Delayed Blast Kills Worker

A crew had spent the night shift drilling in preparation for blasting rock in a mine. They set off the blast, but heard only about half of the expected shots. They went to work on mucking on the rock face, using heavy equipment at first and then working by hand to uncover the misfired holes. An unexploded charge blew up, killing one worker and injuring three others.

Investigators concluded the scooptram must have relit the tape fuse in one of the misfire holes. While technology is changing to make blasting safer, work with explosives is one of the riskiest jobs for those in mining, construction and other industries. One particular hazard is the sensitivity of electronic detonators to stray current, static electricity and exposed electrical terminals on items such as batteries, lamps, radios and cellular phones. In one case, a blaster lost several fingers and received serious burns and facial injuries when a detonator went off prematurely. A connector on a radio held by another may have come into contact with a metal tool or a spool of wire, setting off the blast. If you work around radio-controlled blasting, you must be aware of all the hazards and carefully follow safe practices. Never carry an unauthorized radio or similar device to a blast site. Operators of vehicles in the area must also follow all safety procedures with regard to transmitters.