



# News Release

Connect with DOL at  
<http://social.dol.gov!>



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
Release Number: 13-1590-NAT

For Immediate Release

Aug. 5, 2013

Contact: Amy Louviere

Phone: 202-693-9423

Email: [Louviere.Amy@dol.gov](mailto:Louviere.Amy@dol.gov)

## Fewer roof falls occurring in US coal mines, but challenges remain

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The number of U.S. miners killed in underground coal roof falls has been dramatically reduced since 2007, and fatalities resulting from retreat mining have been virtually eliminated, according to figures from the Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration.

“As a result of efforts undertaken by MSHA and the mining community, we have seen a significant reduction in coal mine roof fall accidents, which have traditionally been a leading source of debilitating injuries and death for coal miners,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

Each year during its Preventive Roof/Rib Outreach Program (PROP), MSHA educates miners and mine operators about the dangers of roof and rib falls in underground coal mines. From 2003–2007, 28 miners lost their lives in accidents involving falls of the mine’s roof and ribs. Over the next five years, from 2008 through 2012, the number of roof and rib fall fatalities dropped to 19, a 32 percent reduction. More significantly, the number of fatalities resulting from retreat mining fell from seven during the first five- year period to zero for the 2008-2012 period.

Retreat mining is the practice of mining coal and leaving pillars standing to support the mine roof. When mining is completed in that area, miners carefully collapse and remove the pillars as the work then retreats from that section of the underground mine.

“Everyone in this industry – miners and their representatives, mine operators as well as MSHA personnel – have worked together to make mines safer and more secure from roof falls,” said Main. “However, while we have made real gains in eliminating fatalities from retreat mining, we must redouble our efforts to address hazards in other areas of underground roof and rib safety.”

In 2012, 377 miners were injured from roof and rib falls. Of these, 145 were roof- bolter operators injured from roof falls, and another 20 were roof- bolter operators injured from falls of rib.

With this in mind, MSHA’s 2013 PROP effort will focus on Roof Bolter Operator Safety. Through the release of a four-part series of informational posters, the agency will target roof- bolter roof and rib fall injuries, as well as other accidents from hands-on drilling, pinch points and accidental control activation.

###