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MSHA special investigators undergo refresher training *Agency worked jointly with FBI to develop course work to improve skills*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Approximately 75 special investigators from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration are participating in refresher training that includes course work conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The two-week classroom instruction at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, W.Va., covers topics such as using proper interview techniques to conduct thorough investigations, the use of injunctive relief in federal district courts, evaluating evidence, reviewing knowing and willful violations, and processing discrimination complaints.

In order that MSHA investigators understand how to appropriately control accident sites, agents from the FBI’s Evidence Response Unit are instructing them on how to approach an accident scene, photograph the scene, obtain and secure evidence, deal with false or altered records, and release the scene. Attorneys with the department’s Office of the Solicitor are presenting on civil and criminal aspects of investigations, specifically addressing evidence needed for successful prosecutions. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice are assisting MSHA presenters with lectures on subjects including how to prepare cases for the U.S. Attorney’s Office, evaluate cases for criminal referral, serve as expert advisers and witnesses, and understand the responsibilities of a grand jury.

“MSHA’s special investigations division is an integral part of the agency’s overall enforcement program,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “This training will serve to strengthen the skills needed to conduct the most thorough, solid and accurate investigations.”

The minimum requirements to become a special investigator include being an authorized representative of the secretary of labor with authority to conduct inspections or having the authorization for right of entry to mining operations, as well as the completion of five weeks of formal classroom training. Credentials also may be obtained through an on-the-job training program. Classroom work consists of reviewing and studying the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, regulations, policy and procedures, and final decisions by the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

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