

Richard Worsham, heavy equipment operator, Dolet Hills Lignite Mine, Mansfield, La

Tell us about your job at Dolet Hills and how long you have worked there.

My title at Dolet Hills Lignite Co. is a "Pumper." This entails keeping the coal as clean as possible. I operate heavy equipment such as dozers to clean the coal, track hoes to dig ditches and things of that nature. Once the ditch is dug, pumps are set out to keep the water out of the pit. I have been with Dolet Hills Lignite Co. for 20 years as of August, 2009. I began as a pumper, then was transferred to coal hauling and then back to being a pumper.

During your time at AEP what has changed in terms of safety and the work environment?

AEP has safety classes that are mandatory and has provided these classes on a yearly basis to keep the up-to-date safety rules and regulations knowledgeable to us as well as continually servicing the equipment to make sure that it is safe for their employees. AEP also provides safety gear for all employees.

As a veteran AEP employee, how would you describe AEP's attitude toward safety?

I believe AEP's attitude toward safety is first and foremost. Safety meetings are routinely scheduled and mandatory attendance is required. I believe AEP strives to keep the work place and its employees in a safe work environment by providing the safety classes and their willingness to discuss any issues should such arise. In fact, they encourage us to come to them with any issues or concerns.

What should AEP be doing differently as it works toward zero harm and zero fatalities?

I believe they strive towards safety first and they do everything possible to make our work place safe. I don't know of anything extra they could be doing to make our work place safer.

How did the employee fatality in 2009 affect you? How did it affect your job?

How do you think it affected your co-workers?

The fatality affected me by reminding me an accident can happen at any given time to anyone. As for my job, it made me change my way of thinking and to try to become more aware of my surroundings. As for my co-workers I believe they, too, realized that an accident can happen to anyone of us.

How have changes in the industry affected your job — either in regulations or company policies/procedures?

I cannot say that my job has been affected; my attitude is to stay focused at all times; be aware of my surroundings on, and off the job, not only for myself but my co-workers as well.

Do you think AEP takes safety seriously enough?

Yes, I cannot repeat enough, I believe AEP strives for safety and always has.

What is the single best thing that AEP can do to improve the safety of its employees?

To me AEP makes safety #1. It's hard to improve something that has worked for many years.

