

**FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION**

601 NEW JERSEY AVENUE, NW  
SUITE 9500  
WASHINGTON, DC 20001

July 9, 2008

SECRETARY OF LABOR,	:	
MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH	:	
ADMINISTRATION (MSHA)	:	
	:	Docket No. SE 2008-575
v.	:	A.C. No. 01-02901-137662
	:	
DRUMMOND COMPANY, INC.	:	

BEFORE: Duffy, Chairman; Jordan, Young, and Cohen, 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. (2000) (“Mine Act”). On April 9, 2008, the Commission received from Drummond Company, Inc. (“Drummond”) 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).

On January 30, 2008, the Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (“MSHA”) issued a proposed penalty assessment to Drummond. Drummond asserts that it had previously filed contests of two of the citations contained in the assessment: Citations Nos. 7692121 and 7692122, assigned to Docket Nos. SE 2007-384-R and SE 2007-385-R. Drummond states that it intended to contest the penalties for the two citations but that its safety superintendent had to assume additional duties and was unable to timely contest them. The Secretary states that she does not oppose the reopening of the assessment.

We have held 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 section 105(a) orders, the Commission has found guidance in Rule 60(b) of the

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure under which, for example, a party could be entitled to relief from a final order of the Commission on the basis of inadvertence or mistake. *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).

Having reviewed Drummond’s request and the Secretary’s response, in the interests of justice, we remand this matter to the Chief Administrative Law Judge for a determination of whether good cause exists for Drummond’s failure to timely contest the penalty proposal and whether relief from the final order should be granted. If it is determined that such relief is appropriate, this case shall proceed pursuant to the Mine Act and the Commission’s Procedural Rules, 29 C.F.R. Part 2700.

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Michael F. Duffy, Chairman

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Mary Lu Jordan, Commissioner

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Michael G. Young, Commissioner

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Robert F. Cohen, Jr., Commissioner

Distribution

Noelle Holladay True, Esq.  
Rajkovich, Williams, Kilpatrick & True, PLLC.  
2333 Alumni Park Plaza, Suite 310  
Lexington, KY 40517

W. Christian Schumann, Esq.  
Office of the Solicitor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
1100 Wilson Blvd., Room 2220  
Arlington, VA 22209-2296

Myra James, Chief  
Office of Civil Penalty Compliance, MSHA  
U.S. Department of Labor  
1100 Wilson Blvd., 25th Floor  
Arlington, VA 22209-3939

Chief Administrative Law Judge Robert J. Lesnick  
Federal Mine Safety & Health Review Commission  
601 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Suite 9500  
Washington, D.C. 20001-2021