

Mine Information
New Iberia, LA
May, 2013

General

The Winchester Mine is a single-level silver mine owned and operated by John (Big John) Winchester. Big John is also the mine manager and is doing business as Bitterroot Corporation, Inc. of Lake View, Idaho. Winchester is active and operating at full capacity. The mine currently works two 10-hour shifts 5 days per week with some maintenance on weekends as needed. The mine has to contend with local hunters and several species of wildlife that have taken refuge in the mine. Local hunting clubs are located less than 500 yards from the mine openings.

Mine Access

Mine access is provided by a 7 foot high 50-foot long decline and a 14-foot diameter concrete-lined shaft. The decline is known as the east decline and the shaft is known as the west shaft. The decline and all working areas of the mine are 7 feet high with the exception of a small area near the workings face in entry 2.

Explosives

Explosive materials are stored on the surface and transported underground for shots three days per week on the second shift.

Blasting

The company uses stick powder (dynamite) and delay electric and non-electric blasting caps. A typical round consists of thirty 10-foot holes with delayed charges which are tied in using detonation cord and electric caps. The round is then detonated from a safe distance with an electric blasting box.

Electricity

Electrical service to the mine is provided by a local electric company. The main disconnect for all power to the underground is located on the surface. The permissible mine fan and a permissible submersible pump are the only two pieces of electrical equipment underground. The controls for the mine fan are located at the fan. The controls for the submersible pump are located at the top of the west shaft.

Gas

The mine is a gas category VI mine (meaning that the existence of methane has never been established) but generally experiences some nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide resulting from blasting and the operation of diesel equipment. Other mines in the area have been known to produce similar gas in addition to infrequent sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide.

Phone

There is pager phone just outside the east portal and another pager phone is located near the production faces. Big John also has a pager phone in his office.

Geology and Ground Control

The Winchester Mine is located on the northern tip of the Bitterroot Mountain Range. Area mines have experienced rock bursts and ground falls. Ground control is maintained with timber sets and management has started experimenting with 4-foot split-set bolts. The mine slopes to the northwest. Pumps are used to control the water level on the northwest side of the mine.

Materials

All materials to work the problem are located underground or on the surface.

Mining Methods

Production crews drill and blast on the solid. Broken rock is delivered to the surface by an LHD that drives up the east decline and dumps on the ground.

Mine Maps

The mine maps were last updated on April 30, 2013.

Mine Equipment

The mine currently utilizes diesel face and transportation equipment. The mine fan and one submersible pump are the only electric equipment underground.

Ventilation

The mine is ventilated by a 400,000 cfm fan that is located just inside the entrance of the east decline. Ventilating air enters the mine via the west shaft and exits the mine via the west decline.

Water

Water flows into the mine constantly and quickly accumulates unless it pumped out. In the past, the water has been controllable by pumping it to the surface from a sump located under the west shaft where water from the mine tends to accumulate. A permissible electric submersible pump sends water to the surface from the sump.

Notification

All federal, state and local officials have been notified.

Backup Teams

Five other trained and fully equipped mine rescue teams are now on site.