WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §22-3-14

§22-3-14. General environmental protection performance standards for the surface effects of underground mining; application of other provisions of article to surface effects of underground mining.

(a) The director shall promulgate separate rules directed toward the surface effects of underground coal mining operations, embodying the requirements in subsection (b) of this section: Provided, That in adopting such rules, the director shall consider the distinct difference between surface coal mines and underground coal mines in West Virginia. Such rules may not conflict with or supersede any provision of the federal or state coal mine health and safety laws or any rule issued pursuant thereto.

(b) Each permit issued by the director pursuant to this article and relating to underground coal mining shall require the operation at a minimum 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 overlying surface lands, except in those instances where the mining technology used requires planned subsidence in a predictable and controlled manner: Provided, That this subsection does not prohibit the standard method of room and pillar mining;

(2) Seal all portals, entryways, drifts, shafts, or other openings that connect the earth's surface to the underground mine workings when no longer needed for the conduct of the mining operations in accordance with the requirements of all applicable federal and state law and rules promulgated pursuant thereto;

(3) Fill or seal exploratory holes no longer necessary for mining and maximize to the extent technologically and economically feasible, if environmentally acceptable, 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 operator from current operations through construction in compacted layers, including the use of incombustible and impervious materials, if necessary, and assure that any leachate therefrom will not degrade surface or groundwaters below water quality standards established pursuant to applicable federal and state law 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

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accordance with the standards and criteria developed pursuant to §22-3-13 of this code, all existing and new coal mine waste piles consisting of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes, and solid wastes and used either temporarily or permanently as dams or embankments;

(6) Establish on regraded areas and all other disturbed areas 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 within the time period prescribed in §22-3-13(b)(20) of this code;

(7) Protect off-site 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;

(9) Minimize the disturbance of the prevailing hydrologic balance at the mine site and in associated off-site areas and to the quantity and the quality of water in surface and groundwater systems both during and after 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 before being released to water courses; and (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 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 the 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: Provided, That in recognition of the distinct differences between surface and underground mining the monitoring of water from underground coal mine workings shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Clean Water Act of 1977;

(10) With respect to other surface impacts of underground mining 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 §22-3-13 of this code for such effects which result from surface-mining operations: Provided, That the director shall make such modifications in the requirements imposed by this subdivision as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface and underground mining in West Virginia;

(11) To the extent possible using the best technology currently available, minimize disturbances and adverse impacts of the operation on fish, aquatic life, wildlife, and related

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environmental values, and achieve enhancement of such resources where practicable; and

(12) Unless otherwise permitted by the director and in consideration of the relevant safety and environmental factors, locate openings for all new drift mines working in acid producing or iron producing coal seams in a manner as to prevent a gravity discharge of water from the mine.

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

(d) The provisions of this article relating to permits, bonds, insurance, inspections, reclamation and enforcement, public review, and administrative and judicial review are also applicable to surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground mine with such modifications by rule to the permit application requirements, permit approval, or denial procedures and bond requirements as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface mines and underground mines in West Virginia.

(e) The secretary shall promulgate for review and consideration by the West Virginia Legislature during the regular session of the Legislature, 2020, revisions to legislative rules (38 CSR 2) pertaining to surface owner protection from material damage due to subsidence under this article. The secretary shall specifically consider adoption of the federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R. § 817.121.

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