



News Release

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MSHA proposes rule to prevent crushing, pinning deaths and injuries *Rule would require proximity detection devices on coal-haulage equipment underground*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Haulage machinery in underground coal mines – such as shuttle cars, ram cars and scoops – would have to be equipped with technology that prevents miners from becoming struck, pinned or crushed, as per a proposed rule from the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

On Sept. 2, MSHA will publish a proposed rule calling for proximity detection systems on underground coal hauling systems used on the mining section. Proximity detection is a technology that uses electronic sensors to detect motion and the distance between a miner and a machine. These systems provide audible and visual warnings, and automatically stop moving machines before miners are injured.

MSHA estimates that, as of June 2015, 155 of the approximately 2,116 underground coal hauling machines and scoops were equipped with proximity detection systems.

Between 1984 and 2014, pinning, crushing and striking accidents killed 42 miners and injured 179 others. In the most recent five-year period (2010-2014), accidents killed nine miners in 41 cases – 23 involved coal hauling machines and 18 involved scoops. In [one recent case](#), on December 16, 2014, a repairman was fatally struck by a ram car at the Highland 9 Mine in Union County, Kentucky. Proximity detection systems may have prevented all of these deaths and injuries.



A shuttle car transports coal in an underground mine.

“This proposed proximity detection system rule would better protect miners from being crushed or pinned in the confined underground mine spaces where large equipment is constantly in motion,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “It is an important component of the department’s ‘Plan, Prevent and Protect’ strategy for safeguarding all workers.”

“We know this technology works as a number of mine operators have already installed proximity detection systems on coal hauling machines and scoops,” said Kevin Stricklin, MSHA’s administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health. “We hope to learn from their experiences during the public comment period.”

In January, MSHA published a final rule requiring the installation of proximity detection systems on continuous mining machines used to cut coal in underground mines. Many continuous mining machines are already equipped with this technology.

The proposed rule requires coal mine operators to use proximity detection systems that do the following:

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- Cause a coal-hauling machine or scoop to stop before contacting a miner
- Provide audible and visual warning signals when a miner gets too close to the machine (within the machine’s warning zone)
- Provide a visual signal on the machine that indicates the system is functioning properly
- Prevent movement of the machine if the system is not functioning properly
- Prevent interference with or from other electrical systems
- Be installed and maintained by a person trained in the system’s installation and maintenance

The proposed rule includes the following phase-in for compliance:

- Eight months after the rule goes into effect, coal-hauling machines and scoops manufactured after the effective date of the rule; and coal-hauling machines and scoops equipped with an existing proximity detection system, which can be modified underground must be in compliance.
- Thirty-six months after the rule goes into effect, coal hauling machines and scoops equipped with an existing proximity detection system, which cannot be modified underground or needs to be replaced with a new proximity detection system; and coal hauling machines and scoops manufactured on or before the effective date of the rule and not equipped with a proximity detection system must be in compliance.

Thirty-six months after the rule goes into effect, all coal-hauling machines and scoops would need to be in compliance.

In the proposal, MSHA also requests comments on whether this technology should be required in underground metal and nonmetal mines. The comment period will close on Dec. 1, 2015, and MSHA will hold public hearings to allow the public to present their views on the proposed rule.

[Learn more about the proposed rule here.](#)

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