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U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.  
Release Number: 11-1526-NAT

For Immediate Release

Oct. 19, 2011

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## **US Labor Department's MSHA warns mining industry about dangers of cold weather** *Miners, mine operators urged to "knock out" winter hazards*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration has launched its annual "Winter Alert" campaign to call attention to the dangers caused by cold weather. Statistics show that coal-mine explosions occur most often during the colder months, October through March.

"As we near the winter season, when the potential for mine explosions is greater, and colder weather creates some drastic changes in the mining workplace, mine operators need to take additional precautions to protect miners," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "In view of this, MSHA is distributing important information to the mining industry about the preventive steps to be taken to avoid accidents."

Low barometric pressure and low humidity, combined with the seasonal drying of many areas in underground coal mines, have been key factors in past mine explosions. Colder weather brings other potential hazards, such as limited visibility, icy haulage roads and walkways, and freezing and thawing of highwalls at surface mines.

This year, MSHA encourages miners and mine operators to "Knock Out the Risk" that winter weather brings by taking specific measures to avoid workplace hazards: remove snow and ice in travel ways, apply salt and sand where needed, and frequently examine highwalls for stability.

In underground coal mines, mine operators should ensure that there is adequate ventilation in the mine, apply liberal amounts of rock dust, conduct frequent and thorough examinations, and be familiar with emergency procedures that prevent coal-mine ignitions and explosions.

During normal inspections, MSHA inspectors will distribute posters, hard-hat stickers and pocket cards with the "Knock Out the Risk" theme to miners and mine operators.

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