

# News Release



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## **MSHA initiative highlights dangers related to mobile equipment use in coal mines** *Shuttle cars and scoops linked to 16 fatalities, nearly 800 injuries since 2000*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – Through a new safety initiative, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration is calling special attention to the potential dangers that shuttle cars and scoops in underground coal mines pose to miners. Between January 2000 and September 2010, nearly 800 miners have been injured and 16 killed in coal mine accidents involving shuttle cars and scoops. Three of those deaths occurred this year.

“We are concerned by the large number of injuries and fatal accidents involving shuttle cars and scoops, and are especially alarmed by the number of deaths that occurred just this year,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “On too many occasions, miners are being hit or crushed by this type of mobile equipment, primarily due to the obstructed view of the driver. Miners need to be more aware of the presence of these vehicles, and mine operators need to provide safety protections to prevent these injuries and deaths.”

Shuttle cars and scoops are used to transport material from one area of the mine to another. The vehicles operate in close quarters and tight travel ways, where space is limited. When these vehicles are loaded, a driver’s view of the travel way may be obstructed, making movement dangerous and presenting serious hazards to other working miners in the area.

Using the slogan “Watch Out!,” MSHA has developed new posters, hard hat stickers and best practice resources to address the issue of worker safety around shuttle cars and scoops in underground coal mines, and mine inspectors will distribute the materials to miners at these operations. The handouts warn miners to watch out for moving mobile equipment in the underground area at all times. MSHA also advises miners to wear reflective clothing or reflective patches that make them more visible to equipment operators. Miners should make certain that equipment drivers can actually see them by signaling their presence in a way that will get the driver’s attention. They are encouraged to keep a safe distance from and avoid walking in front of moving shuttle cars or scoops.

“Mine operators need to determine safe routes of travel for miners and equipment, and examine systems that better establish a worker’s location, such as the use of small strobe lights for miners on foot,” Main said.

For several years, MSHA has actively encouraged the development and use of “proximity detection” technology on mining equipment, which can sense the presence of people and machinery within a certain distance of the equipment. These systems can be programmed to send warning signals and stop machine movement when a certain area or space near the system is breached.

“Proximity detection systems, used in conjunction with good safety practices around mobile equipment, could bring an end to fatal accidents involving shuttle cars and scoops in underground coal mines,” Main added.

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