



Continuous Miner Operator

U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health Administration **Health Hazard Information Sheet HH-42**

Breathing mine air containing harmful levels of respirable coal mine dust causes black lung and other lung diseases. We know that the greatest sources of respirable dust at continuous mining operations are continuous mining machines and roof bolters. We also know that if this dust is not adequately controlled, the miner operator and anyone working downwind of active mining can be exposed to excessive dust levels. Additionally, if quartz particles are present in the respirable dust as has been measured by MSHA at some 25 percent of the continuous mining operations, these miners are at greater risk of developing disabling lung diseases.

MSHA has developed this guide to assist miners and mine operators in using all available tools to control respirable dust levels to **END black lung. Act NOW!**

Continuous miner operators should ALWAYS:

- Know and understand the dust control provisions of the mine's approved mine ventilation plan applicable to their mining section.
- Make sure that a complete on-shift examination of respirable dust controls has been conducted before production begins or continues.
- Correct any deficiencies in controls before production begins or continues when "hot seating."
- Maintain proper face ventilation in accordance with the ventilation plan (line curtain/tubing distance and air quantities/velocities).
- Maintain all water sprays on the miner as specified in your plan (the number, type, location, orientation, operating pressure, and flow rate).

- Maintain dust scrubber system in proper operating condition, if required to be used.
- Perform required daily and weekly maintenance checks of the dust scrubber (checking scrubber air inlets and discharges from plugging, and cleaning the filter panel, demister and sump) to ensure the scrubber system will be effective in collecting mine air and filtering out harmful dust particles.
- Follow good work practices by positioning yourself in a safe location and in fresh air. Avoid working downwind of dust generation sources if it can be done safely.
- Check the operator bimonthly dust sampling results posted on the mine bulletin board.
- Request and use a properly fitted NIOSH-approved respirator when sampling results indicate the presence of excessive dust levels in your work location. (**Remember**, MSHA does NOT accept respirators as a primary means of dust control.)
- Participate in your mine's free, confidential chest X-ray program, whose schedule is posted on the mine bulletin board, or from the visiting NIOSH X-ray van.

**--Remember--
Black lung is NOT curable, but it is preventable!**

If you have questions about coal mine health matters, please contact your local MSHA office or see the MSHA website at www.msha.gov.