

ISSUE DATE: 07/17/09

PROGRAM INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. P09-12

FROM: KEVIN G. STRICKLIN *Charles Thomas for*  
Administrator for  
Coal Mine Safety and Health

SUBJECT: Escape Capsules in Underground Coal Mines

**Who needs this information?**

Underground coal mine operators, miners' representatives, independent contractors, Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) enforcement personnel, Technical Support personnel, and other interested parties should have this information.

**What is the purpose of this Program Information Bulletin?**

The purpose of this Program Information Bulletin (PIB) is to inform the underground coal mining community of MSHA's intent to evaluate emergency escape capsules for their capacity to carry a disabled miner on a stretcher and be accompanied by an attendant and to determine if escapeways are properly maintained to ensure the safe operation of such escape capsules during an emergency.

**Information**

As part of an emergency evacuation and firefighting program under 30 C.F.R. § 75.1502, underground coal miners are instructed in the proper procedures they must follow if a mine emergency occurs, including consideration of different scenarios to determine the best option for evacuation under various mine emergency situations. Differing scenarios may include conditions and situations that use escape capsules to evacuate miners to the surface.

With the passage of the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) ACT in 2006, MSHA considers the use of such capsules as part of an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) to evacuate miners to the surface in the event of an emergency. MSHA intends to evaluate the carrying capacity of these escape capsules to determine if all miners underground could be evacuated in a swift and timely manner, including disabled miners. MSHA will also determine if each escapeway is maintained in a safe condition to always assure passage of miners and disabled miners using an escape

capsule to evacuate to the surface. Accordingly, MSHA may conduct a stretcher test of any escape capsule to insure that a disabled person, secured on a stretcher, could fit inside the capsule and be accompanied by another person, to maintain the injured person during transport. Escape capsules used in escapeways to evacuate miners should be of sufficient size to transport a stretcher in a horizontal position.

**What is the background for this PIB?**

MSHA is aware that escape capsules are being used by some mine operators as part of their emergency evacuation and firefighting program of instruction. MSHA intends to evaluate these escape capsules to determine if they are suitable to be included within an ERP and if they comply with the requirements in 30 C.F.R. § 75.380 (d)(1), § 75.381 (c)(1) and § 75.1502.

**What is MSHA's authority for this PIB?**

The Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 801 et. seq.; 30 C.F.R. § 75.380 (d)(1) and 30 C.F.R. § 75.381 (c)(1) Escapeways and § 75.1502, Mine Emergency Evacuation and Firefighting Program of Instruction.

**Where Is this PIB on the Internet?**

This PIB may be viewed on the World Wide Web by accessing MSHA's home page at ([www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov)), choosing "Compliance Info" and "Program Information Bulletins."

**Who are the MSHA contact person for this PIB?**

Coal Mine Safety and Health, Division of Safety  
John Arrington (202) 693-9549  
E-mail: [arrington.john@dol.gov](mailto:arrington.john@dol.gov)

**Who will receive this PIB?**

MSHA Program Policy Manual Holders  
Underground Coal Mine Operators  
Miners' Representatives  
Independent Contractors  
Special Interest Groups