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MSHA to hold public hearings in June on 2 proposed rules: ‘Examinations of Work Areas in Underground Coal Mines’ and ‘Pattern of Violations’

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that it will hold four public hearings on two proposed rules: “Examinations of Work Areas in Underground Coal Mines” and “Pattern of Violations.” Each hearing will cover the major issues raised by public input in response to the proposed rules.

The hearings for the examinations of work areas proposal will begin at 8:30 a.m. EDT on each date. After testimony has concluded, the hearings for the pattern of violations proposal will begin immediately. Dates and locations are as follows:

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| June 2 | Embassy Suites Denver Denver, Colo. | June 9 | Sheraton Birmingham Birmingham, Ala. |
| June 7 | Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences of West Virginia Charleston, W.Va. | June 15 | MSHA Headquarters Arlington, Va. |

“Both of these proposed rules seek to offer further protections for our nation’s miners – through complete workplace examinations aimed at eliminating conditions that can result in injury, illness or death, and through more effective means for identifying problem mines and encouraging them to improve their safety records,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

MSHA included the general criteria for reviewing a mine for a pattern of violations in that proposed rule; however, the specific criteria were posted on the agency’s website. In the preamble to the proposed rule, MSHA requested input into how the agency should obtain comments during the development of, and periodic revision to, the POV specific criteria.

“MSHA plans to provide any change to the specific criteria to the public for comment before we use it to review a mine for a pattern of violations,” Main added.

MSHA will review and respond to comments, then revise, as appropriate, the specific criteria and post them on the agency’s website. MSHA is requesting comments on the proposed approach to obtaining public input for revisions to the POV specific criteria.

Post-hearing comments must be received or postmarked by midnight EDT on June 30. Comments, requests to speak and informational materials for the rulemaking record may be sent to MSHA electronically through <http://www.regulations.gov>; by fax to 202-693-9441; by mail to MSHA, Office of Standards, Regulations and Variances, 1100 Wilson Blvd., Room 2350, Arlington, VA 22209-3939; or by hand delivery to the same address. For hand delivery, sign in at the receptionist’s desk on the 21st floor. For more information, contact Roslyn B. Fontaine, acting director, Office of Standards, Regulations and Variances, by email at fontaine.roslyn@dol.gov; by telephone at 202-693-9440 or by fax at 202-693-9441.

The proposed rules are available at <http://www.regulations.gov> and on MSHA’s website at <http://www.msha.gov/REGSPROP.htm>. # # #

U.S. Department of Labor news materials are accessible at <http://www.dol.gov>. The information above is available in large print, Braille, audio tape or disc from the COAST office upon request by calling 202-693-7828 or TTY 202-693-7755.