
MAJOR COLLAPSE OF BATTER IN OPEN CUT COAL MINE

INCIDENT

At about 1.30 am on Wednesday the 14th of November 2007, a large section of a Latrobe Valley coal mine batter collapsed into the open cut pit. The collapse allowed the Latrobe River to flow directly into the mine and caused substantial damage to the mine conveyor systems, other mine facilities and the environment.

No persons were injured in the collapse. However, any batter collapse poses a serious risk to health and safety and the environment.

COMMENTS

- The exact cause of the collapse has not yet been confirmed. However, excess hydraulic pressure within the coal joints and underlying aquifer may have contributed to batter instability.
- The government has decided that two separate enquiries will be conducted.
- The first enquiry will investigate compliance with the mining licence and approved conditions, and should be completed by early 2008.
- The second enquiry will establish the facts and causes of the batter collapse, and should be completed by May 2008.



RECOMMENDATIONS & PREVENTATIVE ACTION

- Mine operators must ensure that the hazards associated with batter collapse have been identified, that a risk assessment has been conducted and that the necessary risk controls have been implemented.
- The stability of batters must be maintained by the use of appropriate control measures resulting from geotechnical models and assessments.
- The outcome of stability modelling and assessments must be confirmed by regular in-field monitoring of the batters.
- Any geotechnical modelling and assessments must be performed by suitably qualified persons, and where necessary, peer review should be done.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- For information on the two enquiries, see the *What New* section of the *Minerals & Petroleum* part of the DPI website, at www.dpi.vic.gov.au
- Minerals Industry Safety Handbook. (*Available from the Department*).
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 & Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007.



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