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MSHA launches new online tool to assist mine operators

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today launched a new online tool for the mining industry. The S&S Rate Calculator enables mine operators who implement a corrective action program to determine if their mine is successfully reducing its significant and substantial, or S&S, violations.

S&S violations are violations of a mandatory health or safety standard that "significantly and substantially contributes to the cause and effect of a coal or other mine safety or health hazard."

The S&S Rate Calculator is an enhancement to the two-year-old Pattern of Violations Monitoring Tool, which allows mine operators, miners and stakeholders to measure a mine's performance against MSHA's specific screening criteria for violations. The S&S Rate Calculator allows users to determine a mine's rate of S&S violations for any specific date range. Users need only the mine's 7-digit ID number to find data.

"It is the mine operator's responsibility to track its violation and injury histories to determine whether it needs to take action to comply with mine safety laws, protect miners and not trigger a POV notice," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "Operators who implement a corrective action program can use this tool, which complements the POV monitoring tool, to track their progress and make sure a corrective action program is effectively addressing the mine's S&S rate."

MSHA published a final rule in January revising the POV regulation. The rule provides mine operators who may be approaching POV status the opportunity to implement a corrective action program, and MSHA may consider a mine operator's effective implementation of an MSHA-approved corrective action program as a mitigating circumstance in its POV review. For mines in POV status, each S&S violation will result in a withdrawal order until a complete inspection finds no S&S violations.

The S&S rate calculator is available at: <http://www.msha.gov/DRS/SNSRateCalculator.asp>

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