11.9 Western Surface Coal Mining

11.9.1 General[1]

There are 12 major coal fields in the western states (excluding the Pacific Coast and Alaskan fields), as shown in Figure 11.9-1. Together, they account for more than 64 percent of the surface minable coal reserves in the United States.[2] The 12 coal fields have varying characteristics that may influence fugitive dust emission rates from mining operations including overburden and coal seam thicknesses and structure, mining equipment, operating procedures, terrain, vegetation, precipitation and surface moisture, wind speeds, and temperatures. The operations at a typical western surface mine are shown in Figure 11.9-2. All operations that involve movement of soil or coal, or exposure of erodible surfaces, generate some amount of fugitive dust.

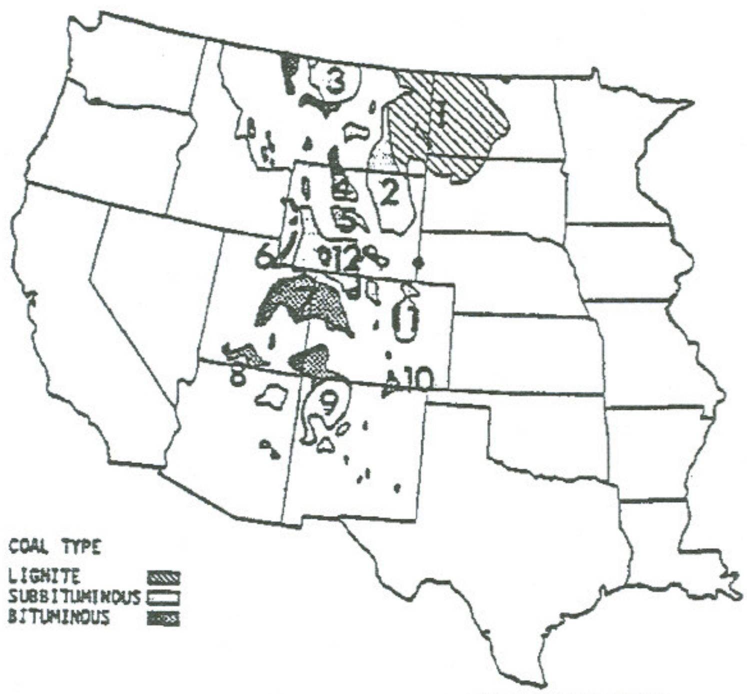
The initial operation is removal of topsoil and subsoil with large scrapers. The topsoil is carried by the scrapers to cover a previously mined and regraded area as part of the reclamation process or is placed in temporary stockpiles. The exposed overburden, the earth that is between the topsoil and the coal seam, is leveled, drilled, and blasted. Then the overburden material is removed down to the coal seam, usually by a dragline or a shovel and truck operation. It is placed in the adjacent mined cut, forming a spoils pile. The uncovered coal seam is then drilled and blasted. A shovel or front end loader loads the broken coal into haul trucks, and it is taken out of the pit along graded haul roads to the tipple, or truck dump. Raw coal sometimes may be dumped onto a temporary storage pile and later rehandled by a front end loader or bulldozer.

At the tipple, the coal is dumped into a hopper that feeds the primary crusher, then is conveyed through additional coal preparation equipment such as secondary crushers and screens to the storage area. If the mine has open storage piles, the crushed coal passes through a coal stacker onto the pile. The piles, usually worked by bulldozers, are subject to wind erosion. From the storage area, the coal is conveyed to a train loading facility and is put into rail cars. At a captive mine, coal will go from the storage pile to the power plant.

During mine reclamation, which proceeds continuously throughout the life of the mine, overburden spoils piles are smoothed and contoured by bulldozers. Topsoil is placed on the graded spoils, and the land is prepared for revegetation by furrowing, mulching, etc. From the time an area is disturbed until the new vegetation emerges, all disturbed areas are subject to wind erosion.

