

Site:	<u>Martin Co.</u>
Break:	<u>2.10</u>
Other:	<u>                    </u>

85462

INITIAL POLREP  
KENTUCKY/WEST VIRGINIA COAL SLURRY SPILL  
MARTIN COUNTY COAL CORPORATION  
INEZ, KY

EVENT: MULTI-REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
ATTN: DOUG LAIR, EPA REGION IV  
CHARLIE KLEEMAN, EPA REGION III

I. SITUATION (1000 HOURS, MONDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2000)

A. At approximately 0200 hours on Wednesday, 11 October 2000, over 200 million gallons of coal mine fine refuse slurry were released from an 72-acre impoundment operated by Martin County Coal Corporation (MCCC). The release occurred as a result of a sudden and unexpected breach into an underground mine adjacent to MCCC's refuse impoundment. The slurry entered both the Wolf Creek and Rockcastle Creek watersheds of Martin County, Kentucky. The spilled material has impacted over 75 miles of surface water downstream of the site, including both the Tug Fork and Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River, a tributary of the Ohio River. Tug Fork and Big Sandy Rivers border both West Virginia and Kentucky.

B. The following potable water intakes have been affected and closed as a result of the spill: Kermit, WV, Crum, WV, and Ft. Gay, WV. These water companies are currently drawing water from alternate sources. The town of Louisa, KY experienced a water emergency on 15 October 2000, as their intakes are also closed, with no reliable alternate source at this time. The Louisa water company services over 2,000 customers, including schools and a hospital. Water restrictions are in effect, and both MCCC and KY EMA are arranging for backup supplies. It is expected that Kenova, WV may also experience some disruption of their water service.

3. MCCC is responding to the spill with their employees and contractor personnel. Federal and State agencies are providing guidance and direction regarding response priorities, which include ensuring adequate supplies of potable water to affected areas, and containment of source material in Coldwater Fork of Rockcastle Creek and in Wolf Creek. Agencies represented on-scene include:

Federal: EPA Region III (OSC Bob Kelly), EPA Region IV (OSC Art Smith),  
EPA ERT (Greg Powell), USCG Strike Team, U.S. DOL, MSHA, U.S. DOI, OSM, U.S. Army  
COE

State: KYDEP, KYDEM, KY Fish and Wildlife, Kentucky Dept. for Surface Mining  
and Reclamation (KY DSMRE), WV DEP.

4. KY Fish and Wildlife has estimated that the majority of all fish and aquatic life in the creeks and Tug Fork were killed due to suffocation. Fish were observed by KY Fish and Wildlife swimming onto shore due to lack of oxygen. Also observed were dead turtles, crayfish, and suckers. Dissolved oxygen (DO) readings taken in the waters were measured as low as one mg/L; three mg/L is lethal to aquatic life.

5. Weather: To date, weather conditions are favorable for conducting response operations. There are concerns over possible flooding should a significant rain event occur, due to the accumulation of solids in creek and river channels as a result of the impoundment failure.

II. ACTIONS TAKEN:

A. Samples have been collected by EPA Region III at water intakes in West Virginia. Samples have been collected in KY by KYDEP. No analytical results have been reported thus far. Samples were collected by ORSANCO on 14 October 2000 over a 25 mile stretch of the Big Sandy River (MM 0 to MM25). Data review has not been completed at this time.

B. KY DSRME issued an Order for Cessation and Immediate Compliance to MCCC on 11 October 2000. The Order requires the facility to retrieve and dispose of all slurry material in an appropriate manner.

3. MCCC has constructed numerous filter dams in both Rockcastle Creek and Wolf Creek watersheds. These consist of several grades of crushed rock, geosynthetic fabric, and straw which are designed to trap coal fines behind the dams while allowing flow through the structures. However, there are not enough designated areas for disposal of this material. There is concern that the contained slurry will remobilize upon an increase in flow from a rain event.

4. Primary focus is on ability of municipal water companies to provide potable water. It is expected that water with unusually high levels of turbidity will be encountered at surface water intakes for an extended period. While many providers have made alternate arrangements to meet water demand, it is likely that some of these alternate supplies may prove somewhat unreliable over time. Efforts will be made to ensure that each water provider that is affected will get appropriate technical assistance to help get them back in service as soon as possible.

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REGION III EPA  
PHILADELPHIA, PA

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EPA REGION IV