

# News Release



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## **MSHA Small Mines Office helps small operators make large safety gains** *Fatality rate down significantly at small mining operations over 5-year period*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), smaller mining operations in the U.S. have seen a significant decline in the rate of fatal accidents in the five years since MSHA established its Small Mines Office. Between 2003 and 2007, mine operations receiving direct assistance from the agency’s Small Mines Office have experienced a 66 percent reduction in their fatality incidence rate (*i.e.*, the number of fatalities per 200,000 hours worked). Prior to 2003, smaller mining operations, those which employed five or fewer miners, tended to experience a higher rate of fatal accidents than their larger counterparts.

“MSHA’s Small Mines Office has clearly played a major role in assisting small mine operators in reducing the workplace hazards that can cause deadly mining accidents,” said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “These efforts have demonstrated that good health and safety practices need not be expensive, time-consuming or complicated.”

Since its inception, MSHA’s Small Mines Office has helped operators of more than 6,500 U.S. mines develop written safety and health programs tailored to fit their specific mining operation. Over the five-year period, these small operations reduced their fatal incidence rate by 66 percent – from .053 (2000-2002) to .018 per 200,000 work hours (2003-2007).

By comparison, the group of small mining operations that did not request direct assistance from the Small Mines Office saw a smaller reduction in their fatality rate for the same time periods, from .053 to .045. Larger mining operations – mines with more than five employees – reduced their fatality rate from .021 to .017 for the same time period.

Kevin Burns, manager of the Small Mines Office, indicated that a primary reason for the success with reducing fatal incidence rates at small mining operations was the agency’s “robust enforcement efforts coupled with a dose of assistance that increases their ability to comply with MSHA safety and health regulations.” Small mining operations with five or fewer employees represent about 50 percent of all U.S. mining operations.

For further information, please visit the MSHA Web site at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

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