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MSHA begins 3rd phase of ‘Rules to Live By’ outreach and enforcement initiative *Fatality prevention program to focus on 14 safety standards*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today launched the third phase of an outreach and enforcement program designed to strengthen efforts to prevent mining fatalities. “Rules to Live By III: Preventing Common Mining Deaths” will focus on 14 safety standards that were chosen because violations related to each have been cited as contributing to at least five mining accidents and at least five deaths during the 10-year period of Jan. 1, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2010.

“The goal of this phase of ‘Rules to Live By’ is to reduce numbers of deaths and injuries from the targeted standards by having mine operators identify and correct all hazardous conditions, direct MSHA enforcement toward confirming that violations related to these conditions are not present at mines, and ensure miners are better trained to recognize and avoid these particular hazards,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

From 2001 through 2010, 609 miners lost their lives in workplace accidents. Violations associated with eight coal standards contributed to 58 deaths during this period, while violations associated with six metal and nonmetal standards contributed to 47 deaths.

The coal standards are as follows:

- 75.362(a)(1) on-shift examination
- 77.404(a) machinery and equipment; operation and maintenance
- 77.405(b) performing work from a raised position; safeguards
- 77.1000 highwalls, pits and spoil banks; plans
- 77.1605(b) loading and haulage equipment; installations
- 77.1606(a) loading and haulage equipment; inspection and maintenance
- 77.1607(b) loading and haulage equipment; operation
- 77.1713(a) daily inspection of surface coal mine; certified person; reports of inspection

The metal and nonmetal standards are as follows:

- 46.7(a) new task training
- 56.3130 wall, bank and slope stability
- 56.3200 correction of hazardous conditions
- 56.15020 life jackets and belts
- 56.14100(b) safety defects; examination, correction and records
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US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR NEWS RELEASE – PAGE 2

Beginning April 1, MSHA will focus more attention on these 14 standards with enhanced enforcement efforts, increased scrutiny for related violations, and instructions to inspectors to more carefully evaluate gravity and negligence – consistent with the seriousness of the violation – when citing violations that cause or contribute to mining fatalities. MSHA inspectors will receive online training to promote consistency in enforcement activity across the agency.

As with the first two phases of “Rules to Live By,” online training will be available to the mining industry and the public on MSHA’s website, and MSHA will provide operators with program and resource information. The agency also will reach out to engage miners and their representatives during the course of MSHA inspections to disseminate appropriate compliance assistance materials – including engineering suggestions, safety target materials packages and other resources – so that they have the appropriate information to address and eliminate workplace hazards.

“In 2011, mining deaths fell to the second lowest annual total on record – a testament to the commitment of miners, mine operators, miners’ representatives, labor and industry organizations, state agencies and grantees, members of the mining community and MSHA,” said Main. “While the mining community achieved near-record low numbers of mining deaths in the United States and has seen a significant decline in fatal mining accidents during the past 10 years, too many miners still lose their lives in preventable accidents. The loss of even one miner causes devastation and pain to the victim’s family, friends and co-workers.

“Compliance with safety and health standards is the responsibility of mine operators, with the assistance of miners. Ultimately, all of us must focus on why these accidents happen and how to prevent them,” he added.

The first phase of “Rules to Live By” began in February 2010.

For additional information about “Rules to Live By,” visit <http://www.msha.gov/focuson/rulestoliveby.asp>.

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