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## **MSHA releases preliminary fatality data for 2012**

*Fatality rates at an all-time low, while annual number of deaths is 2nd lowest*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – Preliminary data from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration released today indicates that, in 2012, mining fatality rates reached an all-time low for the second straight year. Fatality rates are calculated based on the number of mining deaths per 200,000 hours worked.

“Of all miners working in mines last year, fewer lost their lives in mining accidents, and more returned home safely to their family and friends at the end of their shifts,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. He added: “While mining deaths and injuries – due to the efforts of all in the mining industry – have reached historic lows, more actions are needed to prevent mining injuries, illnesses and deaths.”

Thirty-six miners (19 in coal and 17 in metal/nonmetal mining) died in work-related accidents at the nation’s mines in 2012, making it the second-lowest annual fatality total on record, one more fatality than the 2009 historic low of 35. Seven miners died in West Virginia, five in Kentucky, three each in New York and Alabama, two each in Montana and Florida, and one each in Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Virginia.

The leading cause of fatalities during 2012 was powered haulage, which claimed the lives of 10 miners. Other causes included machinery accidents, which killed six; slip or fall of person accidents, which also claimed six lives; and rib falls, which killed three miners. Most notable was the number of supervisor deaths, which accounted for nine fatalities, or 25 percent of the total – a much higher percentage than in previous years and cause for concern.

In 2012, three of the miners killed at metal/nonmetal mines had less than one year of experience at the mine. Five miners had less than one year of experience at the job or task they were performing. At coal mines, five miners who died had one year or less experience at the mine. Eight miners who were killed had one year or less experience at the job or task they were performing when they died.

“These numbers underscore that effective and appropriate training – particularly task training – needs to be provided to miners before they perform a new task,” said Main.

Pinning, crushing and striking accidents in underground coal mines continue to cause significant numbers of injuries and fatalities. From 1984 through 2012, 73 deaths occurred from these types of accidents – including 33 that were associated with continuous mining machines and could have been prevented by proximity detection, a system designed to stop mining machinery from coming into contact with miners. MSHA estimates that using a proximity detection system could have prevented several nonfatal injuries associated with underground mining machines. MSHA believes that, in 2012, three deaths at coal mines could have been prevented if these systems had been in place. Some mine operators already have invested in this technology.

For an analysis of 2012 mining deaths, along with best practices to help mining operations avoid similar fatalities, visit <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp>.

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