

News Release



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 10-1024-NAT (451)

For Immediate Release
July 28, 2010
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NFL running back joins forces with MSHA to deliver mine safety message ***Kansas City Chiefs' Thomas Jones speaks out for 'Stay Out-Stay Alive' campaign***

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that Kansas City Chiefs' running back Thomas Jones has become a spokesman for the agency's annual "Stay Out-Stay Alive" public safety campaign, launched in 1999 to warn outdoor enthusiasts, especially children, about the dangers of playing on mine property. Each year, dozens of people are injured or killed in recreational accidents at active and abandoned mine sites.

Jones, who grew up in the coalfields of southwestern Virginia, has recorded a series of audio and video public service announcements describing the hidden dangers that exist in abandoned mines and quarries. "Both my parents were coal miners, and they instilled in me a respect for the hazards they often encountered while working underground," said Jones. "If you haven't been properly trained as a miner, you have no business being anywhere near a quarry, gravel pit or mine."

"We are pleased that Thomas has dedicated his time to help MSHA spread this very important safety message, especially to young people," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "Since professional athletes often serve as role models for our children, and he comes from a coal mining family, Thomas is the ideal spokesperson for this campaign."

Each spring, MSHA field personnel visit schools, scouting groups and other venues around the country to talk to young people about the dangers of playing on active and abandoned mine property.

Drowning is by far the most common cause of non-occupational fatal mining accidents, accounting for three out of five fatalities over the past 10 years. Abandoned water-filled quarries harbor slippery slopes and unstable rock ledges. The water can conceal old machinery and sharp objects left behind after a mining operation closes. Even expert swimmers may encounter trouble in the dangerously cold and deceptively deep waters. Since 1999, nearly half of all drowning victims were between 15 and 25 years old.

Old surface mines, popular spots for all-terrain vehicles and motorcycle enthusiasts, often contain hills of loose materials or refuse heaps that can easily collapse and cause deadly rollovers. Surface mining landscapes are constantly changing, resulting in poor visibility of cliffs and steep ledges. These hazardous conditions make vehicle accidents at surface mines the second most common cause of fatalities on mining properties.

Underground mines can have hidden shafts, flooded or airless sections, or deadly gases. Tunnels are susceptible to cave-ins, and unused or misfired explosives can be set off by the slightest disturbance or touch.

For further information about "Stay Out-Stay Alive," and to hear an audio clip of the public service announcement, visit <http://www.msha.gov/SOSA/SOSAhome.asp>.

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