

Real Time Personal Respirable Dust and Diesel Particulate Matter Monitoring in Mines

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Abstract An overview is given of two new developments in mine atmospheric monitoring. A new personal respirable dust monitor (PDM) that gives realtime readings is discussed. The unit is mounted within the miner's cap lamp battery and internally measures the true particle mass of dust collected on its filter. Samples are available for later mineralogical analysis and results do not exhibit the same sensitivity to water spray as optically based measurement approaches. The technique achieves microgram – level mass resolution even in the hostile mine environment and reports dust loading data on a continuous basis. The monitor has been evaluated under an Australian Coal Association Research Program (ACARP) grant and is being adopted for statutory mine respirable dust determinations in the US. It has particular application for determining high source locations and efficiency of engineering means of suppression and other approaches to handling the problem. It has been recognised that the PDM's unique measurement approach has application to allow real time atmospheric Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM) monitoring. The industry has no real time atmospheric DPM monitor at present. Recent surveys in New South Wales and Queensland continue to show significant numbers of miners continue to face full shift DPM exposures in excess of internationally accepted levels. Real time DPM monitoring will allow the industry to pin – point high exposure zones such as those encountered in coal longwall face moves, where a number of trucks, loaders, coal ram cars work or in areas of poor ventilation. Pinpointing of high DPM concentration zones will allow efficient modification of work practices to reduce underground miners exposure. Some outcome of a currently funded ACARP project in this area will be discussed.

Mine ventilation is a critical aspect of all underground mines. Mining technological developments and mining environment challenges are necessitating new approaches. This paper principally examines two areas of new development. The research developments discussed have been supported by Australian Coal Association Research Program grants and substantial input from the United States agency, the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety. They are stories in practical application and have received considerable additional industry financial support, mine site testing and evaluation assistance.

1 Monitoring of Respirable Dust

A new personal respirable dust monitor (PDM) developed by the company Rupprecht and Patashnick (now Thermo Fisher Scientific) in the US under a pro-

ject funded by the National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH) has generated promising results in underground coal mine testing performed in the US recently (Volkwein et al, 2004a and 2004b). Results from an ACARP funded study undertaken to evaluate this new realtime dust monitor for personal respirable dust evaluation particularly in engineering studies have been described by Gillies, 2005 and Gillies and Wu, 2006.

This paper describes some results from mine studies that have been undertaken using the real – time PDM. The technology that forms the heart of the PDM, the TEOM(r) system, is unique in its ability to collect suspended particles on a filter while simultaneously determining the accumulated mass. The monitor internally measures the true particle mass collected on its filter and results do not exhibit the same sensitivity to

water spray as optically based measurement approaches. The technique reports dust loading data on a continuous basis and miners and mine operators have the ability to view short term dust levels. It is believed to be the first personal dust monitor instrument that reliably delivers a near – real – time reading.

The instrument has potential to be used as an engineering tool to evaluate the effectiveness of dust control strategies. Being a personal dust monitor, the instrument measures the airborne dust from the breathing zone region and so has many advantages over instruments that measure from a fixed – point location. It can quickly highlight high dust situations and allow the situation to be corrected. The underground workplace in both continuous miner and longwall face environments has varying respirable dust conditions due to aspects such as ventilation conditions and air velocity, shearer activity and design, chock movement, armoured face conveyor movement, manning position, face time of individual personnel, outbye conditions and dust levels in intake air and measurement instrument behaviour. A study has evaluated the instrument as an engineering tool that can assess the effectiveness of a single change to improve dust levels in sufficiently short a time that

other aspects have not changed.

The PDM is a respirable dust sampler and a gravimetric equivalent analysis instrument that is part of a belt – worn mine cap lamp battery. The main components of the device include a cap lamp and sample inlet located on the end of an umbilical cable, a belt – mounted enclosure containing the respirable dust cyclone, sampling, and mass measurement system, and a charging and communication module used to transmit data between the monitor and a PC while charging its lithium ion batteries for the next shift. Figure 1 illustrates the unit.

