

**FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION**

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

**August 30, 2024**

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)	:	
	:	Docket No. WEST 2023-0382
v.	:	A.C. No. 26-01916-577178
	:	
ROBINSON NEVADA MINING	:	
COMPANY	:	

BEFORE: Jordan, Chair; Althen, Rajkovich, Baker, and Marvit, 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 September 7, 2023, the Commission received from Robinson Nevada Mining Company (“Robinson”) 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).

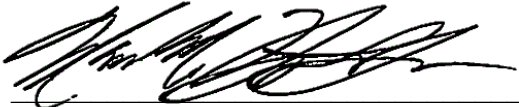
We have held, however, that in appropriate circumstances, we possess jurisdiction to reopen uncontested assessments that have become final Commission orders under section 105(a). *Jim Walter Res., Inc.*, 15 FMSHRC 782, 786-89 (May 1993) (“*JWR*”). In evaluating requests to reopen final orders, the Commission 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 May 22, 2023, and became a final order of the Commission on June 21, 2023. Robinson asserts that it never received the proposed assessment because of a mistake from the U.S Post Office. According to the operator, it received a delinquency notice from MSHA on August 23, 2023. On August 24, 2023, it contacted MSHA Assessments to inquire about the discrepancy of the outstanding balance due to its belief that it never received the proposed assessment. MSHA Assessments informed Robinson that the proposed assessment had been delivered and signed for on May 22, 2023, at 10:01 AM by “C SMITH” in Ely, Nevada. The operator was also informed that this case was delinquent and could not be contested. Robinson states in its motion that it does not have any “C SMITH” employee, and that the proposed assessment was not received by the mine. The Secretary does not oppose the request to reopen, but urges the operator to take steps to ensure that future penalty contests are timely filed.

Having reviewed Robinson’s request and the Secretary’s response, we find that an inadvertent mistake occurred with an unknown person signing for the assessment. 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.

  
Mary Lu Jordan, Chair

  
William I. Althen, Commissioner

  
Marco M. Rajkovich, Jr., Commissioner

  
Timothy J. Baker, Commissioner

  
Moshe Z. Marvit, Commissioner

Distribution:

Genevieve Merrill  
Coordinator, Safety and Health Department  
Robinson Nevada Mining Company  
4232 W. White Pine County Rd. 44  
Ruth, NV 89319  
genevieve.merrill@us.kghm.com

April Nelson, Esq.  
Associate Solicitor  
Office of the Solicitor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Division of Mine Safety and Health  
201 12th Street South, Suite 401  
Arlington, VA 22202  
Nelson.April@dol.gov

Emily Toler Scott, Esq.  
Counsel for Appellate Litigation  
Office of the Solicitor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Division of Mine Safety and Health  
201 12th Street South, Suite 401  
Arlington, VA 22202  
scott.emily.t@dol.gov

Melanie Garris  
USDOL/MSHA, OAASEI/CPCO  
201 12th Street South, Suite 401  
Arlington, VA 22202  
Garris.Melanie@DOL.GOV

Chief Administrative Law Judge Glynn F. Voisin  
Federal Mine Safety Health Review Commission  
Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 520N  
Washington, DC 20004-1710  
GVoisin@fmshrc.gov