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MSHA announces results of April impact inspections

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that federal inspectors issued 255 citations and orders during special impact inspections conducted at eight coal mines and seven metal/nonmetal mines last month. The coal mines were issued 125 citations and 36 orders, while the metal/nonmetal operations were issued 93 citations and one order.

These inspections, which began in force in April 2010 following an explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine, involve mines that merit increased agency attention and enforcement due to their poor compliance history or particular compliance concerns, including high numbers of violations or closure orders; indications of operator tactics, such as advance notification of inspections that prevent inspectors from observing violations; frequent hazard complaints or hotline calls; plan compliance issues; inadequate workplace examinations; a high number of accidents, injuries or illnesses; fatalities; and adverse conditions such as increased methane liberation, faulty roof conditions and inadequate ventilation.

“MSHA inspectors continue to find and cite serious violations at mines we have targeted during previous impact inspections,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “We will continue to level this enforcement tool until repeat offenders demonstrate they take their responsibilities for the safety and health of miners seriously.”

In one of the more extreme examples to date, federal inspectors issued 20 withdrawal orders and five citations during an April 2011 impact inspection at Randolph Mine in Boone County, W.Va., owned by Massey Energy and operated by Inman Energy. Eleven of the orders were for serious violations of a ventilation plan that presented a potential risk of fire, explosion and black lung disease. MSHA released the details of that inspection in a news release dated May 3, 2011, available at <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/msha/MSHA20110659.htm>.

As one example from last month’s impact inspections, on April 14, an inspection team arrived at Wilcoal Mining Inc.’s Tri-State One Mine in Claiborne County, Tenn. The inspectors captured and monitored the mine phone to prevent advance notification of their arrival. As a result of this inspection, the mine operator was issued 15 104(a) citations and 5 104(d)(2) orders.

Two orders and two citations were issued for accumulations of combustible materials on two underground belts. These accumulations extended approximately 650 feet and ranged in depths of 4-16 inches. Although the accumulations were wet at the time, under normal mining conditions they will dry out and present fire and explosion hazards.

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Additional citations were issued for conditions that could cause serious injuries and possible death. Inspectors found violations of inadequate rib and roof support, improperly working parking brakes and emergency stop switches, and noncompliance with the approved ventilation plan. The continuous mining machine was observed mining with the line curtain 24 feet from the scrubber discharge. The plan limits this distance to a maximum of 15 feet. Noncompliance with the approved ventilation plan and the presence of this condition underground at the mine expose miners to respirable coal mine dust, making them vulnerable to black lung disease and methane hazards that could contribute to mine explosions.

The April impact inspection was Tri-State One's fifth since April 2010. Although the mine received a potential pattern of violations notice during the last screening, it reduced its rate of significant and substantial violations during the evaluation period and was not placed on POV status.

As a second example from last month's impact inspections, on April 14, an inspection party arrived at Vision Coal Inc.'s Mine #2 in Letcher County, Ky. Inspectors captured and monitored the phones to prevent advance notice of their arrival. The mine operator was issued 30 citations and seven orders. The operator did not follow the approved roof control plan requiring the use of a sightline or other method of directional control to maintain the projected direction of mining in the underground sections of the mine. This practice exposed miners to serious injuries from roof and /or rib falls. The operator also did not follow the alternate borehole pattern drill plan. Failure to drill the required test holes exposes miners to hazards associated with the inundation of noxious gases and water on a regular basis.

The mine operator also was cited for failure to correct hazardous conditions found by the pre-shift mine examiner, as well as accumulations of loose coal along a conveyor belt in the mine. The operator had been cited 93 times in the last two years for violations of 30 Code of Federal Regulations 75.400, accumulation of combustible materials. If left uncorrected, the condition could have led to a mine fire.

This impact inspection was the second conducted at Vision Coal's Mine #2.

Since April 2010, MSHA has conducted 259 impact inspections. These inspections have resulted in 4,610 citations, 442 orders and 14 safeguards.

Editor's note: A spreadsheet containing the results of impact inspections in April 2011 accompanies this news release.

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MSHA Monthly Impact Inspection List

(April 2011)

April 2011

Coal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action								Justifications											
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe -guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(l)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions	
District 02	PA	3608525	J Clifford Forrest III	Rosebud Mining Company	Tom's Run Mine	9	0	0	9	4	5	9	44.44%	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9								1
District 03	WV	4601436	CONSOL Energy Inc	Consolidation Coal Company	Shoemaker Mine	16	0	0	16	5	11	16	31.25%	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	1							1
District 04	WV	4609244	Massey Energy Company	Inman Energy	Randolph Mine	6	19	0	25	21	4	25	84.00%	6	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25		1						1
District 05	VA	4407252	James C Justice II	Nine Mile Mining, Inc.	#1	15	5	0	20	14	6	20	70.00%	15	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20			1					1
District 06	KY	1518864	Vision Coal, Inc.	Vision Coal, Inc.	No. 2	30	7	0	37	21	16	37	56.76%	29	0	1	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	37	1				1			1
District 07	TN	4003333	Wilma Wagner	Wilcoal Mining, Inc.	Tri-State One	15	5	0	20	12	8	20	60.00%	15	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20			1	1				1
District 07	KY	1517497	Joseph Evans	Leeco Incorporated	#68	30	0	0	30	8	22	30	26.67%	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30			1	1	1	1	1	1
District 11	AL	0100851	Cliffs Natural Resources, Inc.	Oak Grove Resources LLC	Oak Grove Mine	4	0	0	4	2	2	4	50.00%	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4			1	1	1	1	1	1
National Totals						125	36	0	161	87	74	161	54.04%	124	0	1	6	29	0	0	1	0	0	0	161	2	1	3	4	3	1	7	4

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April 2011

Metal/Nonmetal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action								Justifications												
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe -guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(l)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions		
NE	NY	3000026	J W Buyers Jr	County Line Stone Co Inc	County Line Stone Co Inc	14	0	0	14	4	10	14	28.57%	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	1	1							1
SE	GA	0901036	Mize Robert W III	Mize Granite Quarries Inc	Mize Granite Quarries, Inc.	10	1	0	11	8	3	11	72.73%	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11									1
RM	NE	2501126	Constructors Inc (NE)	Kerford Limestone Company	Kerford Limestone CO	8	0	0	8	2	6	8	25.00%	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8			1	1					
RM	WY	4801191	David Brown	Wyo-Ben Inc	Lucerne Mill	6	0	0	6	4	2	6	66.67%	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6									
RM	AZ	0200150	Grupo Mexico S A	Asarco LLC	Ray	46	0	0	46	13	33	46	28.26%	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46				1	1	1			
WE	CA	0404075	Heidelberg Cement AG	Lehigh Southwest Cement Co.	Lehigh Permanente Cement Co.	3	0	0	3	0	3	3	0.00%	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3									1
NC	IL	1101657	Rein Family Trust; Kabbes Interest	Tuscola Stone Company	Tuscola Stone Company	6	0	0	6	1	5	6	16.67%	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6									1
National Totals						93	1	0	94	32	62	94	34.04%	93	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	94	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	1	

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Total	15	National Totals				218	37	0	255	119	136	255	46.67%	217	0	1	6	30	0	0	1	0	0	255	4	2	4	7	5	2	10	5
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