

PADEP Issues Clarification for Blast Site Buffer Area in Noncoal Mining Operations Rules

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The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) issued a final rule correcting an inconsistency between the noncoal mining regulations in 25 Pa. Code ch. 77 and the storage, handling, and use of explosives regulations in 25 Pa. Code ch. 211. Noncoal mine operators are required to conduct blasting operations with explosives in compliance with these two chapters. Chapter 211 provides that when explosives are being loaded into drill holes ahead of a blast, the blast site plus a buffer zone of 50 feet around the blast site must be cleared of all persons and equipment except those necessary to prepare for the blast. Prior language at 25 Pa. Code § 77.564(g)(7), however, required “work within a radius of 50 feet of the blast area” to cease, which PADEP determined resulted in “a larger disruption of activities at a noncoal mine than is necessary to ensure mine worker and public safety, which was not intended and is not consistent with the same safety requirements in Chapter 211.” **Exec.**

Summary, Final-Omitted Rulemaking: Blast Site Clarification for Noncoal Mining Operations (Nov. 12, 2024). PADEP has revised section 77.564(g)(7) to resolve this inconsistency by replacing the term “blast area” (defined in 25 Pa. Code § 211.101 as “the area around the blast site that must be cleared and secured to prevent injury to persons and damage to property”) with “blast site” (defined in section 211.101 as “the specific location where the explosives charges are loaded into the blast holes”).

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