

**Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Deep Mine Safety**

DOCUMENT NUMBER: 580-2219-002

TITLE: Guidelines to Approve Ventilation Plans for Abandoned and Unused Mine Areas

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 1, 2000

AUTHORITY: Section 247 of the Pennsylvania Bituminous Coal Mine Act, 52 P.S. Sections 701-247

POLICY: In general, mine operators can ventilate abandoned or unused workings with adequate quantities of air directed past caved and sealed areas or through unused areas to dilute and render harmless gases escaping from these areas.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this technical guidance is to provide consistency of enforcement through guidelines thus insuring adequate ventilation of abandoned and unused areas.

APPLICABILITY: This guidance is applicable to all Deep Mine Safety staff and all underground coal mine operators and personnel.

DISCLAIMER: The policies and procedures outlined in this guidance document are intended to supplement existing requirements. Nothing in the policies or procedures shall affect regulatory requirements.

The policies and procedures herein are not an adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of the Department to give these rules that weight or deference. This document establishes the framework, within which DEP will exercise its administrative discretion in the future. DEP reserves the discretion to deviate from this policy statement if circumstances warrant.

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PROCEDURES:

Pursuant to Section 247, the mine inspector in the district shall approve the plan for ventilating abandoned and unused parts of the mine. The inspector shall use the following guidelines to determine the adequacy of these ventilation plans.

1. Adequate quantities of air shall be directed past caved and sealed areas and through unused areas to dilute and render harmless the gases escaping from these areas.
2. The air used to ventilate abandoned and unused areas shall be coursed directly into the return air course.

These additional safety precautions are to be provided for sealed areas:

1. The mine inspector in the district shall approve seal design and seal construction methods. The minimum accepted seal will be of the Barrett-Mitchell type or similar.
2. Once completed, examinations of the seals will be made pursuant to Section 228 of the Act until the mine inspector in the district conducts an evaluation.
3. Upon receiving approval from the mine inspector, seals (other than on active sections), may be examined on a weekly basis pursuant to Section 222(e) of the Act.
4. If accumulations of explosive or noxious gases occur in the return air course ventilating the seals, appropriate action shall be taken to reduce the gases to a safe level. This may be accomplished by:
 - Increasing the volume of air ventilating the seals.
 - Installing a pressure relief borehole that is sufficiently large and close enough to the seals to reduce the leakage into the active area. Note that pressure relief holes shall be designed to prevent air from entering into the sealed area.