

# News Release



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
Release Number 06-1871-NAT

For Immediate Release  
October 25, 2006  
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## **MSHA Advises Miners: ‘Don’t Let Safety Slip’ During Winter** *U.S. Department of Labor Kicks Off Winter Alert Campaign for Mine Safety*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** — The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) kicks off its 2006 Winter Alert campaign this week reminding mine operators and miners to increase awareness about the hazards that lead to fatal accidents in both underground and surface mines due to the onset of colder weather. MSHA’s statistics show that most explosions in coal mines occur during winter months.

“Safety principles should be followed year-round, but miners and mine operators must be more vigilant to safety precautions during wintertime when the weather increases the risk of fatal accidents,” said Richard Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “As the temperature drops, miners must be aware of how cold weather affects working environments.”

MSHA’s Winter Alert campaign runs annually from October through March. This year’s theme of “Don’t Let Safety Slip” reminds mine operators and miners to be alert for environmental hazards such as slippery walkways and icy mine access roads, and to make sure safety rules are not compromised because of seasonal changes.

Low barometric pressure, low humidity and seasonal drying of areas in coal mines can cause methane to migrate more easily into the mine atmosphere and coal dust to become dry during colder weather increasing the risk of an explosion. Other hazards include limited visibility, icy haul roads, and unstable highwalls due to the freezing and thawing process on highwalls.

MSHA personnel will distribute Winter Alert posters, hard-hat stickers, and decals to mine operators and miners displaying MSHA’s safety practices for working in underground and surface mines during wintertime.

### **Safety Checklist at Underground Mines:**

- ✓ **Ensure proper ventilation**
- ✓ **Apply liberal amounts of rock dust**
- ✓ **Conduct frequent examinations**
- ✓ **Examine escapeways and evacuation routes**
- ✓ **Winterize fire-suppression systems**

### **Safety Checklist at Surface Mines:**

- ✓ **Winterize equipment**
- ✓ **Examine work areas for hazards**
- ✓ **Examine exhaust systems for leaks**
- ✓ **Ensure proper ventilation in confined spaces**
- ✓ **Examine highwalls for freeze/thaw hazards**
- ✓ **Remove snow and ice from walkways**
- ✓ **Keep roadways safe for travel**

For more information about Winter Alert or other mine safety and health issues, please visit MSHA’s Web site at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

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