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Electromagnetic radiation induced by mining rock failure

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Abstract

Anticipating roof fall in mine workings has been a problem for centuries. The focus in the search for early warning indicators has been on observing seismic (acoustic) events prior to the fall. These precursors have been studied in great detail at many places, but none has been fully successful. So far, no valid, effective early warning system based on low-frequency seismic precursors has been established. In this paper, we investigated a promising new technique, which is not yet completely understood or been widely tested in mines. The new method is the sensing of the embryonic stages of roof fall by detection of high frequency electromagnetic radiation (EMR) emitted from rock microcracks. Two examples of combined observations of EMR and low frequency acoustic emission prior to roof fall at Moonee Colliery are presented. Anomalously, high EMR was detected more than 1 h before roof fall, giving a significant time advantage over the first indicators of low frequency acoustic emission. Analysis of Benioff strain release diagrams of EMR emanating from developing medium scale failure in the mine enabled us to fill the ‘gap’ between previously known microscale (rock fracture in lab) and macroscale (earthquake) EMR observations, and to conclude that indeed a common fundamental relationship must lie behind this multi-scale phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

Australian longwall mines currently use micro-seismic monitoring to provide some warning of an imminent occurrence of roof failure, windblast, or gas outburst from wall. Microseismic monitoring detects acoustic emissions resulting from microfracturing in

stressed zones. The method requires (i) sensors to be coupled to the mine strata, (ii) long cables run to intrinsically safe (IS) recording equipment, and (iii) signals filtered to reject ambient acoustic noise. Systems currently in use are not easily moved, often produce false alarms, and/or fail to provide sufficient warning time for remedy.

An alternative system that could be used to predict outburst and gas-out is monitoring of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) that (like acoustic emission) is also generated from fracturing, although its detection does

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40 not require physical contact with the rock strata. Most
 41 experience with this method has been in Russian
 42 mines of several kinds (but primarily collieries)
 43 where roadways are routinely traversed with a hand-
 44 held detector at a distance of approximately one half
 45 meter from the wall. Attenuation of the electro-
 46 magnetic (EM) signal in air would be negligible.
 47 Signal reduction would be geometric, depending on
 48 the lateral extent of the source region, so signal should
 49 be detectable many meters away from the wall for a
 50 source region of (typically) 10 m extent. The present
 51 paper describes the results of demonstration measure-
 52 ments in one colliery. They extend and corroborate the
 53 results previously obtained in Russian mines as
 54 described by Frid (1997a,b) and supported by
 55 laboratory measurements in many countries (see
 56 below). A new commercial instrument was recently
 57 announced by the laboratory (VNIMI, St Petersburg,
 58 Russia) which developed the method.

59 EMR investigations conducted on different materi-
 60 als, and sometimes combined with measurements of
 61 acoustic emission, showed that EMR was indeed
 62 induced by the microcracks. The materials tested
 63 included metals and alloys (Misra, 1975; Jagasiva-
 64 mani and Iyer, 1988), single crystals (Gol'd et al.,
 65 1975; Khatiashvili, 1984), various rock types (Nitsan,
 66 1977; Warwick et al., 1982; Ogawa et al., 1985;
 67 O'Keefe and Thiel, 1995; Rabinovitch et al., 1995,
 68 1996, 1998, 2000; Goncharov et al., 1980; Sobolev
 69 et al., 1982; Cress et al., 1987; Yamada et al., 1989; Frid,
 70 1990), and ice (Fifolt et al., 1993; Petrenko, 1993;
 71 O'Keefe and Thiel, 1996). From an analysis of all
 72 available data on fracturing, Frid et al. (2003)
 73 concluded that EMR amplitude is determined by
 74 elasticity, strength of (inter-ionic) bonds cut by
 75 fracturing, and crack area. Confining stress has an
 76 effect through its effect on elasticity (Frid, 1999).

