

News Release



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MSHA issues warning to children and adults to ‘Stay Out and Stay Alive’ *Dozens injured and killed each year in recreational accidents*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today launched its annual “Stay Out-Stay Alive” public safety campaign to warn outdoor enthusiasts, especially children, about the dangers of playing on mine property.

Since 1999, more than 200 people have died in recreational accidents at surface and underground active and abandoned operations across the country. In 2006, at least 30 people ranging in age from 17 to 51 were fatally injured while trespassing on mine property.

“There are about 500,000 abandoned mines and another 14,000 active operations throughout the United States,” said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “Many of them contain hidden hazards and, for those not trained to work in mines, the outcome can be deadly. That’s why we urge hikers, bikers, rock hounds and swimmers to ‘Stay Out and Stay Alive.’”

During the month-long campaign, which runs March 19 through April 20, federal mine safety and health professionals will visit schools, scouting groups and other venues to talk to young people about the dangers of playing on mine property.

Underground abandoned mines pose a number of hazards to the casual explorer, including hidden shafts that drop hundreds of feet down, and are covered by decayed and rotten boards that can give way under the slightest weight. Tunnels are prone to cave in and may contain deadly gases, flooded sections, and poisonous snakes and insects. Unused or misfired explosives, including blasting caps, can become highly unstable and be set off by the slightest disturbance or touch.

While they may look innocuous, water-filled quarries may contain hidden dangers as well. In addition to slippery slopes and unstable rock ledges, the water often conceals old machinery and sharp objects left behind after a mining operation shuts down. Even expert swimmers may encounter trouble in the dangerously cold and deceptively deep waters.

Old surface mines, often a popular spot for all terrain vehicle enthusiasts, are characterized by hills of loose materials in stockpiles or refuse heaps that can easily collapse and cause deadly rollovers.

Dozens of federal and state agencies, private organizations, businesses and individuals are active partners in “Stay Out-Stay Alive,” which is in its ninth year. For further information about the national campaign, visit www.msha.gov.

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