

News Release



U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
Release Number: 10-155-NAT

For Immediate Release
Feb. 2, 2010
Contact: Amy Louviere
Phone: 202-693-9423

MSHA publishes proximity detection request for information in *Federal Register* ***Warning system could avert pinning, crushing accidents underground***

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) announced that a request for information on proximity detection systems for underground mines was published in the *Federal Register* on Feb. 1. Proximity detection is an existing technology that uses electronic sensors to detect motion or the locations of objects and persons but its use on mobile equipment in underground mines is a fairly new concept.

Proximity detection systems can be installed on mining machinery to detect the presence of personnel or equipment within a certain distance of the machine. These systems can be programmed to send warning signals and stop machine movement when the programmed areas are breached.

“This technology offers a means to maintaining a safe working environment and preventing injuries to miners when operating remote-controlled machinery,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “MSHA hopes to gather information and comments from the mining community to help us determine whether the use of these systems will be effective in preventing accidents and reducing injuries and the benefits of any suggested regulatory action.”

Specifically, the agency is requesting information from the mining community to help determine whether the use of proximity detection systems would reduce injuries and fatalities from accidents where a remote-controlled continuous miner (RCCM) pins, crushes or strikes miners in underground mines; the application of proximity detection technology to underground equipment other than RCCMs would reduce the risk of accidents; and any other information that will help MSHA in determining the technological and economic feasibility, training needs and benefits of any suggested regulatory action. Comments must be submitted by April 2, 2010.

Since 1983, 31 miners have been killed in underground mines in accidents involving remote controlled continuous mining machines. Approximately 95 percent of the 1,200 continuous mining machines used in underground mines are remote controlled.

To date, MSHA has approved three systems for use in underground gassy mines.

###

U.S. Department of Labor releases are accessible on the Internet at <http://www.dol.gov>. The information in this news release will be made available in alternate format (large print, Braille, audio tape or disc) from the COAST office upon request. Please specify which news release when placing your request at 202-693-7828 or TTY 202-693-7755. The Labor Department is committed to providing America’s employers and employees with easy access to understandable information on how to comply with its laws and regulations. For more information, please visit <http://www.dol.gov/compliance>.