77 Numerous large scale field investigations showed
 78 that the magnitude of EMR sharply increased several
 79 hours or even days before an earthquake and quickly
 80 decreased at its onset or immediately before (Sado-
 81 vskii et al., 1979; Gokhberg et al., 1979, 1982, 1985,
 82 1986; Morgunov, 1985; Gershenzon et al., 1987;
 83 Yoshino and Tomizawa, 1989; Yoshino et al., 1993).
 84 The magnitude of the detected EMR anomalies was
 85 up to 10–15 dB above the usual noise level. Analysis
 86 of 60 earthquake events concluded that EMR was a
 87 “short-term” precursor, with an estimated mean time

88 prior to an earthquake of ~ 6 h (Rikitake, 1997). It is
 89 now understood that EMR is a phenomenon associ-
 90 ated with multi-scale fracturing. New evidence indi-
 91 cates that its behavior can be described in terms of
 92 fractal electrodynamics (Eftaxias et al., 2004).

93 Medium-scale EMR studies in mines are rare.
 94 Nesbitt and Austin (1988) detected EMR in a gold
 95 mine (2.5 km depth). An EMR signal (1.2 mA/m
 96 amplitude) was generated several seconds prior to the
 97 microseismic event (magnitude of –0.4). Recording of
 98 EMR activity in Ural bauxite mines showed that its
 99 values sharply increased with rockburst hazard
 100 increase (Scitovich and Lazarevich, 1985). Analogous
 101 works in the Noril'sk polymetal deposit (Krasnoyarsk
 102 region) revealed an increase of EMR amplitude (up to
 103 150–200 mV/m) and activity in the rockburst prone
 104 zones (Red'kin et al., 1985). Markov and Ipatov (1986)
 105 investigated EMR activity changes in an underground
 106 apatite mine (Khibin deposit, Kola peninsula) and
 107 found that EMR amplitude in rockburst hazardous
 108 zones was in the range of 8–25 mV/m and EMR
 109 activity there was significantly higher than the normal
 110 noise level. Frid (1997a,b, 2000, 2001) observed EMR
 111 anomalies before rockbursts and gas outbursts in coal
 112 mines and presented systematic criteria for their use.

113 The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the potential
 114 of EMR monitoring as a viable forewarning system of
 115 developing failure. Analytical arguments are necessa-
 116 rily semiquantitative, as is often the case when
 117 describing poorly understood physical phenomena.

2. Equipment and experimental site

118
 119 The investigation was conducted at the Moonee
 120 Colliery, about 100 km north of Sydney, Australia,
 121 which had a problem with windblasts and used an
 122 acoustic emission system for warning.

123 Magnetic loop antennas were about 400 mm square
 124 and 20 mm thick (Fig. 1). They were contained in a
 125 tough plastic fabric ‘envelope’ to which were attached
 126 nylon (seat belt material) straps, 1 m long, with metal
 127 loops at each end, so they could be bolted to the rib as
 128 a safety precaution in case of windblast. Loop
 129 properties (inductance, resistance and capacitance)
 130 were within the values permitted for the IS approvals.
 131 They were connected to the recorder through a passive
 132 bandpass (L–R) filter by a 5 m cable. The filter was

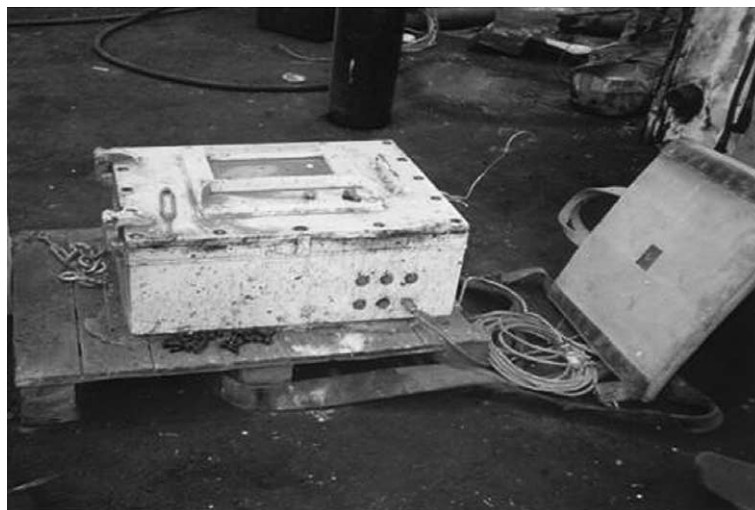


Fig. 1. Magnetic loop antenna (at the right) and EMR recorder.

