

**FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION**

1331 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., N.W., SUITE 520N  
WASHINGTON, DC 20004-1710

**MAR 05 2018**

SECRETARY OF LABOR,  
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH  
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)

v.

TABLE ROCK ASPHALT  
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY,

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:  
:  
: Docket No. CENT 2017-296  
: A.C. No. 23-01836-428136  
:  
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BEFORE: Althen, Acting Chairman; Jordan, Young, and Cohen, Commissioners

**ORDER**

BY THE COMMISSION:

This matter arises under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et seq. (2012) (“Mine Act”). On April 25, 2017, the Commission received from Table Rock Asphalt Construction Company (“Table Rock”) a motion seeking to reopen a penalty assessment that had become a final order of the Commission pursuant to section 105(a) of the Mine Act, 30 U.S.C. § 815(a).

Under section, an operator who wishes to contest a proposed penalty must notify the Secretary of Labor no later than 30 days after receiving the proposed penalty assessment. If the operator fails to notify the Secretary, the proposed penalty assessment is deemed a final order of the Commission. 30 U.S.C. § 815(a).

We have held, however, that in appropriate circumstances we possess jurisdiction to reopen uncontested assessments that have become final Commission orders under section 105(a). *Jim Walter Res., Inc.*, 15 FMSHRC 782, 786-89 (May 1993) (“*JWR*”). In evaluating requests to reopen final orders, the Commission has found guidance in Rule 60(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, under which the Commission may relieve a party from a final order of the Commission on the basis of mistake, inadvertence, excusable neglect, or other reason justifying relief. *See* 29 C.F.R. § 2700.1(b) (“the Commission and its Judges shall be guided so far as practicable by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure”); *JWR*, 15 FMSHRC at 787. We have also observed that default is a harsh remedy and that, if the defaulting party can make a showing of good cause for a failure to timely respond, the case may be reopened and appropriate proceedings on the merits permitted. *See Coal Prep. Servs., Inc.*, 17 FMSHRC 1529, 1530 (Sept. 1995).

Records of the Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration ("MSHA") indicate that the proposed assessment was delivered on January 18, 2017, and became a final order of the Commission on February 17, 2017. Table Rock asserts that that it mailed a notice of contest regarding the citation at issue here to MSHA's payment processing office in St. Louis instead of to the MSHA office in Arlington, VA. The notice was mistakenly included with the payment for a citation the operator did not intend to contest. Table Rock provided documents showing that MSHA received its documents and that the payment for the uncontested citation cleared on February 14, 2017. Table Rock has not filed any other motions to reopen with the Commission in the last two years and responded immediately upon discovering its mistake. The Secretary does not oppose the request to reopen.

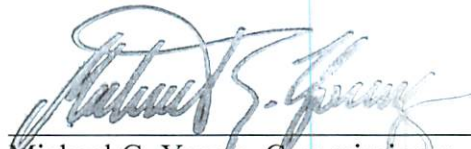
Having reviewed Table Rock's request and the Secretary's response, we find that the operator inadvertently mailed the contest notice to the wrong address. In the interest of justice, we hereby reopen this matter and remand it to the Chief Administrative Law Judge for further proceedings pursuant to the Mine Act and the Commission's Procedural Rules, 29 C.F.R. Part 2700. Accordingly, consistent with Rule 28, the Secretary shall file a petition for assessment of penalty within 45 days of the date of this order. *See* 29 C.F.R. § 2700.28.



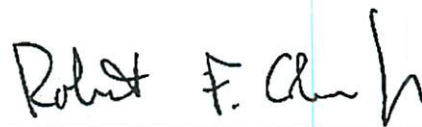
William I. Althen, Acting Chairman



Mary Lu Jordan, Commissioner



Michael G. Young, Commissioner



Robert F. Cohen, Jr., Commissioner

Distribution:

Joe Compton  
Safety Officer  
Table Rock Asphalt Construction Company  
P.O. Box 1165  
Branson, MO 65615

Ali Beydoun, Esq.  
Office of the Solicitor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
201 12th St. South, Suite 401  
Arlington, VA 22202-5450

Chief Administrative Law Judge Robert J. Lesnick  
Federal Mine Safety & Health Review Commission  
1331 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Suite 520N  
Washington, DC 20004-1710

Melanie Garris  
Office of Civil Penalty Compliance  
Mine Safety and Health Administration  
U.S. Department of Labor  
201 12th St. South, Suite 500  
Arlington, VA 22202-5450