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U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 13-1214-NAT

For Immediate Release

June 19, 2013

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Holmes Safety Association embraces mine rescue component

ARLINGTON, Va. – The recent decision by the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association to create a separate mine rescue program represents a critical component in a three-year effort by the Mine Safety and Health Administration to address gaps in how the nation responds to mine emergencies.

“We now have a new partner—a national organization to support and provide the necessary guidance for mine rescue,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment and change to its bylaws to create a mine rescue component during its annual meeting June 4-6 in Virginia Beach, Va. The association will provide a forum for the mine rescue community to collaborate on best practices, procedures and training to enhance mine rescue capabilities for coal and metal/nonmetal mines. It also will serve as a vehicle to disseminate guidelines, training and tools to the mining community.

“Mine rescue is among the most dangerous and challenging types of rescue work undertaken in this country, and we owe those who volunteer for these high-risk missions the best training and support we can give them,” said Main. “This month’s vote returns mine rescue to its roots within the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association.”

Since May 2010, MSHA has hosted three summits and held a number of events with the mine rescue community to discuss the latest improvements in mine rescue, identify remaining gaps in mine emergency response and preparedness, and decide what further actions are needed to ensure a swift and comprehensive response from government, industry and others in the event of a mine emergency.

A meeting to establish the executive committee and officers of the new mine rescue organizational component of Holmes will take place on Oct. 29, 2013, at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, W.Va.

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, founded in 1916 to promote health and safety in mining, was named for Dr. Joseph A. Holmes, a mine safety pioneer and the first director of the U.S. Bureau of Mines. Holmes was instrumental in establishing and organizing mine rescue teams and training during the early part of the 20th century. The nonprofit organization consists of representatives from federal and state governments, mining organizations and labor.

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