



News Release

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Coal dust sampling results show mines are complying with new dust rule

ARLINGTON, Va. – Despite concerns voiced by the mining industry that it would have trouble meeting the requirements of the rule to reduce respirable coal mine dust, approximately 99 percent of the 7,456 valid respirable dust samples collected during the first two months under the [new rule](#) met compliance levels, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s [Mine Safety and Health Administration](#).

Between Aug. 1 and Sept. 30, MSHA collected 4,255 dust samples from 515 coal mines; 20 of those (or nearly .5 percent) exceeded compliance levels used to determine if a violation is warranted. Of the 3,201 samples submitted by mine operators, 42 (or 1.3 percent) exceeded compliance levels.

“Lowering Miners’ Exposure to Respirable Coal Mine Dust, Including Continuous Personal Dust Monitors,” the rule that became effective on Aug. 1, substantially increases operator sampling for respirable coal mine dust and requires an operator to take immediate corrective action when an operator’s sample shows excessive concentrations. The final rule authorizes MSHA to cite an operator based on a single MSHA sample showing excessive dust, rather than on an average of samples.

“These samples were all generated under the new, more rigid standard that requires them to be taken when mines are operating at 80 percent production or more,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “And the results clearly show that mine operators are able to comply with the rule. That’s good news for the health of all coal miners and our efforts to end black lung disease.”

Since Aug. 1, MSHA has conducted comprehensive outreach, education and training on the new respirable dust rule. In addition to meeting with the mining community across the country and posting dozens of [frequently asked questions](#) on its website to help mine operators comply, MSHA coal enforcement and training personnel have trained and certified more than 1,200 individuals in respirable dust sampling and calibration.

In collaboration with the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#), MSHA will host a series of workshops on “Best Practices for Controlling Respirable Dust in Coal Mines.”

“These workshops are part of MSHA’s ongoing commitment to assist the mining industry in the implementation of the new rule,” said Main.

The first workshop will take place on Tuesday, Oct. 28, at the [National Mine Health and Safety Academy](#) in Beaver, West Virginia. Mine managers and operational staff, mine workers, safety and health professionals, mine engineers, manufacturers and consultants are encouraged to attend. Additional workshops will be held in Birmingham, Alabama; Evansville, Indiana; and Grand Junction, Colorado, in 2015.

Prolonged exposure to respirable coal mine dust causes lung diseases, such as coal workers’ pneumoconiosis, emphysema and progressive massive fibrosis. These diseases, collectively referred to as [black lung](#), can lead to permanent disability and death. According to NIOSH estimates, more than 76,000 miners have died since 1968. U.S. Department of Labor news materials are accessible at <http://www.dol.gov>. The department’s [Reasonable Accommodation Resource Center](#) converts departmental information and documents into alternative formats, which include Braille and large print. For alternative format requests, please contact the department at (202) 693-7828 (voice) or (800) 877-8339 (federal relay).

as the result of the disease, and more than \$45 billion in federal compensation benefits have been paid out to coal miners disabled by black lung and their survivors. Evidence indicates that miners, including young miners, are continually being diagnosed with the disease.

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