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Selected Questions and Answers.

PRACTICAL WORKING.

Q.—Describe how you would determine the safety of a miners working place, as regards danger from roof and sides.

A.—The above question is of great importance in mining operations, for we find that between forty and fifty per cent of the accidents in mines result from falls of roof and side; so that it is easily seen that strict observation should be taken by the persons who inspect the miners working places, especially previous to the men entering at the beginning of the day shift, and during the day shift, for, according to the various inspectors reports, the majority of the accidents from the above cause occur during the first and last hours of the day. We see, therefore, how necessary it is for the safety of all concerned that strict examinations be made in the above direction.

On being appointed to make the examination deemed necessary by the C. M. R. A., I would proceed as follows:—

On reaching the working place I would make a strict survey of the roof, taking notice whether any "slips" or joints exist, as these are of great danger to the miner, especially when the thick end of the "slip" is at the lowest point, and unless timber is set up to support the same there is a great danger of their falling out without the least warning.

If, during the course of my inspection, I found any of the roof or side was of such a nature as to endanger the lives of the persons employed therein, I would cause the men working in such place to put up sufficient timber to secure the maximum amount of safety obtainable under such circumstances, seeing such timber set before leaving the place.

Another item which would attract my attention would be the setting of timber and chocks, the forming of packs, and the withdrawing of timber—all of which are leading factors—in the working place of the miner, taking particular notice that all timber was set in accordance with the special rules, or more, if the prevailing circumstances demanded it.

In making an examination of the sides of a working place I should see that all sprags were set to prevent the coal falling after it has been undercut; but if any of the coal side be of such a nature as to be dangerous to work therein, I would cause the same to be drawn and filled into corves, and sent out of the pit. The setting of "cocker-sprags," where used, would have my strict inspection.

If I found that a working place, or part of it, was not safe, and that by setting timber it could be made safe, I would either set, or cause to be set, sufficient timber to procure safety for all working therein. But, on

the other hand, if I found the working place unsafe, and that it required the services of a number of men, and that at the time being these were unobtainable, I would fix danger signals each side of such place so as to warn any person entering such place.

On reaching the office I would make a report in the report book, and acquaint the under manager with the same, who would see that no one except the persons appointed to erect timber where the danger existed entered such working place till the danger was removed.

After having made my examination of such working place, I would comply with Special Rule 32. If found safe, place my initials, with the day of the month, at the entrance of the working place. In case of a place not being safe, I would put up danger signals as before stated.

In conclusion, when testing the roof with any tool which may be supplied for that purpose, I would take the precaution not to stand under the roof while being tested, as there is the possibility of a slight tap bringing down the portion of roof under inspection, especially in the case of "slips," as there is little or no cohesion between the stone overlying the slip, and the "slip" itself.

TESTING FOR GAS.

Q.—How would you ascertain by safety lamp test whether a working place contained a dangerous quantity of either fire-damp or black-damp.

A.—In the examination of a working place for an accumulation of fire-damp, in approaching the suspected place I should use extra care, having with me a couple of safety lamps, leaving one a short distance behind me in the event of the gas being in sufficient explosive proportions to put out the light in the lamp with which I make the test.

I should then pull the light as low as possible without the risk of going out, and then holding the lamp in front of me and as high as I could, and keeping my eye on the flame, advance step by step into the place, stopping every yard to give the gas time to enter the lamp, and show its presence on the flame.

I should continue in this way until the presence of the gas was shown by the appearance of the familiar brownish blue cap and then stop, pull down the flame until there is only a blue point on the wick, raise the lamp slowly to find out whether the gas was present in sufficient quantity to be explosive. If on the raising of the lamp the cap begins to spire up it must be withdrawn, and if the lamp is not at the highest point in the place it may be taken for granted that the gas is present in explosive quantities.

In an accumulation of gas it will be found on the edges of it to be sufficiently diluted to only show a small cap, unless the gas is issuing in such quantity that a