133 designed for anti-aliasing and to reject low frequency
 134 machinery noise. The IS recorders were robust PCs
 135 designed for in-seam seismic and other underground
 136 data acquisition. Hard disk drives (10 GB) and
 137 preamplifiers (*1, *5, and *30 gain) were installed
 138 to boost the signals from the loops. The high speed
 139 input channel of each was capable of A/D conversion
 140 at 100 kHz. This permitted a maximum frequency of
 141 50 kHz. Mine requirements mandated that the PCs
 142 were operated in a flameproof box.

143 3. Recording method

144 Due to presence of machinery noise, we wished to
 145 perform most EMR measurements during hydro-
 146 fracturing operations, when mining had ceased and
 147 noise would be least. In each instance, the sensing
 148 loop was mounted around the corner from the
 149 maingate in the nearest cut-through, typically around
 150 50 m from the centre of the working face (Fig. 2
 151 shows the experimental setup).

152 When the loop had been installed, the system
 153 recorded data until the battery had discharged, 8–10 h
 154 later. The software recorded a sequence of binary
 155 records, paused for ~ 10 s for reinitialization, then
 156 went to the next record. The experimental data were
 157 transferred to a CD writer. The binary data were
 158 converted to ASCII for examination, processing,
 159 plotting, and analysis. Each binary file was just over

1 MB long. The ASCII files were approximately 4
 MB in size, each containing 540,600 data points. A
 single recording session gave about 7000 such files.

4. Description of the data

We present results of two combined EMR and
 acoustic emission observations prior to roof fall that
 were recorded on 15 June and 5 July 2002. The 15
 June session began following unsuccessful hydro-
 fracturing and recorded through a subsequent roof fall.
 The 5 July session was intended to record during
 routine mining, although a small fall occurred as it
 was recording. Table 1 lists record details.

Fig. 3a shows a short fragment of an EMR record.
 Time- and frequency-analysis of our records showed
 that their decay characteristics are very similar to
 those measured by Rabinovitch et al. (2002a) during
 blasting and drilling (Fig. 3b,c) where EMR records
 consisted of numerous individual pulses. Typical
 EMR pulses induced by a single crack are shown in
 Fig. 3d. The FFT of all observed EMR sequences
 shows that the most energetic part of the EMR
 spectrum lies in the frequency range between 25 and
 50 kHz. As was shown by Frid et al. (2003), the
 frequency of EMR signals is inversely proportional to
 the fracture width $b = V_R / 2f$, where V_R is the Rayleigh
 wave speed and f is the EMR frequency. Assuming a
 (typical) Rayleigh wave speed of 1000 m/s enables us

