

# SAFETY ALERT

## Self-contained rescuer combustion reaction

### INCIDENT

An operator at an underground coal mine in the Hunter Valley lost a self-contained rescuer. He did not become aware of the loss until he reached the surface at the end of his shift, at which time he attempted to contact the production area where he had been working. An unsuccessful search was conducted for the unit and operations resumed as normal.

The device was eventually found when it was ejected from the rear of the LHS track of a roadheader, totally destroyed, and a fire was observed at that time.

### CIRCUMSTANCES

The operator had been involved in various tasks during his shift. The device was being belt worn, constrained by a webbing-style pouch that was supplied by the manufacturer of the units.

### INVESTIGATION

An investigative report from the US Department of the Interior - Bureau of Mines (RI 9333) confirms that these units can be subject to "combustion reactions" when placed in extreme destructive forces such as those applied by a rotating track pad. The mine concerned conducted a range of tests and under certain conditions was able to remove a rescuer from its retaining pouch, with the restraining strap still secured.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The possibility of this event occurring should be communicated to all people required to wear such a device during their duties. Operations should review the adequacy of their arrangements for finding self-contained self rescuers if lost, with the potential for such an end result as occurred in this case, to be considered. Operations should review the adequacy of the arrangements in place for the secure retention of self-contained rescuers being belt-worn by people.

**NOTE:** Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

**Signed**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Regan', written in a cursive style.

**Rob Regan  
DIRECTOR  
MINE SAFETY OPERATIONS BRANCH  
NSW TRADE & INVESTMENT**

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**Disclaimer**

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