

SURFACE EFFECTS OF UNDERGROUND COAL MINING OPERATIONS [30 U.S.C. 1266]

SEC. 516. (a) The Secretary shall promulgate rules and regulations directed toward the surface effects of underground coal mining operations, embodying the following requirements and in accordance with the procedures established under section 501 of this Act: Provided, however, That in adopting any rules and regulations the Secretary shall consider the distinct difference between surface coal mining and underground coal mining. Such rules and regulations shall not conflict with nor supersede any provision of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 nor any regulation issued pursuant thereto, and shall not be promulgated until the Secretary has obtained the written concurrence of the head of the department which administers such Act.

(b) Each permit issued under any approved State or Federal program pursuant to this Act and relating to underground coal mining shall require the operator to -

(1) adopt measures consistent with known technology in order to prevent subsidence causing material damage to the extent technologically and economically feasible, maximize mine stability, and maintain the value and reasonably foreseeable use of such surface lands, except in those instances where the mining technology used requires planned subsidence in a predictable and controlled manner: Provided, That nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit the standard method of room and pillar mining;

(2) seal all portals, entryways, drifts, shafts, or other openings between the surface and underground mine working when no longer needed for the conduct of the mining operations;

(3) fill or seal exploratory holes no longer necessary for mining, maximizing to the extent technologically and economically feasible return of mine and processing waste, tailings, and any other waste incident to the mining operation, to the mine workings or excavations;

(4) with respect to surface disposal of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes, and other wastes in areas other than the mine workings or excavations, stabilize all waste piles created by the permittee from current operations through construction in compacted layers including the use of incombustible and impervious materials if necessary and assure that the leachate will not degrade below water quality standards established pursuant to applicable Federal and State law surface or ground waters and that the final contour of the waste accumulation will be compatible with natural surroundings and that the site is stabilized and revegetated according to the provisions of this section;

(5) design, locate, construct, operate, maintain, enlarge, modify, and remove, or abandon, in accordance with the standards and criteria developed pursuant to section 515(f), all existing and new coal mine waste piles consisting of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes, or other liquid and solid wastes and used either temporarily or permanently as dams or embankments;

(6) establish on regarded areas and all other lands affected, a diverse and permanent vegetative cover capable of self-regeneration and plant succession and at least equal in extent of cover to the natural vegetation of the area;

(7) protect offsite areas from damages which may result from such mining operations;

(8) eliminate fire hazards and otherwise eliminate conditions which constitute a hazard to health and safety of the public;

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(9) minimize the disturbances of the prevailing hydrologic balance at the minesite and in associated offsite areas and to the quantity of water in surface ground water systems both during and after coal mining operations and during reclamation by-

(A) avoiding acid or other toxic mine drainage by such measures as, but not limited to -

(i) preventing or removing water from contact with toxic producing deposits;
(ii) treating drainage to reduce toxic content which adversely affects downstream water upon being released to water courses;

(iii) casing, sealing, or otherwise managing boreholes, shafts, and wells to keep acid or other toxic drainage from entering ground and surface waters; and

(B) conducting surface coal mining operations so as to prevent, to the extent possible using the best technology currently available, additional contributions of suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit area (but in no event shall such contributions be in excess of requirements set by applicable State or Federal law), and avoiding channel deepening or enlargement in operations requiring the discharge of water from mines;

(10) with respect to other surface impacts not specified in this subsection including the construction of new roads or the improvement or use of existing roads to gain access to the site of such activities and for haulage, repair areas, storage areas, processing areas, shipping areas, and other areas upon which are sited structures, facilities, or other property or materials on the surface, resulting from or incident to such activities, operate in accordance with the standards established under section 515 of this title for such effects which result from surface coal mining operations: Provided, That the Secretary shall make such modifications in the requirements imposed by this subparagraph as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface and underground coal mining;

(11) to the extent possible using the best technology currently available, minimize disturbances and adverse impacts of the operation on fish, wildlife, and related environmental values, and achieve enhancement of such resources where practicable;

(12) locate openings for all new drift mines working acid-producing or iron-producing coal seams in such a manner as to prevent a gravity discharge of water from the mine.

(c) In order to protect the stability of the land, the regulatory authority shall suspend underground coal mining under urbanized areas, cities, towns, and communities and adjacent to industrial or commercial buildings, major impoundments, or permanent streams if he finds imminent danger to inhabitants of the urbanized areas, cities, towns, and communities.

(d) The provisions of title V of this Act relating to State and Federal programs, permits, bonds, inspections and enforcement, public review, and administrative and judicial review shall be applicable to surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground coal mine with such modifications to the permit application requirements, permit approval or denial procedures, and bond requirements as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface and underground coal mining. The Secretary shall promulgate such modifications in accordance with the rulemaking procedure established in section 501 of this Act.