

News Release



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MSHA urges public to ‘Stay Out and Stay Alive’ *National safety campaign seeks to deter recreational activities on mine property*

ARLINGTON, Va. – For the 11th consecutive year, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today launched its annual “Stay Out–Stay Alive” public safety campaign to warn outdoor enthusiasts – especially children – about the dangers of playing on mine property. Since 1999, nearly 300 people have lost their lives in recreational accidents at mine properties. Almost half of all victims are 15 to 25 years of age, and the most common cause of death is drowning in a quarry.

“No matter how attractive they may appear, active and abandoned mines are not playgrounds. If you’re not trained or authorized to enter the property, stay away,” said Michael A. Davis, MSHA’s deputy assistant secretary of labor for operations. “As we near the end of another school year and prepare for lots of outdoor activities, children and young adults must be aware of the potential dangers that exist.”

During the month-long campaign, which runs from April 27 to May 25, MSHA and its partners will visit schools, scouting groups and other venues to talk to young people about the dangers of playing on active and abandoned mine property.

Old surface mines, which are popular spots for ATV enthusiasts, contain hills of loose materials or refuse heaps that can easily collapse and cause deadly rollovers.

Underground mines can have hidden shafts, flooded or airless sections, or deadly gases; tunnels can cave-in; and unused or misfired explosives can be set off by the slightest disturbance or touch.

Water-filled quarries – the mines that claim the most lives every year – have slippery slopes and unstable rock ledges, and the water may conceal old machinery and sharp objects left behind after a mining operation closes. Even expert swimmers may encounter trouble in the dangerously cold and deceptively deep waters. Drowning is far and away the most common cause of recreational accidents on mine property, accounting for two out of three fatalities over the past 10 years.

Dozens of federal and state agencies, private organizations, businesses and individuals are active partners in “Stay Out–Stay Alive.” For further information about the national campaign, visit www.msha.gov.

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MSHA's Stay Out—Stay Alive Campaign

Fact Sheet

Fatality Statistics 1999 - 2008

- At least 293 fatal recreational accidents occurred at mine properties between 1999 and 2008.
- On average, 29 people lost their lives each of these years in recreational accidents at mines.
- Nearly half (48 percent) of all victims were between 15 and 25 years of age.
- Eighty-five percent of fatality victims were male.
- Drowning is the most common cause (63 percent) for nonoccupational mining fatalities, followed by vehicle accidents (ATVs, motorcycles, four-wheelers, etc.) at 18 percent, with falls being the third most frequent type of fatal accident (10 percent).
- Approximately 85 percent of all nonoccupational mining fatalities occurred on abandoned or non-active mines.
- June and July account for nearly half of all recreational accidents at mines.

Mining is a Fundamental Component of the American Economy

- Roughly half of the electricity generated in the United States comes from coal.
- Mines are located in every state from small operations to complex underground mines and extensive surface operations that use some of the largest industrial equipment ever built.
- There are about 14,000 active and as many as 500,000 abandoned mines in the United States.

Dangers Exist at Active and Abandoned Mine Sites

- Vertical shafts can be hundreds of feet deep. At the surface, they may be completely unprotected, hidden by vegetation or covered by rotting boards.
- Horizontal openings may seem sturdy, but rotting timbers and unstable rock formations make cave-ins a real danger. Darkness and debris add to the hazards.
- Lethal concentrations of deadly gases (methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulfide) can accumulate in underground passages.
- Unused or misfired explosives can be unstable and deadly. Vibrations from a touch or footfall can trigger an explosion.

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- Excavated vertical cliffs in open pit mines and quarries can be unstable and prone to collapse.
- Hills of loose material in stockpiles or refuse heaps can easily collapse upon an unsuspecting biker or climber.
- Water-filled quarries and pits hide rock ledges, old machinery and other hazards. The water can be deceptively deep and dangerously cold. Steep, slippery walls make exiting these swimming holes extremely difficult.
- MSHA's toll-free hotline for reporting unsafe access to mine sites is 800-746-1554. MSHA's Web site is www.msha.gov.

MSHA STATISTICS - FATALITIES BY STATE

Year	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	Total
Total	29	31	30	28	35	28	32	32	30	18	293
Alaska	--	--	1	1	1	--	1	1	--	--	5
Ala.	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	2
Ariz.	4	1	1	--	1	--	1	2	--	--	10
Calif.	4	2	3	1	1	--	2	1	--	--	14
Colo.	--	1	--	--	--	1	2	1	--	1	6
Conn.	--	2	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	5
Fla.	1	--	1	--	1	--	1	1	1	--	6
Ga.	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	1	--	4
Iowa	1	--	--	5	--	3	--	--	1	--	10
Idaho	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	--	--	2
Ill.	2	--	--	--	2	1	1	2	1	1	10
Ind.	1	--	2	3	1	4	2	--	--	--	13
Kan.	--	2	--	--	2	--	1	--	--	--	5
Ky.	--	3	3	--	3	--	1	1	2	2	15
La.	1	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	3
Mass.	--	2	1	--	2	--	--	2	--	--	7
Md.	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	1	1	1	5
Maine	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1
Mich.	1	1	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	4
Minn.	--	--	2	--	1	1	--	1	--	1	6
Mo.	--	5	--	2	--	1	1	1	--	--	10

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Mont.	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	1	--	--	3
N.C.	--	2	1	--	--	1	--	--	2	--	6
Neb.	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	2
N.H.	1	--	2	1	1	1	2	--	--	--	8
N.J.	1	--	1	--	1	1	1	1	--	1	7
N.M.	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	1	3
Nev.	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	3
N.Y.	1	2	--	1	3	--	3	2	--	2	14
Ohio	--	3	1	--	4	4	--	5	--	1	18
Okla.	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1
Ore.	3	1	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	6
Pa.	2	1	2	5	2	3	4	2	4	3	28
S.D.	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	--	--	2
Tenn.	--	--	1	1	1	1	--	--	1	--	5
Texas	1	1	--	1	--	--	1	1	7	--	12
Utah	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	1	5
Va.	--	--	1	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	5
Vt.	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	2
Wash.	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	2	--	--	3
Wis.	1	1	2	1	1	2	--	1	6	--	15
W.Va.	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	2

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