



APR 25 2012

To the Mining Community:

Last year I began providing the mining industry, trainers and grantees quarterly information on the types of accidents that are occurring in mining and the best practices to prevent them. Below is a summary of information from the first quarter of 2012.

Ten miners died in work-related accidents at the nation's mines in the first quarter of 2012. There were 6 coal mining and 4 metal/nonmetal mining fatalities in the first three months of 2012.

The 6 coal mining deaths occurred in each of the following accident categories: Exploding Vessels Under Pressure, Other (Drowning), Handling Materials, Rib Fall, Machinery, and Electrical. An uncharacteristic trend identified was that five of these fatalities – 3 of them supervisors – occurred on 5 consecutive weekends. This is a particular warning flag for the mining community.

The 4 metal/nonmetal mining deaths occurred in the following accident categories: one in a Powered Haulage accident; two killed in Fall of Face/Rib/Highwall; and one in a Fall of Person accident.

MSHA has placed an analysis of the first quarter 2012 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. Fatalities 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. Miners must be free to exercise their rights under the Mine Act to be full participants in maintaining a safe and healthful workplace.

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 highlighting safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations. We believe those actions, along with initiatives by the mining industry, can make a positive difference. MSHA has posted more information and analysis of the fatal accidents that occurred on the MSHA website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp>

No miner should have to die on the job just 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Main". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

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