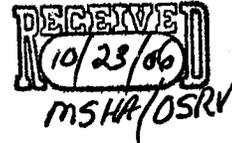


**BLUE RIBBON QUARRIES, INC.**

P.O. BOX 616 ELBERTON GA 30635

MSHA  
OFFICE OF STANDARDS, REGULATIONS AND VARIANCES  
1100 WILSON BLVD. ROOM 2350  
ARLINGTON, VA 22209-3939



FOR THE RECORD- STATEMENT OF OBJECTION

I WOULD LIKE TO GO ON THE RECORD AS BEING OPPOSED TO THE CHANGES IN THE MANNER IN WHICH FINES ARE BEING ISSUED AS STATED IN THE PROPOSED CHANGES. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE POINT SYSTEM IS FAIR, IT GIVES THE INSPECTOR TOO MUCH POWER WHICH IS BASED ON ASSUMPTION THAT HE KNOWS IT ALL.

EVEN IF OUR GRANITE MINING INDUSTRY HAD THE SAME NUMBER OF CITATIONS THE COST WOULD DOUBLE DUE TO THE NEW SYSTEM. IF THEY REDUCED THEIR CITATIONS BY 50% THEY WOULD STILL PENALIZE THE SAME AS THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

OUR SMALL QUARRY RECENTLY WAS HONORED WITH A SENTINEL OF SAFETY AWARD AND WE STILL CURRENTLY HAVE FINES THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY. EVEN WITH A GOOD SAFETY RECORD WE CANNOT PAY THE FINES THAT HAVE BEEN LEVIED AGAINST US. OUR BUSINESS IS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE THE COST OF FUEL INCREASES AND FOREIGN COMPETITION IN THE STONE INDUSTRY. THIS IS A TIME THAT WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF OUR GOVERNMENT NOT MORE FINES AND INTERVENTION. I ASK THAT DIMENSION STONE OPERATORS BE ISSUED A VARIANCE FROM THESE RULES AND INCREASED ASSESSMENTS. DON'T PENALIZE US FOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE MINING INDUSTRY.

IN MY OPINION THE ASSESSMENTS ARE EXCESSIVE AND WILL DISCOURAGE GROWTH IN OUR INDUSTRY IN FACT IT MAY BE THE END OF IT. WE WOULD ALSO ASK THAT THE TIME ALLOWED FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS BE EXTENDED. MANY PEOPLE WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY THESE CHANGES ARE NOT AWARE OF THE PROPOSAL. OUR INDUSTRY, SMALL COMPANY AND ITS EMPLOYEES ARE HOPEFUL THAT YOU WILL LISTEN AND NOT ALLOW THIS CHANGE TO TAKE PLACE, OUR FUTURE AND MANY JOBS ARE AT STAKE!

RESPECTFULLY,

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Vince Fernandez".

VINCE FERNANDEZ  
BLUE RIBBON QUARRIES, INC.  
PRESIDENT