



News Release

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Mining Community Urged to Participate in Drug-Free Work Week

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is encouraging all mine operators and miners to take part Oct. 16 through 22 in the first-ever Drug-Free Work Week, launched today by U.S. Secretary of Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao. The purpose of this week is to educate employers, employees and the general public about the importance of being drug-free for workplace safety and health, and to encourage workers with alcohol and drug problems to seek help.

“There is a direct correlation between substance abuse and accidents in the workplace,” said David G. Dye, MSHA’s acting administrator. “Everyone knows it. Everyone has seen it. Many have been affected by it – and some have died from it.

“Mining professionals must ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy environments for their employees. Mixing drugs or alcohol with mining is a recipe for disaster,” he added.

No business is immune to the problems that drug and alcohol abuse can cause. Most adults who abuse drugs or are dependent on alcohol are employed. According to U.S. government statistics in 2005, nearly 75 percent of the 17.2 million illicit drug users aged 18 or older were employed either full or part time. Up to 40 percent of industrial fatalities and 47 percent of industrial injuries can be linked to alcohol use and alcoholism.

Substance use and abuse in the mining population is at least comparable to the general U.S. adult working population. It may even be slightly worse, give the preponderance in mining of young males, a population more prone to substance abuse than other groups.

During Drug-Free Work Week and beyond, federal mine inspectors throughout the country will distribute educational materials to the mining community that will tout the importance of working in a drug-free environment.

Two years ago, MSHA convened a drug and alcohol summit to raise the level of awareness of drug and alcohol use in the mining industry and present possible remedies to address the situation at mining operations in Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia. Last October, MSHA issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking seeking information about how to address the risks and hazards to miner safety from alcohol and drug use. MSHA requested information from the public to determine whether there is a need for rulemaking to address alcohol and drug use and its safety risk to miners.

For further information about Drug-Free Work Week, visit www.msha.gov.

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