

DMM Safety Alert: Recent Drownings At Abandoned Quarries

In early July 2014, two young men, one 18-years-old and the other 21-years-old, drowned in separate incidents while swimming in abandoned quarries in Virginia. Both victims were swimming with friends on privately owned properties when they drowned.

Water filled pits at active or abandoned mine sites often appear to be desirable swimming holes. However, the water can be deceptively deep and dangerously cold. Steep, slippery walls and unstable banks make exiting the pits extremely difficult. Every year, dozens of people, children and adults, are injured or killed while exploring or playing on mine property.

The use of active and abandoned mine sites for recreational activities such as swimming, riding ATV's, riding off-road bikes, and horseback riding will remain a serious issue going forward. Virginia's mineral mining laws and regulations require mine operators to take all reasonable precautions to guard against trespassing on active mine sites. Many of the abandoned mine sites in Virginia, however, are not regulated by Virginia's Division of Mineral Mining. Regardless, DMM recommends the following:

- Install fencing around hazardous areas.
- Install adequate warning signs that specify hazards.
- Install gates at all entrances to the mine and ensure they are closed and locked when there is little or no activity at the mine.
- Constantly monitor the mine property for signs of trespassing and take action if positive signs of trespassing are found.
- Have direct contact with your neighbors to discuss the dangers of unauthorized entry to the mine property.
- Utilize the federal Mine Safety & Health Administration's Stay Out Stay Alive program; <http://www.msha.gov/SOSA/SOSAhome.asp>

