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MSHA releases preliminary data for 2012 reflecting record low fatality and injury rates in mining

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced the release of preliminary data for 2012 that indicate the lowest fatality and injury rates in the history of U.S. mining.

“MSHA at a Glance,” with updated information on inspections, violations, mines and miners, as well as injury and fatality rates, is available on the agency’s website, <http://www.msha.gov>, under “Fact Sheets.”

“These preliminary numbers clearly show that actions undertaken by MSHA and the mining industry continue to move mine safety in the right direction, with improvements in compliance with the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, and a reduction in injury and fatality rates,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

In 2012, the fatality rate was .0107 deaths per 200,000 hours worked. The rate of reported injuries was 2.56 per 200,000 hour worked. These reductions replace the prior year’s record historical low rates.

Although the number of mines in the U.S. decreased slightly (from 14,176 in 2011 to 14,058 in 2012), the number of miners increased from 381,209 to 387,671. Thirty-five miners died on the job in 2012, tying the record low number of deaths in mining set in 2009. The number of citations and orders MSHA issued fell from 157,052 in 2011 to 140,007 in 2012, an 11 percent decrease.

In coal mining, 19 miners died in on-the-job accidents in 2012, the second lowest number ever. The fatality rate was .0151 deaths per 200,000 hours worked, also the second lowest ever recorded. The rate of reported injuries was 3.15 per 200,000 hours worked, the lowest ever recorded. The number of citations and orders issued declined, from 93,451 in 2011 to 79,327 in 2012, a 15 percent reduction. The industry saw decreases in the number of mines (from 1,973 to 1,865) and in production (from 1,095 to 1,017 million tons) between 2011 and 2012. While the number of coal miners also decreased from a decades-long high of 143,437 in 2011 to 137,361 in 2012, it was the second highest for any year since 1994.

In metal and nonmetal mining, the record-low fatality rate was .0080 deaths per 200,000 hours worked. Sixteen miners died in on-the-job accidents, equaling the record low set in 2011. The reported injury rate of 2.19 per 200,000 hours worked also was a record low. Citations and orders issued dropped from 63,601 in 2011 to 60,680 in 2012, a 5 percent reduction. While the number of metal and nonmetal mines remained steady in 2012, at 12,193, the number of miners increased from 237,772 in 2011 to 250,310 in 2012.

In an effort to provide timely release of information, MSHA has established a new process to release preliminary year-end data in April after they are compiled in the first calendar quarter, and will update them in June.

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