



September 2, 2010

To the Mining Community:

While headlines focus on the disaster at West Virginia's Upper Big Branch (UBB) Mine that killed 29 miners, we cannot lose sight of the fact that other miners are losing their lives at mines around the country. To date, 28 other miners from all sectors of mining have died in fatal accidents since January 1. We need to take prompt and effective action to prevent more fatalities.

The causes of these deaths and the ways to prevent them are known to us all. Eight miners were killed after being **struck-by** moving or falling objects. **Roof falls and rib rolls** crushed 7 miners. Six miners were killed working in **close proximity** to mining or haulage equipment. Three miners lost their lives in **explosions and fires**, another was killed when he was caught inside rotating machinery, one fell to his death, one was killed when his truck went through a berm and over a highwall, and one drowned. Eight of the victims were **contractors**. Each life lost is a tragedy for a family, a mining operation, and a community.

Fatalities are not inevitable. They can be prevented by using effective **safety and health management programs** in your workplaces. **Workplace examinations** for hazards – pre-shift and on-shift every shift – can identify and eliminate hazards that kill and injure miners. And providing effective and appropriate **training** will ensure that miners recognize and understand hazards and how to control or eliminate them. Mine operators and Part 46 and Part 48 trainers need to train miners and mine supervisors on the conditions that lead to deaths and injuries and measures to prevent and avoid them.

Mining workplaces must be made safe for miners, and operators must ensure that safety procedures are always followed. Thousands of mines do that and work year in and year out without fatalities or reporting lost-time injuries.

Violations of the standards identified earlier this year in our Rules to Live By fatality prevention program continue to play key roles in mine fatalities. Based on preliminary information currently available, it appears that that violations of these priority standards were involved in more than half of these 28 fatalities.

Please visit MSHA's website at www.msha.gov for a detailed message from me on this year's fatalities, best practices to prevent them, posters for you to print and display in your operations, and other information on preventing fatalities in the mining workplace.

MSHA's inspectors will be especially mindful of these issues while performing inspections. As they carry out enforcement of the mine laws, they will be talking to miners and mine supervisors in mines throughout the country to discuss these kinds of fatalities and preventing them. Miners deserve a safe and healthy workplace and the right to go home safe and well at the end of every shift, every day. Working together, we can make that happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Main".

Joseph A. Main
Assistant Secretary for
Mine Safety and Health