



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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Virginia Energy Working to Extinguish Second Coal Refuse Fire in Chesterfield County

Coal Refuse Left from Mining That Occurred in the late 1870's

Chesterfield, Va. – Crews began work today to extinguish a fire at the site of a coal refuse pile in the Winterpock community of Chesterfield County.

In March, the Virginia Department of Energy's (Virginia Energy) Abandoned Mine Land team declared an emergency to quickly extinguish a fire at the same coal refuse pile. The fire was extinguished on March 24th and that area of the pile was capped with stone to prevent further burning.

The agency took action once notified last week that a second fire had ignited in a separate section of the coal refuse pile. Virginia Energy hired WM3 Enterprises, LLC to put out the fire and reclaim the area to avoid future ignitions. The fire should be out by the end of this week. It will take up to three weeks to complete the project.

Contractors will remove the burning material from the pile and cool it with water. Residents may notice steam coming from the site during this time that could easily be confused with an increase in smoke. After the material is cooled to a safe temperature it will be mixed with rock and layered back into the pile to prevent further ignition. This area will also be capped with crushed stone. The project is estimated to cost \$170,000.

This coal refuse pile is a result of mining that occurred in the region by Bright Hope Coal Company that was operational in 1877. This specific site was the Beaver Slope Mine. At the time, technology was not available to better separate coal from rock during the mining process. Environmental regulations were also not in place to properly reclaim this material so the spoil that resulted from mining was left in place.

[The Richmond coal basin was an active mining community in the 1700's and 1800's.](#) Several features from that mining still remain in the area. Virginia Energy asks that if you see something you think is associated with historic coal mining to [please contact our agency.](#) We also URGE the public to please stay out of the areas because they can [pose a danger.](#)

[Virginia Energy's Abandoned AML program](#) was created in 1981 and is federally funded to reclaim issues left behind by coal mining that occurred before 1977. Funding has been limited in the past meaning only the highest priority problems were able to be reclaimed. The projects were a safety threat to residents or had a significant negative environmental impact. The federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide Virginia Energy with a substantial increase in funding to do more projects, such as reclaiming coal refuse piles, beginning this spring.

Members of the media are asked to please not go to the site. Photos and videos will be provided upon request.