

Dozer Safety on Stockpiles

Pushing material on a stockpile is a common job found at most mining operations. Often it is the mundane job that can present the most hazards. During a single shift a dozer operator may experience changes in the stockpile's conditions, adverse weather, and the possibility of hidden cavities.

For a dozer to fall into a hidden cavity three events must occur, the dozer operator must position the dozer directly over the feeder zone, a void must have formed with the stockpile between the feeder and the surface, and the weight of the dozer must exceed the strength of the arched material, the bridge, over the cavity.

The following are best practices to follow when working on or around stockpiles with heavy equipment.

1. Use enclosed cabs with rollover protection in stockpile areas.
2. Install 2 means of two-way communication in the bulldozer, with 1 powered by an independent power source.
3. Be aware of surge hole locations at all times. Overhead markers or other effective means should be used.
4. Maintain communication at all times with the feeder control room and the bulldozer operator. Always know which feeder is being operated and the location of feeder points.
5. Install an oxygen generating SCSRs in the bulldozer and inspect them during pre-operational checks. Ensure operators are properly trained on their use.
6. Install high impact cab window glass or chemically treat with a proper window support system.
7. Provide a remote controlled stop device in the cab that can shut off reclaim feeders and belt conveyors.
8. Operators should use equipment seat belts at all times.

Remember, no-one should walk on stockpiles without a safety harness connected to an overhead support and the feeders locked and tagged out. Take time to review your stockpile safety plan and establish a regular time see if the plan needs updating.

The information presented in "Safety Watch" has been compiled from sources believed to be reliable. However, it cannot be assumed that all acceptable measures are contained in this article nor that additional measures may not be required under particular or exceptional circumstances, or your own company procedures, or by federal, state/provincial and local law. Local, state/provincial and federal regulations take precedence over this material. Companies should rely on their own investigations and obtain professional advice specific to their needs before using these materials.