



U.S. Department of Labor

News Release

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Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao announces independent review of MSHA's actions at Utah's Crandall Canyon Mine

ARLINGTON, Va. — U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announced today that an independent team of mine safety experts will review the actions of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) relative to the Crandall Canyon Mine accident. The review will include actions taken before the August 6 accident and the ensuing rescue operations.

"After discussions with Administrator for Mine Safety and Health Richard Stickler, I am taking the unprecedented step of appointing independent outside experts to evaluate MSHA's actions regarding the tragedy at the Crandall Canyon Mine on August 6 and the subsequent rescue efforts," said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "The Crandall Canyon miners, the rescuers who were injured and perished in trying to save others, and the loved ones who have suffered so much in this tragedy continue to be foremost in our thoughts."

The following two individuals will lead the independent review:

Joseph W. Pavlovich of Gray, Ky., is a highly respected former MSHA district manager and expert on mine rescue, with 30 years of hands-on experience in underground and surface coal mine safety and health at MSHA. While working at MSHA, he headed three post-accident internal reviews of MSHA's performance and was a team member on another internal review. After retirement from MSHA, he continued to be active in mine safety activities and served as an associate to former MSHA Administrator Davitt McAteer during his review of the Sago Mine disaster.

Earnest C. Teaster Jr. of King George, Va., is a highly respected former MSHA administrator for Metal and Nonmetal Mine Safety and Health and a Coal Mine Safety and Health district manager, with 32 years of experience in mine safety and health issues in a variety of positions at MSHA, ranging from mine inspector to managerial and supervisory roles. Before retiring from MSHA, he also headed three post-accident internal reviews.

The independent review will consist of a thorough examination of written mine plans, inspection records, and other documents relevant to the Crandall Canyon Mine and interviews of MSHA employees with personal knowledge of MSHA's inspection responsibilities and enforcement procedures at the mine. This review will provide a comparison of MSHA's actions at the Crandall Canyon Mine with the requirements of the federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, the "Mine Act," (as amended by the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006), its standards and regulations, and MSHA policies and procedures. The findings of the independent review will result in the development of recommendations to improve MSHA's enforcement program and the agency's oversight of rescue and recovery programs in the aftermath of mine accidents. Copies of this review will be made available to the families of the miners involved in the Crandall Canyon mine accident, Congress and the public.

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