11.9.2 Emissions

Predictive emission factor equations for open dust sources at western surface coal mines are presented in Tables 11.9-1 and 11.9-2. Each equation applies to a single dust-generating activity, such as vehicle traffic on haul roads. The predictive equation explains much of the observed variance in emission factors by relating emissions to three sets of source parameters: (1) measures of source activity or energy expended (e. g., speed and weight of a vehicle traveling on an unpaved road); (2) properties of the material being disturbed (e. g., suspendable fines in the surface material of an unpaved road); and (3) climate (in this case, mean wind speed).



	Coal field	Strippable reserves (10^6 tons)
1	Fort Union	23,529
2	Powder River	56,727
3	North Central	All underground
4	Bighorn Basin	All underground
5	Wind River	3
6	Hams Fork	1,000
7	Uinta	308
8	Southwestern Utah	224
9	San Juan River	2,318
10	Raton Mesa	All underground
11	Denver	All underground
12	Green River	2,120

Figure 11.9-1. Coal fields of the western United States.[3]

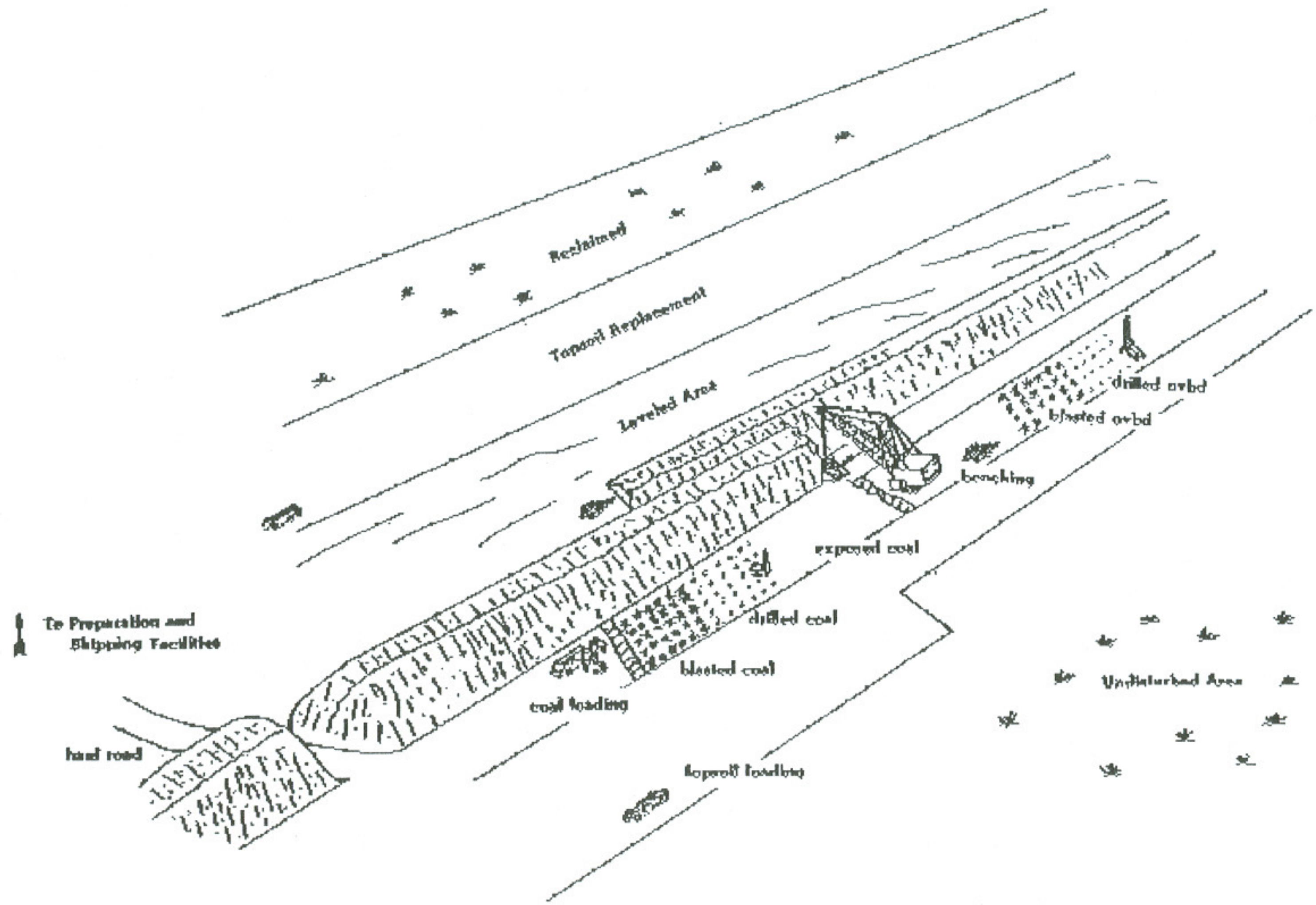


Figure 11.9-2. Operations at typical western surface coal mines.

The equations may be used to estimate particulate emissions generated per unit of source extent or activity (e. g., distance traveled by a haul truck or mass of material transferred). The equations were developed through field sampling of various western surface mine types and are thus applicable to any of the surface coal mines located in the western United States.

In Tables 11.9-1 and 11.9-2, the assigned quality ratings apply within the ranges of source conditions that were tested in developing the equations given in Table 11.9-3. However, the equations should be derated 1 letter value (e. g., A to B) if applied to eastern surface coal mines.

In using the equations to estimate emissions from sources found in a specific western surface mine, it is necessary that reliable values for correction parameters be determined for the specific sources of interest if the assigned quality ratings of the equations are to be applicable. For example, actual silt content of coal or overburden measured at a facility should be used instead of estimated values. In the event that site-specific values for correction parameters cannot be obtained, the appropriate geometric mean values from Table 11.9-3 may be used, but the assigned quality rating of each emission factor equation should be reduced by 1 level (e. g., A to B).

