

**U.S. Department of Labor**  
**Mine Safety and Health Administration**  
Protecting Miners' Safety and Health Since 1978

**SAFETY ALERT**

**Highwall Stability**

Winter months can bring drastic changes to the stability of highwalls due to freezing and thawing. Water accumulates in crevices of rocks and then freezes. The ice acts as a wedge to expand the crevice opening. The ice thaws and the cycle begins again which in turn compromises the stability of the highwall that can result in highwall failure.



**BEST PRACTICES**

- Conduct examinations of the highwall before, during and after every rain, freeze, or thaw.
- Scale down loose hazardous material.
- Do not work under loose material for any reason.
- Pay special attention when working in the corners of box cuts.
- Increase the number of benches at each highwall to catch falling material.
- Use CB radios to keep equipment operators informed of highwall conditions.



**REMEMBER:**  
Safety depends upon what you  
DO or DON'T DO.