From Research to Practice

At times the politician, the lay person, the attorney, and the administrator believe all engineers have the same ability because they don’t understand the field of engineering. This opinion can go so far as to say one expert’s opinion is as good as another.

Adjudication when determined by one of these non-technical parties then leans toward the emotional side of the situation and toward their own project biases.

For important issues, it is the responsibility of the engineer to communicate, as they are the only participants with the capability to flesh out and resolve technical issues. This is the best chance for such conflicts to be appropriately resolved.

Inactivity along these lines by the engineer, especially one considered as an expert, can be misconstrued and used to justify agreement with emotional reaction and inappropriate engineering judgment.

A mining company proposed underground extraction of some coal reserves. Unfortunately, several significant pipelines traversed over the proposed mined-out area. Because of the potential for unplanned ground subsidence, the pipeline companies became concerned about possible subsidence damage and pipeline safety. In order to have an independent evaluation to determine if sufficient mine support would be left after coal extraction; a number of the pipeline companies retained the geotechnical engineering services of MEA, Inc. Based on review of the available information and the proposed mine design, MEA determined that the risk for subsidence was too great.

The mining company said sufficient permanent support would be provided by the planned pillars. However, concern for pipeline damage from short or long-term mine subsidence after the mining was complete still existed. As a result of the concern for pipeline safety from the

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ABOUT MEA: Marino Engineering Associates, Inc. focuses on engineering research, practice and expert evaluations and is licensed in 24 states in the U.S. Our projects primarily have an emphasis on Geotechnical Engineering, however, we also have significant experience in projects involving transportation, subsidence engineering, laboratory testing, training, and geophysical exploration. Gennaro G. Marino, Ph.D., P.E., D.GE is president and principal engineer of Marino Engineering Associates, Inc., and has been a licensed professional engineer since 1984. To obtain additional information on MEA, one can also visit our website at www.meacorporation.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: There is a significant amount of additional information that is available on the above subject. For more information, please contact Dr. Marino at the address listed below.