

# Safety Fuse

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While exploring in old underground workings, the most common mining related artifacts found are bits and pieces of old fuse and sometime old blasting caps. I find on occasion fuse wrappers and blasting cap tins. The fuse wrappers are of interest because they show what kinds of safety fuse they are working with and the fuse itself show the conditions the miners were working under. Many companies made fuse and the most popular were Ensign-Bickford Co., National



Fuse and Powder Co., Coast Manufacturing and Supply Co., and a few others that were probably private labeling from one of these companies.

Safety fuse is usually made with a standard burning speed of either 30

or 40 seconds per foot, depending on the brand. The same brand and make of the fuse may vary as much as 10%, this fact should be kept in mind.

The Ensign-Bickford Co. sold under the following brand names:

- Double Tape
- Clover
- Crescent
- Charter Oak
- Beaver

The National Fuse and Powder Co. sold:

- Sylvanite
- Bear
- Aztec
- Monarch.

The Coast Mfg. & Supply Co. sold:

- Dreadnaught
- Bear
- Sequoia
- Triple Tape.

I have found several bits and pieces of fuse wrappers over the years and now I regret leaving a lot of the scraps where I found them. Many of the wrappers may never be found in complete condition. Some of the paper items found underground were used for toilette paper, this makes them a little unsightly and hard to handle. I have found many carbide cans used for porta-potties, most were the 25lb size and larger.

Some early fuse found were Little Evas, Gutta Percha coated, And Triple Taped Water Fuse. These wrappers were found in early under ground working dating before the turn of the century.

Fuse should be stored in a cool dry place, so that the powder it contains will not be affected by dampness. If

not kept cool, the varnish, or coating will become soft and sticky.

For dry blasting work, cotton or hemp fuse may be used, For damp work, Single Tape, Beaver, White Oak, Sylanite, And Blue Label, For wet work, or wet mines, Double Tape, Gray Charter Oak, White Monarch, Dreadnaught, Bear, Comet Special, and Victor may be used. And for very wet work or even underwater shots, Triple Tape, Crescent, Clover, White Aztec, White Sequoia, and Black Sequoia. I have never seen many of these brands and one might speculate



that some were used mostly on the east coast mines and others in the middle States and the rest on the west coast.

Safety fuse has been defined legally as "a fuse for blasting that burns and does not explode. Which does not contain it's own source of ignition, and which is of such strength and construction that will contain the powder while burning."

Safety fuse is the medium through which the flame is conveyed for the ignition of the blasting cap. Many of you may have in your collections fuse wrappers or full rolls of fuse, I would appreciate you sending in any information on safety fuse not mentioned in this article.