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MSHA announces results of July impact inspections

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today announced that federal inspectors issued 262 citations, 19 orders and three safeguards during special impact inspections conducted at eight coal mines and five metal/nonmetal mines last month.

The monthly inspections, which began in force in April 2010 following the explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine, involve mines that merit increased agency attention and enforcement due to their poor compliance history or particular compliance concerns, including high numbers of violations or closure orders; frequent hazard complaints or hotline calls; plan compliance issues; inadequate workplace examinations; a high number of accidents, injuries or illnesses; fatalities; and adverse conditions such as increased methane liberation, faulty roof conditions and inadequate ventilation.

As an example from last month, MSHA conducted an impact inspection on July 17 at Rebcoco Coal Inc.’s Valley Mine No. 1 during the day shift. MSHA personnel captured and monitored the communication systems to prevent advance notification of the inspection. MSHA issued 54 citations and nine orders on the day of the inspection, followed by five more 104(b) withdrawal orders for the operator’s failure to abate the outstanding violations.

Inspectors found violations related to inadequate examinations, the mine’s ventilation plan and the maintenance of electric equipment. The operator failed to conduct pre-shift examinations of the belt conveyor entry prior to miners working and traveling in the area, as well as adequate on-shift examinations of the belt conveyor entries. Inspectors also found that the operator did not properly maintain electric face equipment and failed to conduct adequate electrical examinations. These cited conditions were extensive, having existed over several weekly electrical examinations, and posed serious dangers to miners.

The continuous mining machine was found cutting coal on the wrong side in conflict with the approved ventilation plan, and the area had only a third of the required amount of ventilation. Several water sprays on the machine were functioning with only half of the required water pressure, and the ventilation curtain used was not properly placed. Proper ventilation and controls for methane and respirable coal mine dust must be in place to prevent mine explosions and black lung disease.

Inspectors issued a failure-to-abate order during the impact inspection because the operator had not removed accumulations of combustible materials such as empty rock dust bags, empty wooden pallets, garbage in three crosscuts along the intake roadway and small trash piles at various crosscuts along the intake. The accumulation of the combustible materials standard has been cited 24 times in a two-year period at this mine. Five other failure-to-abate orders were issued because the operator had not corrected violations on the roof bolting machine’s automated temporary roof support systems, section power center, roof bolter and fire suppression systems. Inspectors also observed two faulty circuit breakers and a broken receptacle latch on the power center, and six defects on the roof bolter. This impact inspection was the second conducted by MSHA at this mine which, effective Aug. 10, entered into nonproducing status.

– more –

“Mine operators have an obligation under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act to conduct thorough examinations of workplaces and equipment to find and fix hazards to protect miners,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “A failure to do so can expose miners to injury, illness and death. MSHA takes these failures to comply seriously and, on Aug. 6, issued new rules requiring more thorough operator examinations.”

As a second example from last month, MSHA conducted another impact inspection on July 17 at Cobalt Coal Corp. Mining Inc.’s Westchester Mine in McDowell County, W.Va. The inspection party captured the phones to prevent advance notice of the inspection. Inspectors issued 47 enforcement actions, including one imminent danger order, 39 citations, six unwarrantable failure orders and one safeguard. This impact inspection was the mine’s first.

An imminent danger order was issued when stray electrical current was detected on the frame of the section power center and the no. 2 shuttle car. The operator was cited for failing to maintain the underground electrical system in a safe operating condition. In total, 15 citations and orders were issued for not maintaining face equipment in permissible condition, as well as violations relating to electric equipment, trailing cables, grounding and underground high voltage distribution. The stray electrical current and other cited hazards could have electrocuted or seriously injured miners.

Westchester Mine also failed to conduct weekly examinations on the roof bolter, complete the examination of the conveyor belt in its entirety, and perform adequate examinations of the alternate escapeway between the belt drive and the working section. The inspectors observed hazardous conditions on the directional lifeline and tripping/stumbling hazards in the walkway directly under the lifeline. These conditions should have been discovered during examinations and then corrected to provide miners with safe passage in the alternate escapeway during a mine emergency and while working underground.

