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U.S. Department of Labor For Immediate Release
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 13-1326-NAT

July 10, 2013
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MSHA releases final data for 2012 *Numbers indicate lowest mining death and injury rates*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced the release of final data for 2012 that indicate the lowest fatality and injury rates in the history of U.S. mining, along with the lowest rate of contractor fatalities since the agency began calculating those rates in 1983.

Thirty-six miners died on the job in 2012. The 2012 total includes the Dec. 28 death of a coal miner at Choctaw Mine in Walker County, Ala., that was recently deemed chargeable to the mining industry. Five contractors died in mining accidents in 2012, compared to 11 in 2011, nearly half the lowest number ever recorded.

“While more needs to be done to protect the nation’s miners, we are moving mine safety in the right direction. The actions undertaken by MSHA and the mining community were the key to the continuing improvements we saw in 2012,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “All miners deserve the safest possible working conditions.”

Compliance with the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 also continued to improve in 2012, with an 18 percent reduction in violations cited by MSHA since 2010. As a result, penalties for violations dropped. Although the number of mines in the United States decreased slightly (from 14,176 in 2011 to 14,093 in 2012), the number of miners increased from 381,209 to 387,878.

In 2012, the fatality rate was .0110 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.

The number of citations and orders MSHA issued fell from 156,802 in 2011 to 139,770 in 2012, an 11 percent decrease. Penalty assessments dropped from \$160.8 million in 2011 to \$120.5 million in 2012.

In coal mining, 20 miners died in on-the-job accidents in 2012, the second lowest number ever. The fatality rate was .0159 deaths per 200,000 hours worked, also the second lowest ever recorded. The rate of reported injuries was 3.16 per 200,000 hours worked, the lowest ever recorded. The number of citations and orders issued declined, from 93,330 in 2011 to 79,250 in 2012, a 15 percent reduction.

The coal industry saw decreases in the number of mines (from 1,973 to 1,871) and in production (from 1,095 to 1,018 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 137,650 in 2012, it was the second highest for any year since 1994.

In metal and nonmetal mining, the record-low fatality rate was .0079 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 63,472 in 2011 to 60,520 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 250,228 in 2012.

For updated information on number of inspections, violations, mines and miners, as well as injury and fatality rates, go to “MSHA at a Glance” at <http://www.msha.gov>, under “Fact Sheets.”

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