



# News Release

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## MSHA announces results of August impact inspections

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that federal inspectors issued 356 citations, orders and safeguards during special impact inspections conducted at 16 coal mines and four metal/nonmetal mines last month. The coal mines were issued 272 citations, 37 orders and two safeguards, while the metal/nonmetal operations were issued 45 citations.

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 Aug. 25, Hidden Splendor Resources Inc.’s Horizon Mine in Helper, Utah, was cited for 33 violations, including eight orders, after MSHA inspectors secured the communication system to prevent advance notice of the inspection. Violations included ventilation devices not being maintained, high accumulations of coal dust and hazardous conditions on the underground conveyor belts. The conveyor belt violations, in combination with accumulation of combustible materials, exposed miners to fire hazards. Further, fire fighting equipment was inoperable. The August impact inspection was the fifth conducted at this coal mine, which was notified in March 2009 of a potential pattern of violations.

As a second example, an Aug. 19 inspection at Upper Cedar Grove No. 4 in Logan County, W.Va., resulted in a total of seven citations and eight orders, nine of which were designated as significant and substantial. Six unwarrantable failure closure orders and one unwarrantable failure citation involved violations related to ventilation, the mine’s emergency response plan, and unsafe conditions and practices that arose from a lack of proper and complete examinations. In addition, the operator failed to notify MSHA of a change from nonproducing to producing status within three working days, as required.

“As we continue to conduct impact inspections at mines with compliance problems or other health or safety issues, there are indications that the industry is getting the message and improving health and safety practices,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “But for mine operators not getting the message, MSHA will use impact inspections and other enforcement tools at our disposal to protect the health and safety of their miners.”

Since April 2010, MSHA has conducted 327 impact inspections, which have resulted in 5,843 citations, 555 orders and 21 safeguards.

**Editor’s note:** A [spreadsheet](#) containing the results of impact inspections in August 2011 accompanies this news release.

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