



Division of Mineral Mining

## Serious Injury Accident: Poisonous Snake Bite August 17, 2004

A 30-year-old mine contractor employee was seriously injured when a poisonous snake bit him at a Virginia sand and gravel mine. The victim, a fire protection equipment service technician with 3 years of experience, and a co-worker were inspecting a fire extinguisher in the mine's barge load-out switch building. The victim stated that he felt a stinging pain in his lower left leg immediately after he kicked a fire hose located on the floor of the building and observed two red marks above his left ankle. The victim initially thought it was an insect bite or sting because no snake was observed in or around the building and he wasn't experiencing any adverse reactions or symptoms. A short time later a mine employee observed a water moccasin (eastern cottonmouth) in a tree adjacent to the switch building. The victim was transported to an emergency room for medical treatment and observation, where he began to exhibit poisonous snakebite symptoms. He was hospitalized for two days where he received antivenin treatment.

The mine company was unable to provide documentation that site-specific hazard training was provided to the contract employees. A notice of violation (NOV) was issued to the mine operator for failure to follow their training plan for providing and documenting site-specific hazard training for these contract workers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Awareness information concerning the potential presence of poisonous snakes on mine property should be provided and stressed to all persons that work on a mine site, with particular emphasis on site-specific hazard training provided to contractors/others who are new or may only be on the mine site infrequently or periodically (45.1-161.292:73).

Accident/injury notification and reporting policies and procedures should be emphasized during hazard training. DMM requires that any accident that involves serious injury or death be reported by the quickest available means and that the accident scene be preserved (4VAC25-40-50).



Barge load-out building where snake-bite occurred. Note rolled up fire hose on floor where snake is thought to have been located.