

News Release



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MSHA issues safety alert and fatality update *Mining community urged to focus on safe work practices*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today issued a safety alert and fatality update to the mining industry to draw renewed attention to deaths that have occurred this year in mines throughout the country.

“While headlines continue to focus on the disaster at Upper Big Branch Mine, we cannot lose sight of the fact that other miners are losing their lives at our nation’s mines,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Since the beginning of this year, 28 other miners from all sectors of mining have died in fatal accidents. We must take action to prevent additional fatalities.”

MSHA compiled data on the most common causes of mining deaths in 2010: Eight miners were killed when they were struck by moving or falling objects. Roof falls and rib rolls crushed seven miners. Six miners were killed while working in close proximity to mining or haulage equipment. Three more miners lost their lives in explosions and fires; another miner was killed when he was caught inside rotating machinery. Eight of the dead miners were contractors, including one who fell to his death; and one who was killed when his truck went through a berm and over a highwall. One miner drowned in a dredge pond.

The agency has posted the safety alert and fatality update on its website. This information not only details the year’s mining deaths, it offers best practices to prevent additional deaths. There are also links to posters that operators can print and install at their mining operations.

MSHA inspectors will be especially mindful of these issues while performing inspections. They will talk to miners and mine supervisors in operations throughout the country to discuss these types of fatalities and the ways to prevent them.

In a letter to the mining community, Assistant Secretary Main reminded mine operators that effective safety and health management programs save lives. “Workplace examinations for hazards – pre-shift and on-shift on every shift – can identify and eliminate hazards that kill miners. Effective and appropriate training will help ensure that miners know and understand these hazards and learn how to control or eliminate them.

“Fatalities are not an inevitable consequence of mining,” Main added. “We must all work together to send miners home safe and healthy after every shift.”

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