



News Release

Connect with DOL at
<http://social.dol.gov!>



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 11-1265-NAT

For Immediate Release

Aug. 24, 2011

Contact: Amy Louviere

Phone: 202-693-9423

Email: louviere.amy@dol.gov

MSHA announces results of July impact inspections

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that federal inspectors issued 375 citations and orders during special impact inspections conducted at 10 coal mines and five metal/nonmetal mines last month. The coal mines were issued 232 citations and 24 orders, while the metal/nonmetal operations were issued 108 citations and 11 orders.

Special impact inspections, which began in force in April 2010 following the 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.

As an example from last month’s impact inspections, on July 22, MSHA inspectors arrived during the second shift at Wilcoal Mining Inc.’s Tri-State One Mine located in Claiborne County, Tenn. The inspection party immediately seized and monitored communications at the mine to prevent advance notification. More than two-thirds of 32 citations and orders issued were designated as significant and substantial. The impact inspection was the sixth conducted at this mine.

MSHA issued eight unwarrantable failure closure orders for conditions that presented serious hazards in the event of a fire, explosion or other emergency that could prevent miners from safely exiting the mine. The operator was cited for failure to maintain a primary escapeway for safe travel due to the presence of lumber, other debris and water up to 10 inches in depth; inadequate pre-shift examinations; failure to conduct a proper electrical examination; use of a water pump without a fail-safe ground system in the primary escapeway; not providing the required number of self-contained self-rescuers at the section storage location as well as two-way communications for one of the mine’s refuge alternatives on the active section; and inadequate ventilation.

Twenty-four 104(a) citations were issued for hazardous conditions that, if left unchecked, could potentially cause or contribute to a roof fall, mine fire or explosion. These violations concerned a lack of emergency roof support supplies; improper roof bolt spacing; excessive coal accumulation; misaligned and unguarded conveyor belts, and a damaged conveyor belt roller; nonworking ventilation control doors; improperly maintained and nonpermissible electrical equipment; noncompliance with the approved emergency response plan; and nonfunctioning communication and tracking systems.

-- more --

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR NEWS RELEASE – PAGE 2

Tri-State One Mine was one of 13 operations to receive a letter from MSHA in November 2010 that placed it on notice of a potential pattern of violations of mandatory health or safety standards under Section 104(e) of the federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.

As a second example from last month, MSHA issued 13 citations and orders during an impact inspection conducted on July 1 at Inman Energy's Randolph Mine, located in Boone County, W.Va. The inspection party arrived at 4 a.m. and captured the phones prior to proceeding. The impact inspection was the second conducted this year at the mine.

Six unwarrantable failure closure orders were issued for accumulations of combustible materials on the working section from the feeder to the face, overhanging rock brows on the working section that were not adequately supported or otherwise controlled, failure to follow the mine's approved ventilation plan, miners not being made aware of the designated responsible person on duty, and failure to conduct and record adequate pre-shift and on-shift examinations. Inspectors also cited a number of violations involving other hazardous conditions, including permanent ventilation controls that were not properly constructed or otherwise maintained, accumulation of water in a return air course, an unguarded high-voltage cable, improper storage of compressed oxygen cylinders and inadequate support of a kettle bottom in the mine roof.

"The closure order is still one of the most effective tools inspectors have to bring about compliance, even during impact inspections," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "We will not hesitate to use these and other enforcement tools to protect the nation's miners."

Since April 2010, MSHA has conducted 307 impact inspections, which have resulted in 5,526 citations, 518 orders and 19 safeguards.

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

###

