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US Labor Department's MSHA releases first quarter 2013 fatality data

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today released a summary of U.S. mining deaths that occurred during the first quarter of calendar year 2013.

Between Jan. 1 and March 31, 11 miners died in workplace accidents. Eight fatalities occurred in coal mines, while three occurred in metal/nonmetal mines. Six coal miners were killed in less than one month, four of them in West Virginia, which prompted increased action by MSHA; the agency issued a safety alert, and MSHA inspectors, supervisors and managers traveled throughout the state to advise miners, miners' representatives, mining supervisors and operators about this trend.

In coal mining, two miners each died in machinery, powered haulage and roof fall accidents. One miner each died in accidents involving exploding vessels under pressure and hoisting. In metal/nonmetal mining, one miner each died in accidents involving fall of highwall, machinery, and explosives and breaking agents.

MSHA has undertaken a number of measures to prevent mining deaths, injuries and illnesses, including increased surveillance and strategic enforcement through impact inspections at mines with troubling compliance histories; enhanced pattern of violations actions; special initiatives such as "Rules to Live By," which focuses attention on the most common causes of mining deaths; and outreach efforts with mining stakeholders.

Mining fatality and injury rates were the lowest ever in 2011. Preliminary data for 2012 show that mine safety continues to move in the right direction with fatality rates for all mining reaching an all-time low: .0107 deaths per 200,000 hours worked. The rate of reported injuries was 2.56 per 200,000 hours worked, also the lowest rate on record.

"It has taken the efforts of MSHA and the entire mining industry to reach these milestones," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "But while mining deaths and injuries are at historic lows, more action is needed by all of us to prevent mining injuries, illnesses and deaths."

An analysis of 2013 first-quarter fatalities is available on MSHA's website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp>, along with best practices to help mining operations avoid similar fatalities.

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