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U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 12-818-NAT

For Immediate Release

April 26, 2012

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Labor Department's MSHA issues user notice regarding SCSR units *Phase-out of CSE SR-100 breathing devices in underground mines to begin immediately*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that mine operators must immediately begin phasing out the use of SR-100 self-contained self-rescuers manufactured by Pittsburgh, Pa.-based CSE Corp. The announcement, made in conjunction with the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, was prompted by the April 13 NIOSH report of a joint NIOSH-MSHA investigation that determined the units do not conform to safety requirements. Self-contained self-rescuers are portable devices that, in the event of an emergency, can provide underground miners with up to 60 minutes of breathable air.

By April 26, 2013, mine operators are required to replace with any other approved one-hour SCSR those SR-100s that are worn or carried by miners and stored on mantrips. The entire phase-out of all SR-100 units must be completed by Dec. 31, 2013.

“Due to the large number of CSE SR-100s in underground coal mines, multiple SCSRs available to miners, the low probability of failure and the shortage of immediately available replacements, MSHA and NIOSH have determined that an orderly phase-out will better protect the safety of miners than immediate withdrawal of the devices,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

Following the identification of a potential problem with the starter oxygen system on two SR-100s by NIOSH and later by the manufacturer during routine quality control testing, an investigation was launched. The company voluntarily stopped selling the units, and additional safety protections and new training measures for miners were put in place to address the potential problem.

NIOSH developed a protocol and began a testing process in October 2010 for the prevalence of failure of the oxygen starter and, along with MSHA, collected 500 of the approximately 70,000 units deployed in underground coal mines throughout the U.S. Five of those units proved defective, exceeding the maximum allowable failure rate of 1 percent, which includes a safety margin for error.

MSHA and NIOSH jointly approve respirators for use in the nation's mines. At the time of the investigation, the SR-100 was one of three one-hour SCSR models in use.

Under the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006, coal mine operators are required to provide additional SCSRs for each miner underground in areas such as working places, on mantrips, in escapeways and where outby crews work or travel. The rule also requires that SCSRs be readily accessible in the event of an emergency.

For further information, visit the CSE-SR-100 single-source page on MSHA's website at <http://www.msha.gov/alerts/csesr100/csesr100alerts.asp>.

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