Emission factors for open dust sources not covered in Table 11.9-3 are in Table 11.9-4. These factors were determined through source testing at various western coal mines.

The factors in Table 11.9-4 for mine locations I through V were developed for specific geographical areas. Tables 11.9-5 and 11.9-6 present characteristics of each of these mines (areas). A "mine-specific" emission factor should be used only if the characteristics of the mine for which an emissions estimate is needed are very similar to those of the mine for which the emission factor was developed. The other (nonspecific) emission factors were developed at a variety of mine types and thus are applicable to any western surface coal mine.

As an alternative to the single valued emission factors given in Table 11.9-4 for train or truck loading and for truck or scraper unloading, two empirically derived emission factor equations are presented in Section 13.2.4 of this document. Each equation was developed for a source operation (i. e., batch drop and continuous drop, respectively) comprising a single dust-generating mechanism that crosses industry lines.

Because the predictive equations allow emission factor adjustment to specific source conditions, the equations should be used in place of the single-valued factors in Table 11.9-4 for the sources identified above, if emission estimates for a specific western surface coal mine are needed. However, the generally higher quality ratings assigned to the equations are applicable only if: (1) reliable values of correction parameters have been determined for the specific sources of interest, and (2) the correction parameter values lie within the ranges tested in developing the equations. Caution must be exercised so that only the unbound (sorbed) moisture (i. e., not any bound moisture) is used in determining the moisture content for input to the Chapter 13 equations.

