

Placement of Coal Combustion By-Products (CCBs) at Coal Mine Sites: a Combined OSM/EPA Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Concerning CCB placement at coal mine sites, some environmental groups believe the use of these materials places an unacceptable risk on public health and environmental quality. This paper will attempt to place this debate into perspective based on the results of extensive investigations by the U.S. DOI, Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Currently, there are less than 2 percent of the CCBs that are produced in the U.S. that are placed back at less than 2 percent of the coal mine sites where they originated. Most of the uses to date have been extensively researched. This research indicates that the placement of these materials on the coal mine site usually results in a beneficial impact to human health and the environment when it is used to mitigate other existing potential mining hazards. It can also be used to improve the economics of mining when used as a non-toxic fill within the spoil area prior to grading and final reclamation. The results of investigations over the last decade by OSM and EPA would suggest that future placement activities should be evaluated adequately for inclusion in a beneficial use category specifically for coal mining applications.