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## US Labor Department's MSHA makes agency audit results public

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced it has posted on its website audit reports by the agency's Office of Accountability from 2008 to 2010. A report summarizing these audits was provided to the House and Senate Appropriations committees in March 2010.

"I firmly believe that, like any responsible government agency, MSHA should continuously review its activities to improve its efficiency and performance," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "Conducting audits is not a new practice for MSHA – they've been carried out for years. But beyond that, it's important to do more than identify and correct specific issues. We take these findings seriously and are implementing new training, and revising policies and procedures to ensure that common problems that have been identified do not crop up again and again."

Among the major findings identified during audits conducted in fiscal year 2009, the Office of Accountability determined that additional training was needed for inspection personnel to ensure that inspectors conduct effective inspections that properly and consistently identify hazards in specialized processes in metal and nonmetal mines. MSHA has modified training programs to address these issues.

Also in 2009, the Office of Accountability identified instances of inadequate supervisory reviews of inspections, due in large part to widespread attrition that resulted in many field office supervisors having five or fewer years with the agency. MSHA has developed and conducted a training program specifically tailored to provide supervisors with the essential tools to successfully carry out their functions. By the end of April, all metal and nonmetal supervisors will have completed this training. Supervisory training for coal mine safety and health supervisors will be scheduled during the next six months.

The Office of Accountability audits noted that in 2010, in some instances, inspectors did not properly evaluate gravity and negligence in certain citations. As a result, MSHA improved training on citation and order writing including the appropriate evaluation of gravity and negligence.

The Office of Accountability, which was established in 2007, provides focused oversight and evaluation of the agency's enforcement activities to assure that MSHA's policies and procedures are being consistently applied, and that critical enforcement activities are being accomplished. Accountability audits have included accompanying mine inspectors during inspections, as well as reviewing inspection reports, mine plans and relevant mine files to ensure that effective management controls are in place that adhere to MSHA policies and procedures. Corrective action plans also are developed and implemented when deficiencies are identified.

To access the audit reports by field office, go to the following link:  
<http://www.msha.gov/readroom/FOIA/AccountabilityAudits/AccountabilityAudits.asp>.

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