



News Release

U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number 06-489-NAT

For Immediate Release
Date: March 15, 2006
Contact: Dirk Fillpot Amy Louviere
Phone: (202) 693-4676 (202) 693-9423

MSHA Proposes Fines of \$139,300 against Kentucky Operator after Mine Ignition

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced proposed fines of \$139,300 against a Kentucky mine operator for safety violations contributing to a methane ignition at J&R Coal Inc.’s No. 7 mine in Letcher County, Ky., Sept. 12, 2005. One miner suffered serious injuries in the ignition which occurred as he was drilling a borehole.

“The safety and health of miners must be protected every day. The failure of any mine operator to provide safe working conditions carries a high risk for their miners and will not be tolerated,” said David G. Dye, MSHA’s acting administrator. “MSHA will assess strong penalties, as in this case, when miners suffer injuries because the operator failed to provide safe working conditions.”

MSHA found that the accident occurred as a result of the operator’s high negligence. The fines MSHA has proposed for safety violations contributing to this accident are as follows:

- failure to install line and box check curtains as required by the ventilation plan, \$42,500;
- failure to perform an adequate pre-shift examination, \$42,500;
- failure to maintain methane detectors in proper operating condition, \$18,100;
- failure to conduct tests for methane, \$18,100;
- failure to conduct an on-shift exam to ensure compliance with respirable dust control parameters, \$18,100.

MSHA can assess fines ranging from \$60 to \$60,000 per violation depending on the nature of the violation, level of negligence and several legal factors.

J&R Coal has 30 days to appeal the proposed fines.

For more information about MSHA, please visit www.msha.gov.

###