The 2007 US Federal legislative program includes responses to strengthen mine emergency response plans and the Mine Safety and Health Administration's ability to investigate accidents, enforce health and safety regulations, strengthen rescue, recovery and accident investigation practices and update the 35 year old respirable dust standard that is not effectively preventing today's miners from developing black lung disease. Part of this move will require miners be equipped with the new PDMs developed and certified by NIOSH and authorise miners to adjust their activities to avoid respirable dust overexposure.

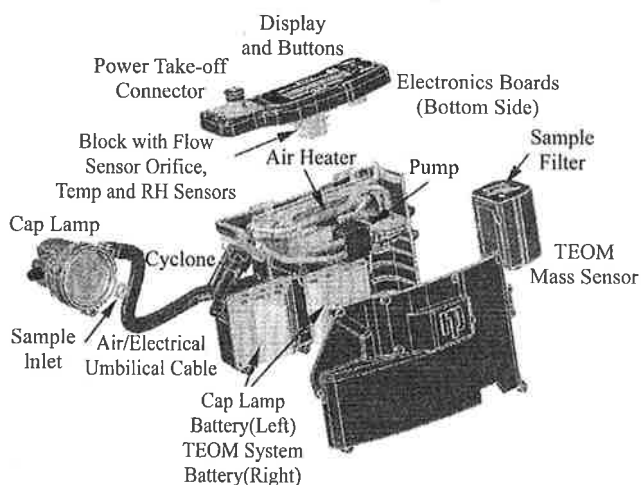


Fig. 1 Major components of the PDM.

Tests were undertaken at a development face to monitor the dust exposure levels of various equipment operators. The PDM units can give variable time period rolling averages of dust concentration and for engineering evaluation purposes it is better to use shorter time rolling average dust concentration data as the quicker response to monitored changes shows more significant dust concentration variations. As shown in Figure 2

PDM units were put on continuous miner (CM), bolt-er and shuttle car (SC) operators in tests commencing at 20: 15. The face crew was replaced at 21: 10 pm by the second crew as the first crews were released for crib break. The results of the PDM tests are shown in Figure 2 as 15 minute average levels.

During the tests an unplanned event took place. The end cap of ventilation ducting in an inactive

adjacent face of the development section was sucked in and caused reduction in the ventilation air quantity available to the face being monitored from $7.5 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ to $4.3 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$. This caused a significant loss of suction head in the ventilation ducting at the face resulting in the dust-laden air at the face billowing back onto operators. All PDMs worn by the three operators have registered sharp rises in dust level. In fact this unplanned event was first noticed by one of the operators who had checked the real time display on the PDM he was wearing at the time. The failure of the end cap piece in the inactive face was soon rectified and the normal air flow re-established. Readings from all PDMs show the immediate reduction in duct level upon rectification.

The longwall panel has a number of potential dust

sources. A detailed survey can assist in evaluating the contribution of each component source, show the contribution from a number of major sources and the cumulative dust level faced by a miner at different points throughout the panel. In undertaking Longwall studies it is important to maintain consistency with measurement conditions along the face activities. Figure 3 indicates studies undertaken over the majority of a shift with two PDM units. The shearer position data was downloaded from the mine monitoring system. A cutting sequence took on average slightly less than an hour. It can be seen in the figure that seven cutting cycles occurred across the seven hour study time period with good regularity. One early period of 45 minutes of cutting was lost to belt structure removal.