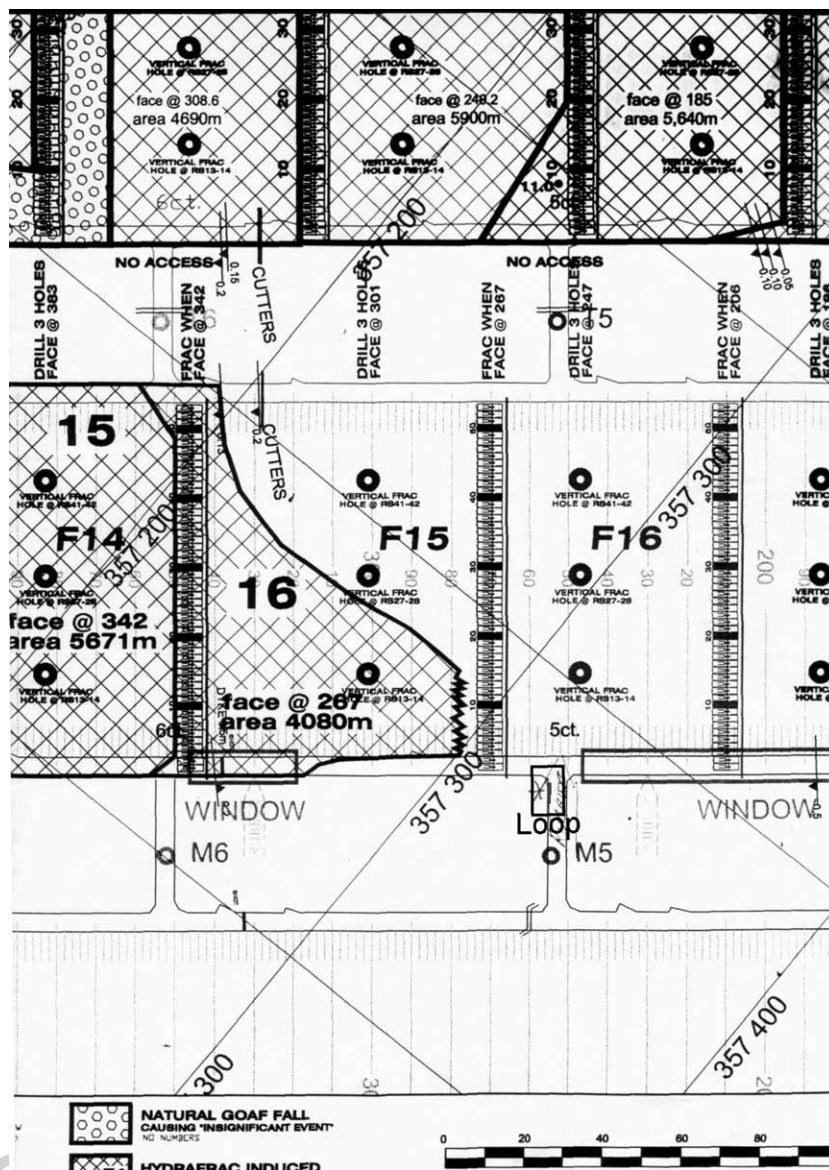


Fig. 2. EMR recorder near mine face with EMR antenna (denoted by the “loop”) about 50 m from it. Black circles indicate vertical hydrofrac drillholes; crosshatching shows roof fall without hydrofrac stimulation.

187 to define the range of the widths of the cracks causing
188 our EMR signals to be 1–2 cm.

189 Frid (2001) showed that the zone affected by
190 mining and characterized by the increased stress level
191 could be estimated to be about 2.5 times its width in all
192 directions. (This is a conservative approximation made

193 by Frid (2001) on the basis of elastic behavior of a
194 single underground opening under confining stress
195 (Jaeger, 1964). Petukhov and Lin'kov (1983) show
196 that geometric complications in openings will increase
197 stress concentrations and the size of a highly stressed
198 zone. This zone is the source of crack induced EMR.

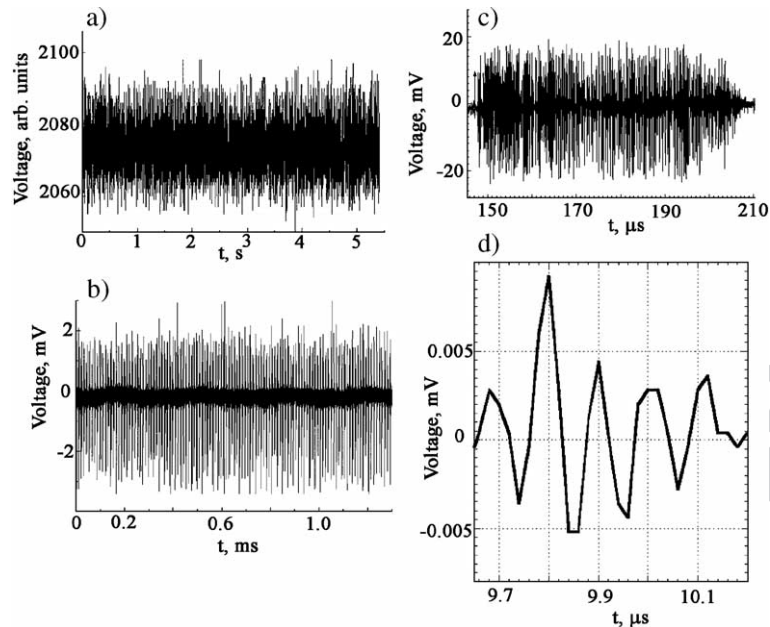


Fig. 3. EMR signals observed during: (a) mining, (b) blasting, (c) drilling, and (d) single EMR pulse induced by individual crack. Panels (b)–(d) from Rabinovitch et al. (2002a). Note change in time scale.

