

Supervisor and Mining Company Fined \$88,000 for Dangerous Backfill Procedure



Two mine workers were assigned to backfill a stope using material called sandfill, which can cause caustic chemical burns when contacting skin. One of the workers entered the stope and began to move toward the pour point, walking through water, slime and sandfill. His feet got stuck. Because the backfill system hadn't been shut down, the pipe continued to pour sandfill around the worker and he was unable to move or communicate as the backfill rose. His partner saw what was happening, radioed the surface to shut down the pump and went to a refuge station for help. It took seven workers an hour to extricate the worker; all received burns to their legs and one required skin grafts. Two weeks before this incident, workers had raised concerns about the backfill procedure to the general foreman and supervisor. But they made no changes to the procedure. The mining company and a supervisor pleaded guilty to OHS violations. The company was fined \$80,000 and the supervisor \$8,000 [*FNX Mining Company Inc. and Jeffrey Huffman*, Govt. News Release, March 13, 2015].