen Mining Company, located in the Homer City area, Indiana County, Pennsylvania. The victim John A. Momeyer, age 39, employed as a General Inside Laborer with 17 years mining experience lost his life while operating a 15 ton Goodman motor. Nature of injury was head, chest and other body parts.

The victim was operating a 15 ton Goodman motor and was in the process of dragging a longwall shear into the mine with the help of two other motors. At the #2 Drive area the shear came off the track a little on the back end. The moving crew was going to pull the shear through a nearby switch a reevaluate the situation. The area around this switch was 12' to 15' high and tapered down to 7'. Steel arches are set as supplemental support along this track entry and they are in the range of from 44" to 60" at various locations along this track entry. The clearance under the arches at this area of the track entry was around 48" from on top of the rail. The victim was operating a motor and the area went from 7' of height to 48" of height under the arches in an abrupt manner. The victim was drug out overtop the motor and crushed between the arches and motor.

### CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT

It is the consensus opinion of the investigating team that the victim was operating the motor in a somewhat standing position and was not facing the direction of travel. Together with the sudden change of the roof height we feel that the victim thought that he had more clearance to the low arches and was not in a regular operating position at the time of his accident. Such abrupt overhead clearance change was not adequately marked to warn any approaching vehicle of the drastic height change along this area.

### MEANS OF PREVENTING A SIMILAR ACCIDENT

All motorman will be reinstructed as to the low overhead conditions that exist at this mine. The three 15 ton motors will be taken outside to the shop and as much as practicable lowered to allow for better visibility for the motorman. Such abrupt roof clearance changes will be marked with a reflectorized sign noting such areas and other low areas will be so marked. Such signs will be

of a standard formate and be used only in low clearance areas.

#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ACCIDENT

The victim was somewhat responsible for this accident in that he was a highly qualified motorman who was well aware of the low overhead conditions that exist along the track haulages at this mine.

This area and other areas throughtout the mine could have been marked better regarding the low overhead clearances.