

From the Assistant Secretary's Desk – First Quarter 2014 Fatality Analysis

Today we are providing mining industry stakeholders with a summary of the mining deaths that occurred in the first quarter of 2014 and best practices to prevent them. Preliminary data show that during the first quarter of 2014, from January 1 to March 31, eight miners died in accidents in the U.S. mining industry. Three were killed in coal mining accidents and five in metal and nonmetal mining accidents. While overall, the first quarter was in line with recent historic low numbers of mining deaths and a significant drop from the last quarter of 2013, when 15 miners died, the metal nonmetal sector is not following that trend.

The metal and nonmetal mining industry has experienced 18 mining deaths from October 2013 to April 2014, five in April alone. As a result of this recent increase, I called a May 5, 2014 summit with metal nonmetal stakeholders to address this unacceptable trend, and discuss the actions to reverse it.

The 18 deaths from October 2013 to April 2014 have occurred at crushed stone, sand and gravel, silver, cement, lime, gold, granite, clay and iron ore mining operations in 12 states across the country. Six were at underground mines and 12 were at surface mines. Five of the deaths were supervisors. Since calling the summit, another death occurred on May 1, at surface gypsum mine in Nevada. Although many of the deaths are still under investigation, basic protections appear to have been lacking.

Mine operators need to examine the quality of training miners are receiving as well as the examinations of miner's work places. These appear to be deficient and MSHA will be paying close attention to those during mine inspections, as well as the types of hazards and conditions leading to these deaths. Details on the mining deaths presented at the summit can be found in the power point link below.

Looking at the first quarter of 2014 only, in coal mining, three miners were killed in machinery and powered haulage accidents.

Two miners were killed in machinery accidents: A 24-year-old continuous mining machine operator died after he was pinned between machinery and the coal rib; and a 41-year-old mechanic trainee died while working on a belt conveyor feeder, when he was pinned between the crawler track and the frame of the feeder. Machinery accidents can be prevented by following well-known precautions, including installing proximity detection systems and training miners to avoid the "Red Zone" areas.

The third coal mining victim, a 20-year-old laborer, died in a powered haulage accident when he was struck by a feeder. Basic precautions to prevent such deaths include de-energizing and locking out equipment while it is being repaired.

In metal and nonmetal mining, two miners were killed by falling/sliding materials: A 50-year-old supervisor was killed at a sand and gravel mine when an 80-foot-high embankment failed, engulfing him, and a 64-year-old foreman was struck by a section of pipe. Falling and sliding material accidents can be prevented by following best

practices, which include training, use of hardhats, examining ground conditions before work to ensure slope stability, and working from a safe location.

A third victim in metal and nonmetal mining was killed in a fall. A 34-year-old contract laborer died after stepping into an open elevator shaft from the fourth floor landing.

The fourth victim in metal and nonmetal mining was a 56-year-old belt operator killed at an iron ore mine when he became entangled in a belt conveyor. As in the third coal mining fatality, this death could have been prevented by following proper lock-out and tag-out procedures.

The fifth victim, a 27-year-old contractor mechanic, was repairing a hydraulic pump at a crushed limestone operation when he fell from a walkway and hit his head on the ground.

These deaths are a reminder that, despite steady progress in mine safety due to the actions of MSHA and the mining industry, much more needs to be done to protect the nation's miners. MSHA is providing information on these deaths and the best practices to the mining industry, including trainers. See the links below for an analysis of the mining fatalities during the first quarter of 2014, along with best practices to help mining operations avoid fatalities like them, and for trainers to include in miner training.

Mining deaths are preventable. While we have made progress, it is clear there is more to be done. In order to prevent mine deaths, operators must have in place effective safety and health management programs that are constantly evaluated; "find-and-fix" programs to identify and eliminate mine hazards; and training for all mining personnel.

Conducting workplace examinations both prior to and during a shift - every shift - can prevent deaths by finding and fixing safety and health hazards. Workplace examinations must be performed and the problems identified resolved to protect workers. Effective and appropriate training will ensure that miners recognize and understand hazards and how to control or eliminate them.

MSHA has undertaken a number of measures to prevent mining deaths, injuries and illnesses: increased surveillance and strategic enforcement through impact inspections at mines with troubling compliance histories; enhanced pattern of violations actions; special initiatives such as "Rules to Live By," which focuses attention on the most common causes of mining deaths; and outreach efforts. We know it takes the efforts of all of us in MSHA and the mining industry to improve mine safety and health.

Miners deserve a safe and healthful workplace, and at MSHA, we are committed to doing everything we can to make that happen.

[Summary of 2014 \(1st Quarter\) Fatal Accidents at Metal/Nonmetal Mines and Preventative Recommendations](#)

[Summary of 2014 \(1st Quarter\) Fatal Accidents at Coal Mines and Preventative Recommendations](#)

[May 5, 2014 Presentation on Metal and Nonmetal Mining Deaths](#)