

SAFETY PROCEDURES AND INSTALLATION GUIDELINES

When work is performed over, in, or near an abandoned mine opening, a number of safety procedures must be followed to reduce the risk of accident and injury. Before commencing work, it is advisable to check with the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Department of Labour.

The Department of Labour, under the Director of Mine Safety, have established procedures and Codes of Practice relating to the entry into old mine workings. Any entry into an abandoned mine opening must be approved by the Department of Labour. Failure to enter without such approval is in contravention of the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources can often provide information and plans relating to old mine workings and subsidence concerns. Both sources are also able to provide copies of relevant guidelines and regulations pertaining to work in and around open holes and confined spaces. Always try to obtain as much information as possible before starting work.

Safety concerns and recommended procedures for working around abandoned mine openings are outlined below.

Shafts, Inclined Shafts and Raises

- Work around an open hole is extremely dangerous. Anyone working in the area of an opening must wear an approved safety belt and lanyard, attached to a secure anchor. Failure to do so can result in personal injury or death through falls or drowning in flooded openings. Information on appropriate personal safety equipment is available from the numerous safety supply companies located throughout Nova Scotia. Appropriate provisions should also be made to prevent mobile equipment from falling into a mine opening.
- The area around the perimeter of the open hole should be carefully checked for broken and fractured rock which could break free.

Adits, Declines and Slopes

- Working under loose rock is extremely dangerous. Any loose rock located over or around the portal, or on the roof and walls of the opening, must be removed or secured. If a stable roof and sides cannot be found within a mine opening, it may be best to seal the opening at the entrance.

- Where natural water flow occurs in a mine opening, a drainage pipe must be installed behind any solid closure to prevent water build-up behind the seal.
- The air in an adit or incline shaft must be tested and monitored for carbon monoxide, methane and other potentially harmful gases. Along with naturally occurring gas, hazardous exhaust fumes can accumulate from the use of diesel equipment used in the opening. To reduce the danger, fresh air must be supplied using a fan and ventilation tubing.

Subsidence or Caving Features

- Subsidence and caving around an abandoned mine opening is always a concern; care must be taken when working and using vehicles or heavy equipment in the area. Before initiating work, the area should be carefully inspected for subsidence and caving features. Additional information on subsidence and caving concerns is available from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

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