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# Mechanical behaviour and permeability evolution of gas-containing coal from unloading confining pressure tests

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## Abstract

Underground coal mining usually develops vertical stresses and reduces the horizontal stress in front of the coal face, which may trigger the occurrence of coal ruptures and gas outburst hazards. According to the stress change characteristics of the working face using different mining methods, different loading paths (constant confining pressure path and unloading confining pressure path) were selected in this study. Methane permeability tests of coal samples under different loading and unloading paths were conducted. Based on these tests, the effects of the unloading rate on the mechanical behaviour and permeability evolution (including energy evolution and fractal dimension) of the coal was investigated quantitatively. The tests revealed that the higher confining pressure unloading rates yielded a lower compressive strength and ductile strain. The increase in the unloading rate reduced the elastic energy and dissipation energy of the samples. Moreover, the higher unloading rate corresponded to more complex failure structures of coal and a greater fractal dimension, which resulted in greater permeability after the rupture of the coal samples. Furthermore, the higher unloading rates accelerated the rock damage rate and the permeability increase rate, which had a notable effect on the emergence of gas outburst hazards.

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