

Dear Grantee:

Between January 1 and December 21, 2011, 37 miners died in work-related accidents at our nation's mines. There were 21 coal mining and 16 metal/nonmetal mining fatalities last year, compared with 48 and 23, respectively, in 2010, making 2011 the year with the second-lowest number of mining deaths since statistics for both coal and metal/nonmetal were first recorded in 1910.

Even though the number of mining deaths in 2011 were the second-lowest on record, one mining death is still one too many. Each miner killed represents a family, a community, a workplace that has suffered an incalculable loss. We must work harder to prevent fatalities in mining workplaces in this country.

To that end, MSHA has placed a detailed analysis of 2011 mining fatalities on its website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp> along with best practices to help mining operations avoid fatalities like them.

Fatalities are preventable. Many mines operate every shift of every day, year in and year out, without a fatality or a lost-time injury. Mining workplaces can and must be made safe for miners. Operators must ensure that safety procedures are always followed. With focus, effort and dedication, we can eliminate fatalities in the mining workplace.

As in the past, we are reaching out to the grantees, recognizing the positive impact you have in delivering training to miners. I am asking that you incorporate, as appropriate, training on these types of accidents as well as measures needed to prevent them. Increased training and awareness is necessary if we are to prevent these types of deaths.

Some miners are uncomfortable in speaking out, even when they know there are health and safety hazards. We ask that you remind miners of their rights and responsibilities and provide them with information explaining their Miners' Rights. To assist you, we have recently added a single-source page on our website that has information concerning Miners' Rights.

MSHA has taken a number of actions to identify mines with health and safety problems and initiated several outreach and enforcement initiatives, including "Rules to Live By," a fatality prevention program spotlighting the safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations. We believe those actions, supported by the delivery of quality training; have contributed to the improved fatality numbers this past year.

No miner should have to die on the job to earn a paycheck. We must all work together to ensure that does not happen. We are united in our determination that all miners go home safe and healthy at the end of each shift. .

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Main  
Assistant Secretary of Labor for  
Mine Safety and Health