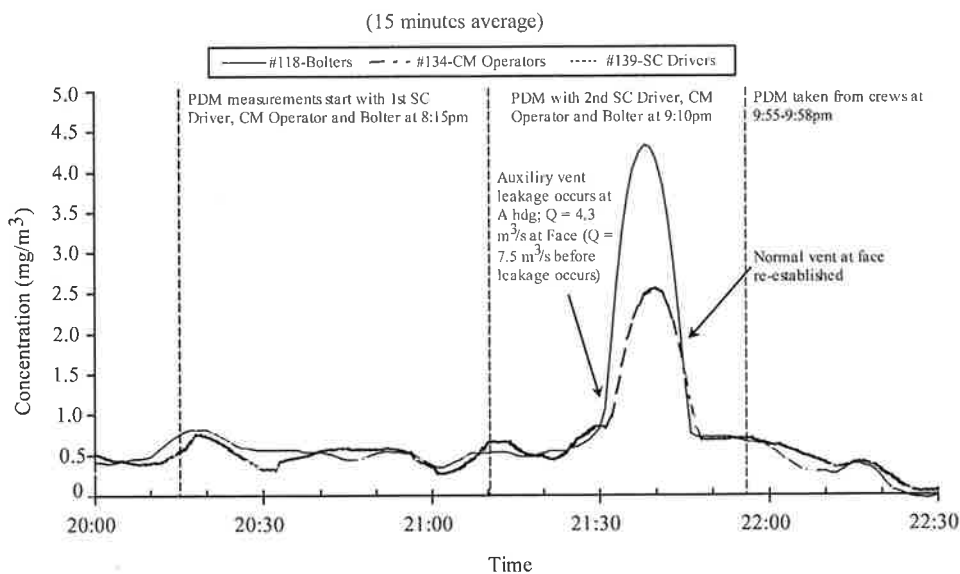


Fig. 2 Development Face PDM results.

Measurements were carried out at longwall face positions monitoring the dust levels experienced by shearer and chock operators in a unidirectional mining cutting sequence. Results of these tests are shown in Figure 4 and 5 for various operator position combinations.

Figure 4 illustrates dust exposure at the MG Shearer and TG Chock operator positions as the cutting sequence moves along the LW face. This shows under Unidirectional cutting that during the TG to MG cutting sequence operators are advancing chocks downstream of the shearer and so experience relatively high dust exposures.

After snaking at the MG end chock operators fol-

lowing the shearer are upstream of the unit and so experience relatively lower dust exposures. The results indicate that the MG shearer operator was subjected to relatively high dust level exposure when cutting from MG to TG. When cutting from TG to MG the dust level experienced by the MG shearer operator was much lower.

Figure 5 examines variation of dust make with shearer advance rates. Two TG to MG cuts were examined; one taking over 42 minutes for the cut and one only taking 26 minutes. It is clear that although there is virtually the same dust make in the two cuts at the same shearer position the dust exposure of average $1.72 \text{ mg}/\text{m}^3$ for the faster cut is greater than for the slower at $1.03 \text{ mg}/\text{m}^3$.

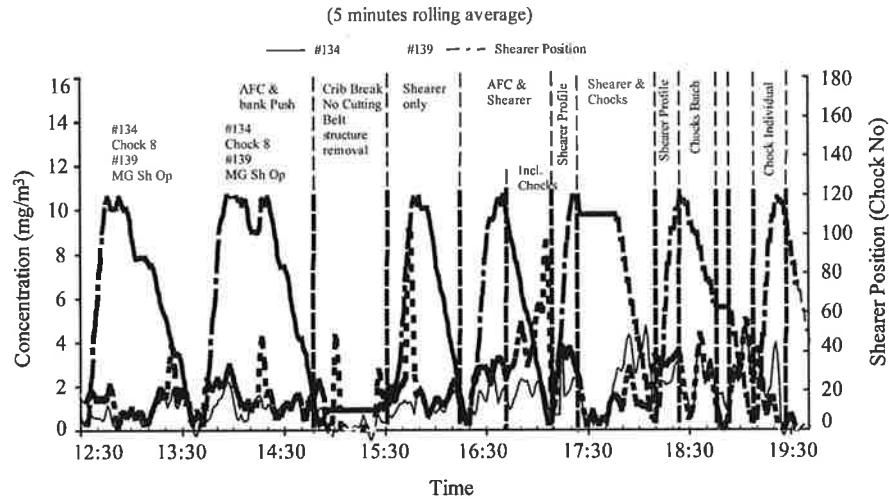


Fig. 3 LW Face Dust Surveys Shearer Position and dust monitored points and Levels