The operator also was cited for violations of standards covering roof and rib control, fire suppression and ventilation. Of 17 ventilation violations, one was not following the approved ventilation/methane dust control plan where the air quantity in the last open crosscut was approximately one-fourth of what is required. Inspectors found water accumulation up to 11 inches deep in the primary intake escapeway for a distance of 40 feet in an area with a mining height of 58 inches. These conditions, if left uncorrected, affect the effectiveness of the mine’s ventilation system to control and remove methane, respirable dust and other contaminants from the miners’ working environment.

Since April 2010, MSHA has conducted 477 impact inspections, which have resulted in a total of 8,545 citations, 852 orders and 36 safeguards.

Editor’s note: A spreadsheet containing the results of impact inspections in July 2012 accompanies this news release.

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MSHA Monthly Impact Inspection List

(July 2012)

July 2012

Coal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action								Justifications																		
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe-guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	104(e)(2)	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(j)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions							
District 02	PA	3609326	GenPower Holdings LP; James L Laurita Jr	Dana Mining Company of Pennsylvania LLC	4 West Mine	7	0	0	7	3	4	7	42.86%	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7															
District 03	WV	4609028	Alliance Resource Partners LP	Mettiki Coal, WV, LLC	Mountain View Min	18	1	0	19	11	8	19	57.89%	17	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19		1													
District 05	VA	4407275	James C Justice II	Virginia Fuel Corporation	Wilson #2	14	0	0	14	7	7	14	50.00%	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	1		1												
District 06	KY	1518381	Alpha Natural Resources, Inc.	Sidney Coal Company Inc	Taylor Fork Energy	22	1	0	23	7	16	23	30.43%	22	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	1							1							
District 07	KY	4003177	Roy C Wagner	Rebco Coal, Inc.	Valley Mine #1	54	9	0	63	25	37	62	40.32%	54	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	63	1		1	1	1			1							
District 09	CO	0503505	Desert Generation +Transmission CO	Blue Mountain Energy INC	Deserado Mine	13	0	0	13	5	8	13	38.46%	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	1	1	1												
District 09	CO	0504864	Grupo Cementos de chihuahua SA de SV	GCC Energy LLC	King II	8	0	2	10	2	6	8	25.00%	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	1	1												
District 12	WV	4609188	Tom Roberts	Cobalt Coal Corp Mining, Inc	Westchester Mine	39	7	1	47	19	26	45	42.22%	39	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	47								1							
8						National Totals				175	18	3	196	79	112	191	41.36%	172	1	2	1	15	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	193	5	3	4	1	1	0	4	1

July 2012

Metal/Nonmetal

Mine Information						Type of Issuance				S&S Information				Issuances - Type of Action								Justifications																	
District	State	Mine ID	Controller Name	Operator Name	Mine Name	Cit	Orders	Safe-guards (Coal only)	Total	S&S	Non-S&S	Total	S&S Rate	104(a)	104(b)	104(d)(1) Citation	104(d)(1) Order	104(d)(2)	104(e)(2)	314(b)	103(k)	104(g)(1)	103(j)	107(a)	Total	1. Operator Tactics	2. Hazard Complaints /Hotline Calls	3. Plan Compliance Issues	4. Inadequate Exams	5. Accidents, Injuries, Illnesses	6. Fatal Accidents	7. Enforcement History	8. Adverse Conditions						
WE	NV	2600668	Art Wilson	Art Wilson Company	ADAMS CLAIM	11	0	0	11	4	7	11	36.36%	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	1													
NE	PA	3609824	Timothy M Smith	Damascus 535 Quarry & Stone Products LLC	Lanesboro Crushing/Lippman J 1, I 2	3	0	0	3	1	2	3	33.33%	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1			1		1	1							
SC	AR	0301967	Jeff Byler	Cedar Ridge Quarries	Cedar Ridge Quarries	17	1	0	18	7	10	17	41.18%	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	18					1								
SE	TN	400864	Nyrstar NV	Nyrstar Gordonsville, LLC	Elmwood/Gordonsville Mine	5	0	0	5	0	5	5	0.00%	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5					1									
RM	AZ	0200826	Grupo Mexico S A	Asarco LLC	Hayden Concentrator	51	0	0	51	15	36	51	29.41%	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51	1			1				1						
5						National Totals				87	1	0	88	27	60	87	31.03%	87	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Total	13	National Totals				262	19	3	284	106	172	278	38.13%	259	1	2	1	15	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	281	8	3	4	3	3	1	7	1
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