

News Release



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 08-1800-NAT

For Immediate Release
Dec. 10, 2008
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Aggressive new program achieves 100 percent completion of MSHA annual mine inspections *Completion rate is unprecedented in agency's history*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced that in the first year of the agency's 100 Percent Plan, the agency achieved its goal of completing every mandated regular inspection for the year. This success marks the first time in the agency's 31-year history that every mandated regular inspection was completed within the year.

The Mine Act requires MSHA to inspect every underground mine four times a year and every surface mine twice a year. "Miners are safer today due to the success of this program. Reaching this milestone is an outstanding and significant achievement," said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

In October 2007, MSHA formally launched the 100 Percent Plan to address completion rates and, one year later, marked the successful completion of quarterly and twice-yearly inspections at more than 14,800 active mining operations around the country.

Stickler attributed the success of the 100 Percent Plan to several factors, including the willingness and work ethic of dedicated career MSHA employees, the temporary reassignment of MSHA inspectors to areas where they were most needed, the provision for increased overtime for additional hours needed to complete inspections, and better oversight and tracking of inspections by the agency's district offices and headquarters. Nearly 190,000 hours of inspector overtime were logged during FY 2008. More than 172,000 citations and orders were written in that same time period.

Since July 2006, MSHA has hired more than 360 new coal enforcement personnel, and the fiscal year 2008 budget allocated funding for the hiring of 55 additional metal/nonmetal enforcement personnel. However, it can take up to 18 months for a new hire to become fully trained as a mine inspector. Once these new enforcement personnel receive their certifications, MSHA's enforcement ranks will be at their highest level since 1994.

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