199 Assuming mine working width to be about 3 m, we can
 200 estimate the volume of this zone as $V=226 \text{ m}^3$ per
 201 each 1 m of its length. Frid (2001) showed that crack
 202 number N created in highly stressed volume, V , could
 203 be estimated as follows: $N=V/(kc)^3$ (where $k=3$ is the
 204 concentration factor (Zurkov et al., 1969), and c is the
 205 crack length). For purposes of estimating N , the crack
 206 length can be taken to be equal to the crack width (1–2
 207 cm). The validity of this assumption is based on the
 208 equivalence of theoretical and experimental criteria for
 209 rockburst prediction (Frid, 2001). It enables us to
 210 estimate the number of cracks N inducing individual
 211 EMR pulses to be about 10^6 for every 1 m of mine
 212 working. This very large value explains the very dense
 213 character of our EMR record where overlapping
 214 individual pulses were obtained. Similar properties of
 215 EMR signals were investigated by Goldbaum et al.
 216 (2003), who showed that crack formation at time
 217 intervals shorter than EMR pulse duration excites
 218 EMR pulses which partially overlap or even coincide.
 219 Fig. 4 shows first example of a combined measure-
 220 ment of acoustic emission and EMR prior to roof
 221 failure. As is seen, the roof fall (Richter magnitude
 222 was equal to 0) took place at 12:09:17. EMR mean
 223 values routinely increased up to 11:06:03, remained

large up to 12:03:28, and decreased after the roof fall. Hence, the maximum in the mean of EMR activity was about 1 h before the maximum of acoustic emission (roof fall).

Fig. 5 shows a second example of the combined measurement of acoustic emission and EMR prior to roof failure, where the first two bursts of acoustic emission (Richter magnitude of which was -0.6 , -0.8) were observed at 8:59:09, after which the acoustic emission level was in the range of its background (Richter magnitude of which was -2 ,

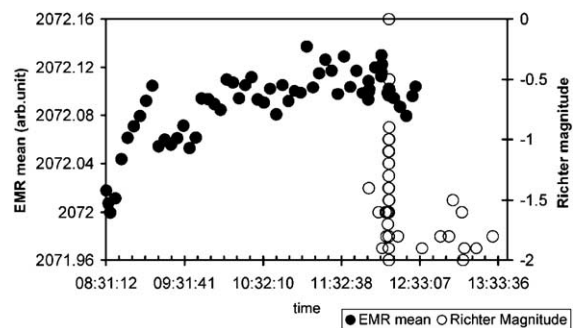


Fig. 4. The first example of combined EMR and acoustic emission recording prior to roof fall.

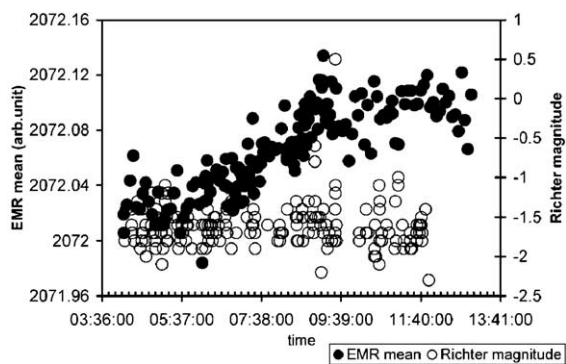


Fig. 5. The second example of combined EMR and acoustic emission measurement prior to roof fall.

