



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

## *Virginia Department of Energy*

Washington Building / 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1100 Bank Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219-3638  
(804) 692-3200 FAX (804) 692-3237  
[www.energy.virginia.gov](http://www.energy.virginia.gov)

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Tarah Kesterson

(276) 356-3405

[tarah.kesterson@energy.virginia.gov](mailto:tarah.kesterson@energy.virginia.gov)

## **Investigation Complete After Mining Fatality at Lhoist North America #1 Mine in 2022**

**Charlottesville, VA –** The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) completed its investigation and finalized the fatality report into the death of 50-year-old Stuart “Ray” Moore at Lhoist North America’s #1 Mine in Giles County. Nearly one year ago, the excavator operator was engulfed in an uncontrolled slide of material resulting in his death.

The investigation found several factors contributed to the mining fatality. At the time of the accident, Moore was assisting in the removal of lime kiln dust, a mining by-product that was stored in portions of the underground mine years ago. The material was stored in several levels of the underground workings. Lime kiln dust stored on Level 4 was sent down to Level 7 for removal. The accident occurred when a large quantity of this material slid into Moore’s work area on Level 7 and buried the excavator he was operating. Water flowing into the mine combined with the lime kiln dust resulted in a slope failure in the area of the accident.

During the investigation, Virginia Energy discovered the material removal method did not ensure slope stability as required by regulation to prevent uncontrolled movement. Inadequate lighting in the work area contributed to the accident by making it difficult to observe the slope for any changes. In addition, Moore was not properly trained for the tasks he was performing.

The area where the accident occurred remains under a Closure Order issued by Virginia Energy on the day of the accident. That means no work can take place in that section of the mine until new plans are submitted and approved by the agency.

Several Notices of Violation were issued to Lhoist North America for defective equipment lighting, insufficient illumination of work areas, failure to ensure bank stability and for not properly training the employees. Additionally, the Certified Mine Foreman received a violation for not conducting a required workplace examination before the miners started work.

The fatality investigation was a joint effort between Virginia Energy and the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

Lhoist North America of Virginia's #1 mine is located along Big Stony Creek in Giles County. The mine produced limestone used to make quicklime and hydrated lime. The mine began production in the late 1940's. Lhoist North America assumed ownership in 1999. No stone production has taken place at the underground mine since early 2021, when the decision was made to begin mine closure operations.