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U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs
Washington D.C.
Release Number: 11-1428-NAT

For Immediate Release

Sept. 29, 2011

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US Labor Department's MSHA awards \$1 million in Brookwood-Sago Mine Safety Grants

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced \$1 million in grant funds to eight organizations that provide education and training within the mining industry. The Brookwood-Sago grants program was established through a provision in the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006. This funding will be used to develop and implement training and related materials for mine emergency preparedness, as well as for the prevention of accidents in underground mines.

“The ability to keep up with technological advances will not only lead to increased safety, but also gives us a unique opportunity to expand the types of training materials available,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “These materials will allow us to use new and innovative methods to train mine rescue responders and educate the mining community on safety, and that will save lives.”

The University of Arizona in Tucson will receive \$122,000 to design easy-to-use simulation gaming software for training purposes. This platform, designed to train approximately 50 trainers and 2,500 miners, will have a particular focus on those with low literacy and limited English proficiency.

Pennsylvania State University in University Park will receive \$216,000 to develop multimedia education and training materials, for both miners and operators, to help identify and prevent unsafe working conditions in and around mines. The purpose of the materials is to demonstrate exemplary strategies and best practices regarding emergency prevention.

The Colorado School of Mines in Golden will receive \$91,000 to develop realistic computer simulations to train mine managers and staff for mine emergencies, train and evaluate incident commanders and support staff, and train underground search and rescue teams and fresh air base personnel to make decisions based on real-time information and hazard recognition.

Wheeling Jesuit University in Wheeling will receive \$144,000 to partner with the Academy for Mine Training and Energy Technologies at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College to create the Active Training Portal for Mine Safety. Together, they will develop, implement and evaluate a 16-hour “train-the-trainer” course that applies active learning to underground mine emergency prevention and preparedness.

The United Mine Workers of America Career Centers Inc., based in Washington, Pa., will receive \$176,000 to develop a real-time simulation program for responding to emergencies that is relevant to new miners, new mine rescue team members and/or experienced miners. The training will be offered to miners, mine operators and mine rescue team members.

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Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., will receive \$117,000 to develop the Virtual Mine Safety Training Academy – a comprehensive, innovative mine safety training tool with a Web-based, simulated campus environment that includes an underground room-and-pillar coal mine.

Bevill State Community College in Jasper, Ala., will receive \$81,000 to expand upon a previously successful Brookwood-Sago grant, which developed video training modules for mine emergencies. The college will develop short safety training videos for the mining workforce that will be provided for use in mine safety meetings and/or as a continuous video loop at the entrance of mines. The videos also will be distributed on the Internet for adoption in underground mines across the country, free of charge.

The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy in Big Stone Gap will receive \$50,000 to develop and produce a video showing the proper way to react during a mine emergency. It will be approximately 30 minutes in length and include seven critical sequences of events during a mine emergency.

Training grants are awarded for a 12-month performance period, and applicants must be states or nonprofit entities. The grants were named in remembrance of 13 men who died in two explosions at the Jim Walter Resources Inc. No. 5 Mine in Brookwood, Ala., in 2001, and 12 men who died in an explosion at the Sago Mine in Tallsmanville, W.Va., in 2006.

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