249 –1). The maximum of acoustic emission magnitude
 250 (–0.5) coinciding with roof fall was recorded at
 251 9:30:26. A comparison of acoustic emission data with
 252 EMR recordings showed that, at 7:17:35, about 1 1/2
 253 h prior to the first small burst of acoustic emission,

254 EMR activity became larger than its background level
 255 (see between 4:08 and 7:17) and reached its maximum
 256 at 9:11:56, i.e. ~ 19 min earlier than the acoustic
 257 emission peak.

258 Our results can be presented using a Benioff
 259 strain release diagram. The Benioff strain is defined
 260 as the square root of the energy of emitted signals.
 261 Based on their review of a large number of results,
 262 [Jaume and Sykes \(1999\)](#) concluded that changes in
 263 the Benioff strain release prior to earthquakes were
 264 equivalent to those observed in rock failure in the
 265 laboratory, and constitute an important feature of
 266 ‘critical point’ systems. [Bufe and Varnes \(1993\)](#) also
 267 showed that using the cumulative Benioff strain
 268 release leads to more accurate predictions of the time
 269 of major failure. [Rabinovitch et al. \(2002b\)](#), analyz-
 270 ing EMR amplitude changes induced by rock
 271 compression, showed a similarity in the fractal
 272 nature of the processes controlling EQs and those
 273 of EMR induced by rock fracture, and showed that

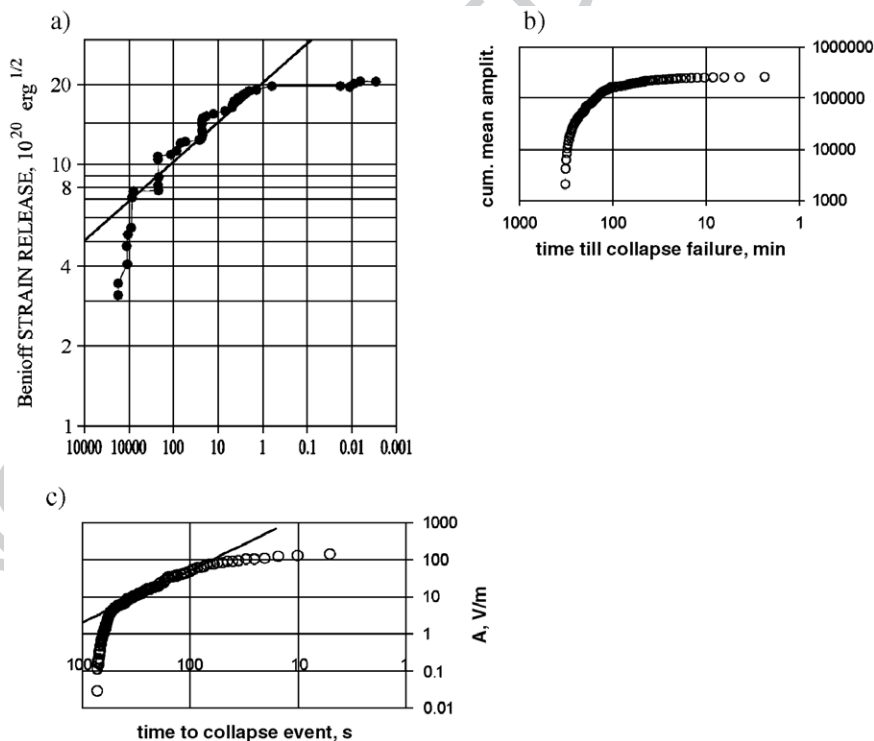


Fig. 6. Benioff strain release diagrams of panel (a) soft- γ radiation prior to very large-scale collapse (redrawn from Fig. 3 of [Kossobokov et al., 2000](#)), (b) EMR prior to roof fall, and (c) EMR during rock compression ([Rabinovitch et al., 2002b](#)).

274 amplitude of EMR pulses is the square root of the
275 electromagnetic energy recorded. Hence, it could be
276 used in place of Benioff strain.

