



News Statement

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Statement by Solicitor of Labor M. Patricia Smith regarding ongoing investigation of Upper Big Branch Mine explosion

WASHINGTON – Solicitor of Labor M. Patricia Smith today issued the following statement regarding new developments in the ongoing investigation of the April 5, 2010, explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County, W.Va.

“The Department of Justice requested this week that the Mine Safety and Health Administration postpone any plans to hold public hearings and, in a prior request, asked that we not release transcripts of witness testimony gathered thus far in the Upper Big Branch Mine accident investigation. A letter from R. Booth Goodwin II, the U.S. attorney with the Southern District of West Virginia, explains that any public disclosure at this time ‘poses a serious risk of hindering the criminal investigation into events at UBB.’

“From the very beginning, we have exercised extreme caution to ensure that DOJ has had every opportunity to run its own investigation. We have no intention of jeopardizing those efforts. Therefore, we’ve agreed to honor that department’s request. We remain committed to holding public hearings and making the transcripts available once we are assured by the criminal prosecutors that doing so will not impede their ability to bring any wrongdoers to justice.”

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