WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-21-14

§22-21-14. Protective devices required when a coalbed methane well penetrates workable coalbed; when a coalbed methane well is drilled through horizon of coalbed from which coal has been removed; notice of stimulation; results of stimulation.

(a) Except for those coalbeds which the coalbed methane operator proposes to complete for production of coalbed methane or where a ventilation hole is being converted to a well, when a well penetrates one or more workable coalbeds, the well operator shall run and cement a string of casing in the hole through the workable coalbed or beds in such a manner as will exclude all oil, gas or gas pressure as may be found in such coalbed or beds. Such string of casing shall be circulated and cemented in such a manner as provided for in reasonable rules promulgated by the chief in accordance with the provisions of chapter twenty-nine-a of this code. After any such string of casing has been so run and cemented to the surface, drilling may proceed to the permitted depth.

(b) When a coalbed methane well is drilled through the horizon of a coalbed from which the coal has been removed, the hole shall be drilled at least thirty feet below the coalbed, of a size sufficient to permit the placing of a liner which shall start not less than twenty feet above it. Within this liner, which may be welded to the casing to be used, shall be centrally placed the largest-sized casing to be used in the well and the space between the liner and casing shall be filled with cement as they are lowered into the hole. Cement shall be placed in the bottom of the hole to a depth of twenty feet to form a sealed seat for both liner and casing: Provided, That the liner may extend back to the surface and serve as the freshwater or coal protection casing, if done in accordance with subsection (a) of this section and section twenty-one, article six of this chapter, as applicable. If the liner is constructed in this manner, the next string of casing to be run into the well shall extend at least twenty feet below the coalbed. Cement shall be placed between that string of casing and the liner from the bottom of the casing to a point at least twenty feet above the coalbed. Following the setting of the liner, drilling shall proceed in the manner provided above. Should it be found necessary to drill through the horizon of two or more workable coalbeds from which the coal has been removed, such liner shall be started not less than twenty feet below the lowest horizon penetrated and shall extend to a point not less than twenty feet above the highest horizon penetrated.

(c) At least five days prior to the stimulation of any coal seam the well operator shall give the coal owner and operator notice of the date and time of stimulation and shall allow the coal owner or operator to have an observer present at the site at the coal owner or operator's risk and cost. Within thirty days after stimulation is completed, the well operator shall certify the actual stimulation procedure used, including, but not limited to, the fluid injection rate, the injection pressure, the volume and components of fluid injected and the amount and components of the propping agent, if any.

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(d) The chief may grant variances to the requirements of this section where the variance would promote the extraction of coalbed methane without affecting mine safety.

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