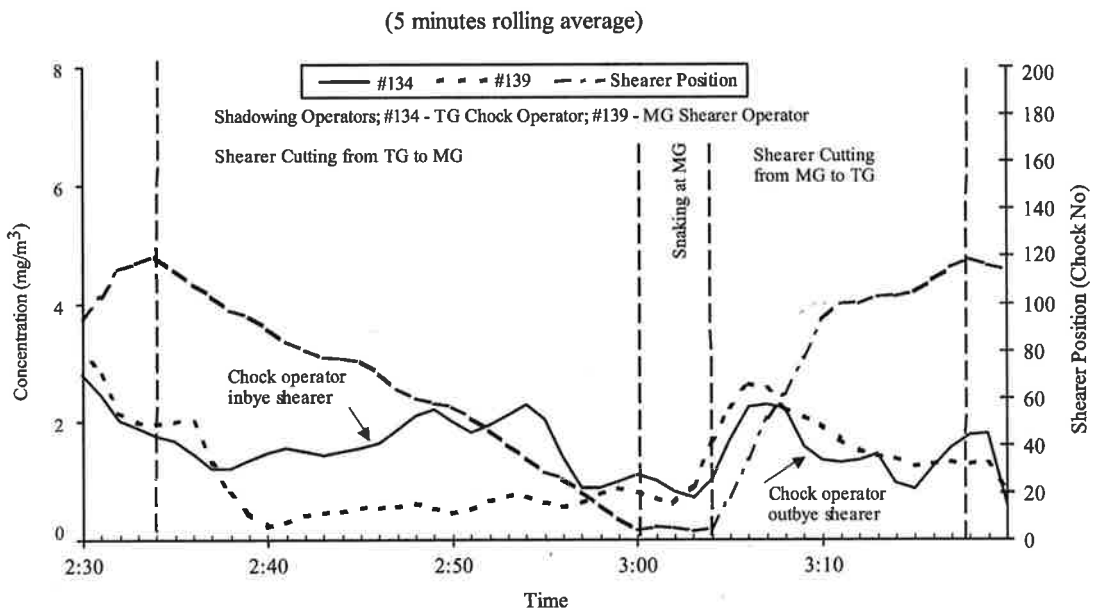


Fig. 4 Relative dust make experienced by MG shearer and TG Chock operators

Based on the tests conducted, it is concluded that the PDM has demonstrated its potential use as an engineering tool to locate and assess various sources of dust during normal mining operations. The principles and concepts used to identify and fix some of the higher dust levels are generally common sense. However, to make the most effective use of this information, training and experience in using this type of technology will be very important. Experience with the data from the unit will help miners gain confidence to use the information to maintain reduced or safe dust levels during mining.

2 Monitoring of Diesel Particulate Matter

Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM) issues are very high profile currently in both Australian coal and metal mines and Australian states are generally moving to acknowledge and to broadly follow US 2008 final metal mine regulation limits of 0.2 mg/m^3 submicron particulate matter, 0.16 mg/m^3 total carbon particulate and 0.1 mg/m^3 elemental carbon particulate. The real time DPM monitor is being developed on the base of the successful PDM unit. The objectives of this part of the ACARP study is to undertake an underground series of tests to establish the robustness and reliability of the

new approach. Thermo Fisher Scientific, has undertaken structural changes to the PDM to convert it to a DPM real time monitoring underground instrument, the D - PDM. The Pennsylvania Pittsburgh Research Laboratories of NIOSH (the group that originally contracted for the PDM development) has undertaken laboratory "calibration or verification" testing. They have an accredited diesel exhaust laboratory and international expertise in this area. A phase of Australian mine robust-

ness and engineering testing is currently being undertaken to ensure the instrument can effectively assist mine management to handle this health issue. Tests are being undertaken at points of expected high atmospheric DPM such as during Longwall face moves, Development RAM car, Eimco and PJB usages. The outcome of the project will give the industry access to an enhanced tool for understanding the mine atmosphere in the presence of DPM.

