

# Accidentgram

**COAL MINE SERIOUS ACCIDENT** – On Thursday, January 27, 2005, a serious fall of person accident occurred at the secondary crusher building of a coal handling facility at a surface coal mine. A plant employee fell through an opening in the floor at the fourth level conveyor belt head drive area and dropped into the No. 4 secondary crusher surge bin. A large coal spill had occurred at the head drive and plant employees were in the process of removing the spill by dumping the coal through the 30- by 32-inch opening in the floor. The opening was normally closed with a 36- by 36-inch metal cover. To access the lower surge bin, the cover had been opened and was lying on the floor next to the opening. The opening had not been protected by any barrier, but a miner had been positioned at the hole to warn others of the opening. After a while, this person left the area to help shovel the spilled coal into the wheelbarrow that was being used to take the coal to the opening. A second opening, normally used to shovel spills into the surge bin, was covered by the large spill and was not accessible. The victim was not involved in the cleanup work but arrived shortly before his quitting time to look at the spill. He fell through the opening as he walked around the head drive area. The victim fell approximately 17 feet to the surge bin wall, continued to fall approximately 9.5 feet along the steeply angled wall of the bin, went through the opening at the bottom of the bin, and stopped at the No. 4 crusher feeder pan. The conveyor belt system, with the exception of the crusher, had been deactivated prior to the accident. The victim did not contact the energized crusher, but did receive multiple fractures and injuries to the upper back, shoulder, collarbone, clavicle and ribs and received a bruised lung.



**Best Practices**

- Protect accessible floor openings with substantial railings or barriers to prevent falls of persons.
- Establish procedures and train personnel in procedures for removing, protecting, and replacing flooring during construction or maintenance.
- Always use fall protection equipment, safety belts and lines, when working near openings where there is a danger of falling.
- Each job should be thoroughly analyzed for hazardous conditions/practices and safe work procedures should be implemented and communicated between all workers involved.