



News Release

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



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Arlington, Va.
Release Number: 12-264-NAT

For Immediate Release

Feb. 9, 2012

Contact: Amy Louviere Jesse Lawder
Phone: 202-693-9423 202-693-4659
Email: louviere.amy@dol.gov
lawder.jesse@dol.gov

US Labor Department's MSHA seeks information for miners' rights survey

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration is seeking public comment on data collection relating to miners' rights in the workplace. The agency is performing a pilot study to determine how to survey miners' understanding of their rights under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 and the degree to which they believe they are free to exercise those rights at work. MSHA is the third agency in the department to initiate this type of survey, following the Wage and Hour Division and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

“What we hope to ultimately learn from this pilot and subsequent survey is how we can better educate miners on their rights to safe and healthful working conditions,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “If a miner is denied the right to participate in safeguarding health and safety at his or her mine, it puts at risk not only the miner's safety, but the safety of fellow miners.”

MSHA aims to implement an anonymous survey in a setting and format that will result in candid and reliable responses. In order to achieve this, the agency is performing the pilot study to investigate the efficacy of different data collection methods and to develop an appropriate survey instrument for the mining community. While the current pilot is focused on coal miners and coal mining communities, MSHA's goal is to determine how to measure miners' knowledge and willingness to exercise rights under the Mine Act across all mining sectors.

“The overarching goal is for miners to be able to address health and safety concerns at work,” added Main. “But in order to achieve that goal, we've first got to pinpoint the reasons why some don't speak up. We heard testimony at congressional field hearings after the Upper Big Branch disaster about miners who were afraid to make safety complaints for fear of losing their jobs. We want to know what areas of the country and in what mining sectors this and other factors affect miners' exercise of their rights.

MSHA highlighted the importance of gathering this information in a meeting this week with stakeholders representing miners. The agency also discussed the development of materials to aid miners and miners' representatives in carrying out their rights and responsibilities under the Mine Act.

Comments will be accepted until March 19, 2012. For more information or to submit comments, visit <http://www.msha.gov/DOLICR01192012/DOLICR1192012.asp>.

###