(5 minutes rolling average)

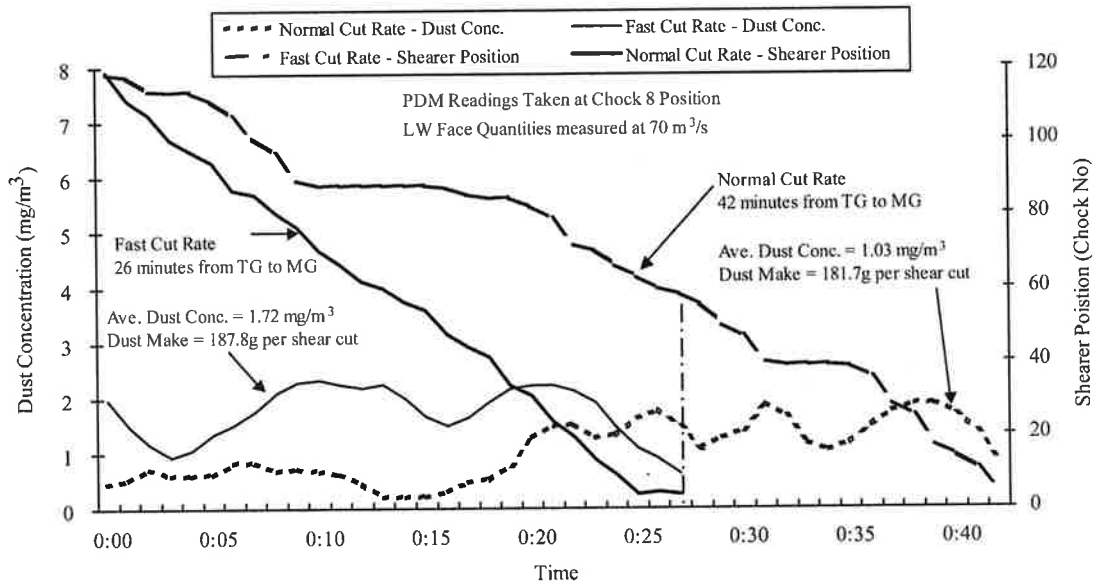


Fig. 5 Variation of dust make with shearer advance rates

The phase of Australian mine testing commenced in September 2006. The Mine 1 tests were undertaken in working sections with use of diesel powered Ram cars over four days. The results from these limited tests qualitatively indicated that the D - PDM did respond to observed diesel activity in fairly low concentration ranges. 10 minute averaging periods appeared to allow a balance between ability to recognise individual diesel source vehicle movements and measurement accuracy. Some readings were taken with instruments mounted on a vehicle with positive results. There had been concern that vehicle vibrations may detrimentally affect monitor accuracy. Mine 2 testing was undertaken in December 2006. These exercises monitored various ventilation arrangements of longwall face move during chock transport to the installation roadway. Mine atmosphere DPM concentrations were in general higher than in earlier mine tests. Higher DPM concentrations allowed relatively greater accuracy in monitoring concentra-

tions. Results were in most cases recorded as a rolling 10 minute average and so more reflected activity changes. It was straight forward to analyse results for arrival and departure times of diesel machines at the face. Interpretation could be made on whether the machine travelled down gate roads either with a speed faster than the air velocity (and so with high exhaust concentrations trailing) or with a speed slower than the air velocity (and so with high exhaust concentrations in advance).

