

FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION

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August 30, 2023

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)	:	Docket No. WEST 2023-0100
	:	A.C. No. 45-02295-563293
v.	:	
	:	
CASCADE CONCRETE PRODUCTS	:	
COMPANY, INC.	:	

BEFORE: Jordan, Chair; Althen, Rajkovich, and Baker, 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. (2018) (“Mine Act”). On January 12, 2023, the Commission received from Cascade Concrete Products Company, Inc. (“Cascade”) 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 105(a) of the Mine Act, 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 September 19, 2022, and became a final order of the Commission on October 19, 2022. Cascade contends that it sent its notice of contest of three citations to MSHA’s penalty collections office in St. Louis along with the payment of the uncontested citations. The Secretary does not oppose the request to reopen but notes that notices of contest should be mailed to MSHA’s Civil Penalty Compliance Office in Arlington, Virginia, while payments should be sent to MSHA’s collection office in St. Louis. The Secretary urges the operator to take steps to ensure that future penalty contests are timely filed.

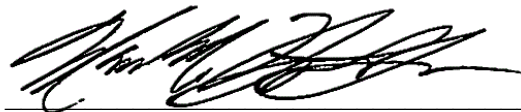
Having reviewed Cascade’s request and the Secretary’s response, we find that the failure to properly file the notice of contest was the result of inadvertent administrative error. We urge the operator to take steps to ensure that such errors do not recur. Nevertheless, in the interest of justice, we 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.



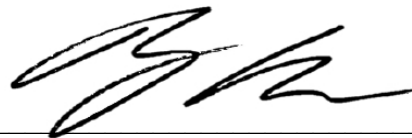
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William I. Althen, Commissioner



Marco M. Rajkovich, Jr., Commissioner



Timothy J. Baker, Commissioner

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