277 We present the data on a bilogarithmic ('log–log')
278 scale as was proposed by Kossobokov et al. (2000),
279 where the x -axis measures the (reversed) "relative
280 time" while the y -axis is cumulative Benioff strain
281 release. Fig. 6a (redrawn from Fig 3 of Kossobokov
282 et al., 2000) shows soft- γ radiation prior to very
283 large-scale collapse. In such plots, the relative time
284 of the collapse is 0, and equals 1 when the first
285 event occurred. Fig. 6b shows a bilogarithmic strain
286 release diagram of EMR signals recorded prior to
287 roof fall.

288 A comparison of these diagrams with one pre-
289 sented by Rabinovitch et al. (2002b) (Fig. 6c) for
290 EMR signals emanating during rock compression
291 reveals qualitative similarity of the process underlying
292 these phenomena on three different scales (large-EQ,
293 medium-roof fall, and microrock compression in lab).

294 All three diagrams consist of three principal
295 phases: nucleation, intermediate, and irreversible.
296 During the nucleation phase, the graphs are almost
297 vertical, during the intermediate phase, their slope is
298 constant, and in the irreversible phase, the slope
299 monotonically declines, inevitably ending with rock
300 collapse. Our EMR measurements showed (Fig. 6b)
301 that as early as 100 min before roof fall, the failure
302 process had reached its irreversible part and hence
303 rock collapse had been unavoidable.

304 As we noted above, first indications of acoustic
305 emission leading up to the roof fall were 70 min later
306 than first EMR precursors and only a half hour prior
307 to the roof collapse itself.

308 To understand these results, note that rock destruc-
309 tion at all scale levels (from rock samples up to crust
310 fracture) adhere to the following "sequence": nuclea-
311 tion of micro cracks, their accumulation, and coales-
312 cence ending in failure (Zurkov et al., 1969; Regel' et
313 al., 1972; Kuksenko and Mansurov, 1986, 1987;
314 Petrov and Gorobetz, 1987; Gueguen and Palciauskas,
315 1994; Mansurov, 1994; Rechez and Lockner, 1994;
316 Rechez, 1999). As we understand it, EMR emanates
317 from the very early onset of destruction, while the
318 bulk of the low frequency acoustic emissions are
319 mainly linked to the large-scale fracture itself (Frid et
320 al., 2003). Hence, recording high frequency EMR
321 excited by numerous microcracks (1–2 cm in width),

nucleation of which begins much earlier than the roof
fall itself, yields a significant time advantage for the
early collapse warning.

Moreover, the time between crack nucleation and
final failure has a tendency to increase as failure
intensity increases (Kuksenko et al., 1982, 1987;
Mansurov, 1994). Such behavior is known to be valid
for laboratory fracture experiments, for pillar loading
in mines, for rockbursts, and (on a still larger scale)
even for earthquakes. Hence, the detection of EMR
emanating from the failure enhances the time advant-
age as the collapse size increases. This conclusion is
in agreement with many prior studies, viz:

- EMR was observed to be a short-term (~ 6 h)
forecaster of 60 analyzed earthquakes (Rikitake,
1997),
- EMR was excited several hours or even days prior
to large scale collapse (Gokhberg et al., 1979, 1982,
1986; Yoshino and Tomizawa, 1989),
- EMR signal was emitted ~ 500 μ s before the
acoustic emission signals during laboratory inves-
tigations of rock failure (O'Keefe and Thiel, 1995).

5. Summary and conclusions

1. EMR signals measured in mines are qualitatively
similar to those measured in the laboratory during
rock fracturing and in open quarries during
blasting.
2. Analysis of fracture sizes showed that fractures of
the order of 1–2 cm were the main source of
measured EMR.
3. Comparison of the EMR and acoustic emission
records showed that anomalous EMR activity had
been measured much earlier than acoustic emis-
sion. An increase in the scale of failure (micro-
medium-macro) increases the time advantage of
EMR detection over acoustic detection.
4. Analysis of Benioff strain release diagrams of
EMR records in the mine showed their similarity to
those known for earthquakes and rock fracture.
Similarity of mine-induced EMR to those of micro-
and macroscale, together with analysis of sizes of
cracks exciting EMR, enables us to conclude that
EMR was generated during a crack nucleation
phase prior to the incipient roof fall.

370 6. Uncited reference

372 Jaume and Sykes, 1996

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