Table 11.9-1 (English Units). EMISSION FACTOR EQUATIONS FOR UNCONTROLLED OPEN DUST SOURCES AT WESTERN SURFACE COAL MINES[a]

Operation	Material	Emissions By Particle Size Range (Aerodynamic Diameter)[b,c]				Units	EMISSION FACTOR RATING
		Emission Factor Equations		Scaling Factors			
		TSP ≤30 µm	≤15 µm	≤10 µm[d]	≤2.5 µm/TSP[e]		
Blasting[f]	Coal or overburden	$0.000014(A)^{1.5}$	ND	0.52[e]	0.03	lb/blast	C_DD
Truck loading	Coal	$\frac{1.16}{(M)^{1.2}}$	$\frac{0.119}{(M)^{0.9}}$	0.75	0.019	lb/ton	BBCC
Bulldozing	Coal	$\frac{78.4\ (s)^{1.2}}{(M)^{1.3}}$	$\frac{18.6\ (s)^{1.5}}{(M)^{1.4}}$	0.75	0.022	lb/hr	CCDD
	Overburden	$\frac{5.7\ (s)^{1.2}}{(M)^{1.3}}$	$\frac{1.0\ (s)^{1.5}}{(M)^{1.4}}$	0.75	0.105	lb/hr	BCDD
Dragline	Overburden	$\frac{0.0021\ (d)^{1.1}}{(M)^{0.3}}$	$\frac{0.0021\ (d)^{0.7}}{(M)^{0.3}}$	0.75	0.017	lb/yd^3	BCDD
Vehicle traffic[g]							
Grading		$0.040\ (S)^{2.5}$	$0.051\ (S)^{2.0}$	0.60	0.031	lb/VMT	CCDD
Active storage pile[h] (wind erosion and maintenance)	Coal	0.72 u	ND	ND	ND	$\frac{lb}{(acre)(hr)}$	C[i]___

[a] Reference 1, except as noted. VMT = vehicle miles traveled. ND = no data. Quality ratings coded where "Q, X, Y, Z" are ratings for ≤30 µm, ≤15 µm, ≤10 µm, and ≤2.5 µm, respectively. See also note below.

[b] Particulate matter less than or equal to 30 µm in aerodynamic diameter is sometimes termed "suspendable particulate" and is often used as a surrogate for TSP (total suspended particulate). TSP denotes what is measured by a standard high volume sampler (see Section 13.2).

[c] Symbols for equations:

- A = horizontal area (ft^2), with blasting depth ≤ 70 ft. Not for vertical face of a bench.
- M = material moisture content (%)
- s = material silt content (%)
- u = wind speed (mph)
- d = drop height (ft)
- W = mean vehicle weight (tons)
- S = mean vehicle speed (mph)
- w = mean number of wheels

Table 11.9-1 (cont.).

[d] Multiply the $\leq$ 15-µm equation by this fraction to determine emissions, except as noted.
[e] Multiply the TSP predictive equation by this fraction to determine emissions.
[f] Blasting factor taken from a reexamination of field test data reported in Reference 1. See Reference 4.
[g] To estimate emissions from traffic on unpaved surfaces by vehicles such as haul trucks, light-to-medium duty vehicles, or scrapers in the travel mode, see the unpaved road emission factor equation in AP-42 Section 13.2.2.
[h] Coal storage pile factor taken from Reference 5. To estimate emissions on a shorter time scale (e. g., worst-case day), see the procedure presented in Section 13.2.5.
[i] Rating applicable to mine types I, II, and IV (see Tables 11.9-5 and 11.9-6).

Note: Section 234 of the Clean Air Act of 1990 required EPA to review and revise the emission factors in this Section (and models used to evaluate ambient air quality impact), to ensure that they did not overestimate emissions from western surface coal mines. Due to resource and technical limitations, the haul road emission factors were isolated to receive the most attention during these studies, as the largest contributor to emissions. Resultant model evaluation with revised emission factors have improved model prediction for total suspended particulate (TSP); however, there is still a tendency for overprediction of particulate matter impact for PM-10, for as yet undetermined causes, prompting the Agency to make a policy decision not to use them for regulatory applications to these sources. However, the technical consideration exists that no better alternative data are currently available and the information should be made known. Users should accordingly use these factors with caution and awareness of their likely limitations.