



To the Mining Community:

Thirty seven miners died in work-related accidents at the nation's mines in 2011. There were 21 coal mining and 16 metal/nonmetal mining fatalities last year, compared with 48 and 23, respectively, in 2010, making 2011 the year with the second-lowest number of mining deaths since statistics were first recorded in 1910.

Even though the number of mining deaths in 2011 were the second-lowest on record, one mining death is still one too many. Each miner killed means a family, a community, and a workplace suffered an incalculable loss. We must work harder to prevent fatalities in mining workplaces in this country.

To that end, MSHA has placed a detailed analysis of 2011 mining fatalities on its website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp> along with best practices to help mining operations avoid fatalities like them.

Fatalities are preventable. Many mines operate every shift of every day, year in and year out, without a fatality or a lost-time injury. Mining workplaces can and must be made safe for miners. Operators must ensure that safety procedures are always followed. With focus, effort and dedication, we can eliminate fatalities in the mining workplace.

Fatalities can be prevented by using effective **safety and health management programs** in your workplaces. **Workplace examinations** for hazards – pre-shift and on-shift every shift – can identify and eliminate hazards that kill and injure miners. And providing effective and appropriate **training** will ensure that miners recognize and understand hazards and how to control or eliminate them. Mine operators and Part 46 and Part 48 trainers need to train miners and mine supervisors on the conditions that lead to deaths and injuries and measures to prevent and avoid them. Miners must be free from retaliation when they identify hazards or refuse to work in dangerous conditions, and should exercise their rights under the Mine Act to be full participants with MSHA and the operator in maintaining a safe and healthful workplace.

MSHA has taken a number of actions to identify mines with health and safety problems and initiated several outreach and enforcement initiatives, including “Rules to Live By,” a fatality prevention program highlighting safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations. We believe those actions, along with initiatives by the mining industry, have resulted in lower fatality numbers in 2011. MSHA has posted more information and analysis of the fatal accidents that occurred during 2011 on the MSHA website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp>

No miner should have to die on the job just to earn a paycheck. We must all work together to ensure that does not happen. We are united in our determination that all miners go home safe and healthy at the end of each shift.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph A. Main". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joseph A. Main
Assistant Secretary of Labor for
Mine Safety and Health