Summary of 2015 (3rd Quarter) Fatal Accidents at Coal Mines and Preventative Recommendations

During the third quarter of 2015, two miners were killed in accidents in the coal mining industry. One miner died in a **Machinery** accident and one miner died in a **Slip or Fall of Person** accident. We need to work together to prevent additional fatalities.

When completed, a detailed investigation report of each fatality is posted on the MSHA website at:

http://www.msha.gov/fatals/fab.htm

Here is a brief summary of these accidents:

One miner was killed in a Machinery accident.
A 29-year-old electrician with 9 years of mining experience was killed while replacing a load locking valve on the cutter head jack of a continuous mining machine. Prior to working on the machine, pin boards were stacked in a single column to block the cutter head in place. The victim was positioned between the cutter boom and the pan with the load locking valve removed when the cutter head collapsed, fatally crushing the miner.

One miner was killed in a Slip or Fall of Person accident.
A 58-year-old bulldozer operator with 10 years of mining experience was found lying unconscious on the ground next to a bulldozer. The mine foreman had driven the bulldozer operator to his designated working area. After seeing that the bulldozer was stationary, he returned and found the bulldozer operator lying on the ground. First aid was started immediately by mine personnel and they continued medical treatment until emergency personnel arrived. The miner was airlifted to the hospital where he remained until October 5, 2015, when he died from his injuries.

Best Practices
Miners do not need to die while working at coal mining operations. These fatalities can be prevented. No miner should die while working. Effective safety and health management programs save lives. Workplace examinations can identify and eliminate hazards that kill and injure miners. Effective and appropriate training help ensure that miners recognize and understand hazards and how to control or eliminate them.

While some of the specific circumstances of these accidents remain under investigation, here is what we know at this time:

Machinery Accident
These deaths can be prevented by following well-known precautions:

- Study the manufacturer's manual for safety precautions and recommended blocking procedures BEFORE initiating repairs.
- Ensure that blocking material is competent, substantial, and adequate to support and stabilize the load. Always use the manufacturer's safety device(s) or features for securing components against motion.
- Devise safe methods to complete tasks involving large objects, massive weights, or where the release of stored energy is a possibility. Ensure that all stored energy is released or fully controlled before initiating repairs.
- Ensure the power is off and securely block equipment against all hazardous motion at all times while performing maintenance work. Secure assemblies that rotate to prevent rotation AND sufficiently block them for support.
- DO NOT proceed until all safety concerns are adequately resolved, especially if potential hazards or prescribed procedures are unclear. Treat the system as unblocked until the blocks or jack stands are fully loaded and equipment stability has been verified.
- Never loosen hydraulic hoses or components without first determining if they are supporting something or trapping pressure.
- Ensure that there is sufficient space around equipment to enable work to be performed safely.
- Train all miners in the health and safety aspects and safe work procedures related to their assigned tasks.

Slip or Fall of Person Accident
These deaths can be prevented by following well-known precautions:

- Always use three points of contact when using steps and/or handholds to access equipment. Ensure that either two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet are in contact with the machine at all times when mounting and dismounting equipment.
- Get on the machine only at locations that have steps and/or handholds. Steps should be highly visible and easily reached by all miners.
- Make sure steps and handholds are properly secured and free of defects, damage, and debris.
- Keep hands free of any objects when mounting and dismounting equipment. Use a rope to raise and lower objects to and from the operator's compartment.
- Do not use equipment controls as handholds when entering or exiting the operator's compartment.
- Maintain traction by ensuring footwear is free of potential slipping hazards such as dirt, oil, and grease and by coating existing ladders, handholds, and landings with slip resistant material.
- Always face equipment while mounting or dismounting it.
- Ensure sufficient illumination is provided at all work areas.

Contractors

No contractor was killed at coal mining operations in the third quarter of 2015. Contractors and mine operators should ensure that contractor employees are properly trained and follow the mine's safety policies and procedures. Contractors and mine operators should coordinate operations at the mine to ensure that safety and health management programs are in place and are effective, all workplace examinations are performed, and safe work procedures are followed.

The importance and value of effective **safety and health management programs** cannot be overstated. A thorough, systematic review of all tasks and equipment to identify hazards is the foundation of a well-designed safety and health management program. Modify equipment, processes, work procedures and management systems to eliminate or control identified hazards. Operators and contractors should create effective safety and health management programs, ensure that they are implemented, and periodically review, evaluate, and update them.

If an accident or near miss does occur, find out why and act to prevent recurrence. If changes to equipment, materials or work processes introduce new risks into the mine environment, address them immediately.

Conducting **workplace examinations** before beginning a shift and during a shift – every shift – can prevent deaths by finding and fixing hazards. All required workplace examinations must be performed and identified hazards eliminated to protect miners.

Providing effective and appropriate **training** to miners is a key element in ensuring their safety and health. Mine operators and Part 48 trainers need to train all miners to recognize the conditions that lead to deaths or injuries and ensure that measures are taken and followed to eliminate hazardous conditions. Training all miners to follow safe work procedures and stay focused on the task they are performing cannot be stressed enough.

Miners deserve a safe and healthy workplace and the right to go home safe and healthy at the end of every shift, every day. Working together makes that happen.