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Contact: Jesse Lawder

Phone: 202-693-4659

Email: lawder.jesse@dol.gov

MSHA announces results of December 2012 impact inspections

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that federal inspectors issued 150 citations and nine orders during special impact inspections conducted at eight coal mines and three metal/nonmetal mines last month.

The monthly inspections, which began in force in April 2010 following the explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine, involve mines that merit increased agency attention and enforcement due to their poor compliance history or particular compliance concerns. These matters include high numbers of violations or closure orders; frequent hazard complaints or hotline calls; plan compliance issues; inadequate workplace examinations; a high number of accidents, injuries or illnesses; fatalities; adverse conditions such as increased methane liberation, faulty roof conditions and inadequate ventilation; and respirable dust.

As an example from last month, one impact inspection was conducted on Dec. 11 during the day shift at Dorchester Enterprises Inc., Mine No. 4 in Wise County, Va. Upon arrival at the mine, MSHA personnel secured the mine’s communication system to prevent advance notice of the inspection. The inspection team travelled underground to two mechanized mining units, and an additional team member inspected the surface. MSHA cited violations concerning ventilation practices and conditions, as well as accumulation of combustible material. A total of 13 citations and five orders were issued, nine cited on the surface and nine underground.

Two unwarrantable failure orders were issued for the mine operator failing to follow the approved ventilation plan on the active mechanized mining units. The inspection team observed visible dust overriding the machine scrubber system and rolling across the top of the continuous mining machine and shuttle car operator. Air readings taken by inspectors indicated increased potential for ignitions in the mine as well as for injuries and illnesses to miners. The mine operator has been cited 35 times in the past two years for failure to follow the approved ventilation plan.

This impact inspection was the second at Mine No. 4; 10 citations were issued during the previous impact inspection in February 2011.

“December’s impact inspections found one of the lowest numbers of violations to date, which tells us broadly that mines undergoing impact inspections are improving,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “But we still see some mines that fail to address recurring problems that put miners at risk.”

– more –

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As another example from last month, MSHA conducted an impact inspection Dec. 4-9 at Asarco LLC, Ray Mine, a large surface copper ore mine located in Gila County, Ariz. The mine, which employs 783 miners, was issued 28 citations. Conditions cited included not providing insulating material to prevent electrical shock to miners and equipment safety defects that exposed miners to hazards and were not repaired in a timely manner. Ray Mine has been cited 26 times in the past two years for violating this equipment safety standard.

Two citations were issued for openings in railings that exposed miners to fall hazards of approximately 100 feet in one area, and a separate area that exposed miners to fall hazards of more than 8 feet into a sulfide solution pond. Another citation was issued for fall hazards of more than 20 feet that were not immediately apparent to miners and not properly identified with barricades and/or warning signs. Two citations were issued for not providing automatic backup alarms on a welding truck and a skid loader to warn miners in the area of the vehicles' movement.

This impact inspection was the second at the mine; 46 citations were issued during the previous impact inspection in April 2011.

Since April 2010, MSHA has conducted 550 impact inspections and issued 9,595 citations, 909 orders and 40 safeguards.

Editor's notes:

- On Jan. 1, the operator and mine name of Dorchester Enterprises Inc., Mine No. 4 changed to Mill Branch Coal Corp., Dorchester Mine.
- A spreadsheet containing the results of impact inspections in December 2012 accompanies this news release.

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MSHA Monthly Impact Inspection List

(December 2012)

December 2012

Coal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action									Justifications												
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe-guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	104(e)(2) Order	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(j)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions	9. Respirable Dust Issues	
District 03	WV	4609060	David M Maynard	Ten-Mile Coal Co., Inc.	#4 Mine	16	0	0	16	2	14	16	12.50%	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	1									
District 04	WV	4609210	John B Preece	West Virginia Mine Power, Inc.	Mountaineer Pocahontas Mine No. 3	11	0	0	11	5	6	11	45.45%	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11		1								
District 05	VA	4407052	Alpha Natural Resources, Inc.	Mill Branch Coal Corp.	Dorchester Mine	13	5	0	18	12	6	18	66.67%	12	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18				1	1					1
District 06	KY	1517941	James H Booth	Apex Energy Inc	No 2	7	0	0	7	2	5	7	28.57%	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7		1	1							
District 07	KY	1519486	Tina Davenport; John C Davenport	Davex Energy, LLC	Davex Energy, LLC #1	12	1	0	13	6	7	13	46.15%	12	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13			1	1				1		
District 09	CO	0504674	Oxbow Carbon LLC	Oxbow Mining, LLC	Elk Creek Mine	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2				1	1					
District 10	KY	1519358	Armstrong Energy Corporation LLC	Armstrong Coal Company Inc	Parkway Mine	19	1	0	20	5	15	20	25.00%	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20										1
District 12	WV	4609066	Alpha Natural Resources, Inc.	Brooks Run Mining Company LLC	Cucumber Mine	20	0	0	20	6	14	20	30.00%	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20										1
8						National Totals				98	9	0	107	38	67	105	36.19%	97	0	1	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	2	1	1	1

December 2012

Metal Nonmetal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action									Justifications														
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe-guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	104(e)(2) Order	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(j)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions	9. Respirable Dust Issues			
SC	MO	2302371	Tom Hillman; Paul Melnik	Valley Minerals, LLC	Valley Minerals, LLC	18	0	0	18	7	11	18	38.89%	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18												
WE	NV	2602246	Barrick Gold Corp	Barrick Goldstrike Mines Inc	Meikle Mine	6	0	0	6	2	4	6	33.33%	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6		1	1	1	1	1						
RM	AZ	0200150	Grupo Mexico S A	Asarco LLC	Ray	28	0	0	28	9	19	28	32.14%	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28												
3						National Totals				52	0	0	52	18	34	52	34.62%	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	
Total						National Totals				150	9	0	159	56	101	157	35.67%	149	0	1	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	3	4	5	0	6	2	1