Figure 6 shows Longwall ventilation arrangement for tests. The positions of the D - PDM monitors #106 and #108 are shown; #106 in the face installation road and #108 in a cut through ventilating the face. On this test day loaded chock carriers travelled in along the MG and out through TG. About 50m³/s ventilation was measured in the MG and about 35m³/s in the TG. There was a back borehole upcasting some air. Four chock carriers were available and a total of 10

chocks were moved. Results from monitor #108 as shown in Figure 7 clearly demonstrated the ability of the D - PDM units to detect variations of DPM levels in the atmosphere as the Chock carriers travel in from MG and out from TG of the LW face. Significant submicron DPM readings were recorded due to the large number

(10) of chocks that were transported during the shift. Levels of DPM recorded in the second half of the shift were higher. The condition of the back road had become poor and some chock carriers were slower and having difficulty travelling through.

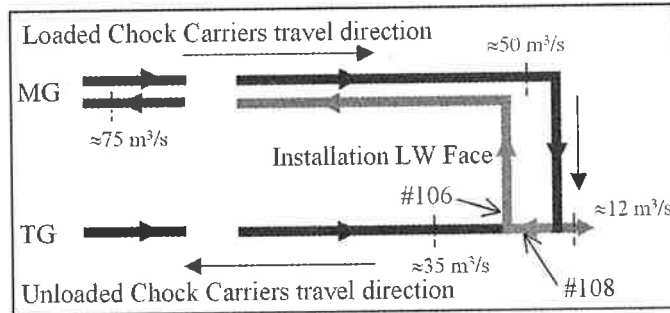


Fig. 6 Longwall ventilation – chock carriers travel in on MG and out on TG.

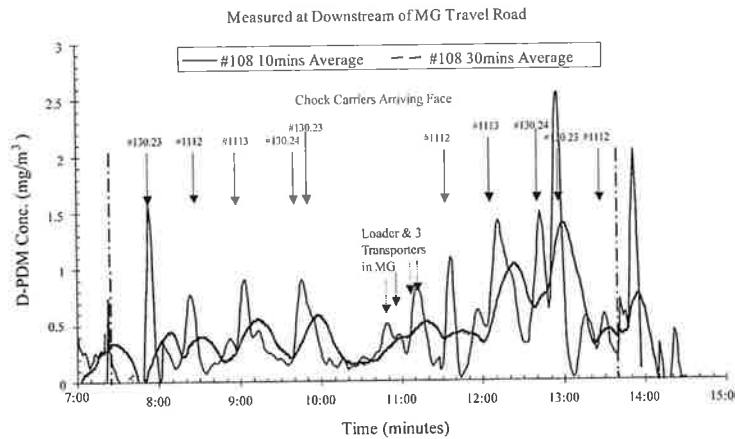


Fig. 7 Observations on results at monitor 108 fixed location.

Figure 8 examined one three hour period with particular interest in recording of D - PDM readings as compared to Heading air velocity chock carrier vehicle speed. Close examination of results from #108 monitoring the DPM downstream of the MG and back road showed that when the chock carriers travel in from the MG in three cases they arrived at the TG end of the face in advance of the peak level of the DPM cloud. This indicated that the carriers were generally travelling at higher average speed than air velocity. However Carrier #1112 arrived slightly later indicating slower machine travel speed than air velocity. The time difference and also the peak concentration depends on the air velocity and chock carriers' travel speeds. In theory if the chock carrier travels at the same speed as air velocity the peak concentration will

be extremely high and the carrier will arrive at the same time as the concentration peak.

Mine 3 tests was undertaken in June 2007. These exercises monitored various ventilation arrangements of longwall face move during chock transport to the installation roadway. Figure 9 shows Longwall ventilation arrangement for tests and the positions of the D - PDM monitors #106 and #108 during the tests. On this test day loaded chock carriers travelled in and out through the TG. About $28\text{m}^3/\text{s}$ ventilation was measured in the MG and about $39\text{m}^3/\text{s}$ in the TG. There was a back borehole downcasting about $11\text{m}^3/\text{s}$. Three chock carriers were available and a total of four chocks were moved.

Figure 10 shows readings from monitor 106 at the fixed location responded and illustrate clearly travel of