

News Release



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US Labor Department's MSHA kicks off annual 'Winter Alert' campaign *Miners, mine operators urged to take precautions during colder months*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration kicks off its 2010 Winter Alert campaign today to warn miners and mine operators about the dangers colder weather can bring to the mining environment. Historically, statistics show that most coal mine explosions occur during the colder months.

“Conditions at underground and surface coal mines can change dramatically during colder weather,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Miners and mine operators should always be mindful of the dangers and hazards they may face this time of year.”

Low barometric pressures and low humidity, coupled with seasonal drying of many areas in underground coal mines, have contributed to the larger number of mine explosions during winter months. Other hazards include limited visibility, icy haulage roads and walkways, and the freezing and thawing effect on highwalls at surface mines.

MSHA urges miners and mine operators at underground coal mines to follow safety checklists by ensuring there is adequate ventilation, applying liberal amounts of rock dust, conducting frequent and thorough examinations, and being familiar with emergency procedures to prevent coal mine ignitions and explosions.

Miners also should be vigilant about keeping escapeways clear of impediments. Miners and operators of surface mines should examine the stability of highwalls, remove snow and ice from walkways, de-ice any equipment, and apply salt and sand liberally where needed.

During their normal inspection duties, MSHA inspectors will distribute posters and hardhat stickers with the slogan “Beat Winter Hazards, Win with Winter Alert” to alert miners about potential risks.

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