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**RE: RIN 1219 – AB64**

**COMMENT ON MSHA'S PROPOSED RULE TO LOWER  
MINERS' EXPOSURE TO RESPIRABLE COAL MINE DUST**

MSHA's proposed rule renews a much needed focus on the elimination of black lung disease. This is a very important issue. MSHA should implement the rule as speedily as possible.

For years miners have been injured due to breathing coal mine dust. They are short of breath and unable to enjoy and their lives have been changed severely due to working in excessive dust. Their ability to support their families was wiped out and they are now dependent on compensation and disability benefits to get by. Their income is half what they had earned. Black lung has deprived them of a normal and productive life. They cannot do simple chores such as cutting the grass. They cannot take a walk. Black lung has ruined their health. It has changed the lives of their families.

The 1969 Coal Mine Act was intended to eliminate black lung by reducing the amount of dust that miners breathed. The law stated that it intended to ensure that the working conditions in coal mines were sufficiently free of dust in the mine atmosphere to permit each miner the opportunity to work during the period of his entire adult working life without incurring any disability from 'black lung' disease or any other occupation-related disease. However nearly 40 years later we have not ended black lung.

I am encouraged that MSHA has a renewed dedication to eliminating black lung. Miners are entitled to work in a safe and healthy work environment. Miners should be able to work in an environment where they are not at risk for developing an incurable disease.

(Name, address)

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My name is Bobby Branham. I live in 71 Wells St Auxier,  
Kentucky. I worked as a coal miner at Branham and Baker Coal.

We always tried to follow the proper safety procedures at the mines. We tried to control the coal dust. We hung ventilation curtains and we used water sprays to control the dust. Despite our best efforts to control the dust, I got Black Lung. I now have a severe breathing impairment. I use portable oxygen to breathe. I am totally disabled because of Black Lung.

More must be done to protect miners from Black Lung disease. MSHA's proposed rule is needed. Too many miners are still working in too much dust and getting Black Lung.

Ending Black Lung disease is very important. MSHA should act as speedily as possible. MSHA needs to prevent young miners from getting Black Lung. These young miners are healthy and they think that Black Lung will not be a problem for them. They do not realize the danger working in coal mine dust. The harm from the dust is invisible and the disease progresses slowly. It gradually causes the miner to feel short of breath until one day he cannot get enough air to do his work. After the miner stops work Black Lung continues to cause injury and eventually it causes the miner to become like I am now, with constant shortness of breath and not enough air to climb a flight of stairs or walk a short distance on level ground.

I urge MSHA to adopt the proposed rule changes and end Black Lung.

(Name, address)

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