

# News Release



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
Release Number: 08-840-NAT

For Immediate Release  
June 19, 2008  
Contact: Amy Louviere Matthew Faraci  
Phone: 202-693-9423 202-693-9406

## **MSHA, key mining organizations urge renewed commitment to safety** *Joint letter refocuses mining community on accident prevention*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – In an unprecedented move, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and three key mining organizations have joined forces to urge the coal industry to refocus on sound safety practices in the nation’s coal mines. A letter signed by acting Assistant Secretary of Labor Richard E. Stickler and the top executives from the National Mining Association (NMA), the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and Bituminous Coal Operators’ Association (BCOA), is being distributed to coal miners, operators and contractors in the wake of recent mining fatalities.

“Maintaining a safe work environment is everyone’s responsibility, and I applaud my colleagues from the NMA, UMWA and BCOA for their support and cooperation in this effort,” said Stickler. “I hope that everyone who receives this letter will review and discuss their own work practices and renew their commitment to follow safe work procedures.”

The letter states, “With a joint effort by all to refocus on safety, a repeat of these accidents could be prevented in the future and everyone can return home safely to their families. In addition to training, teamwork and communication, there must be recognition that no short-term action should put any miner at risk of not achieving an accident-free workday.”

There have been 15 fatalities in the nation’s coal mines this year, four of which occurred over the past two weeks. As vacation season approaches and summer activities are planned, the letter warns, it is easy to become distracted from the task at hand. MSHA and its partners’ letter also explains that maintaining a focus on safety means trying to anticipate hazards, thinking before acting and avoiding shortcuts.

Accompanying the letter are copies of MSHA’s summaries of what happened in the first 14 fatal accidents of 2008. Recipients are urged to read each of them carefully, considering why these accidents occurred and how they may act to prevent similar accidents in the future.

###

U.S. Department of Labor releases are accessible on the Internet at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov). The information in this news release will be made available in alternate format (large print, Braille, audio tape or disc) from the COAST office upon request. Please specify which news release when placing your request at 202-693-7828 or TTY 202-693-7755. The Labor Department is committed to providing America’s employers and employees with easy access to understandable information on how to comply with its laws and regulations. For more information, please visit [www.dol.gov/compliance](http://www.dol.gov/compliance).