

Record Low Number of Mining Deaths in Fiscal Year 2016, Mine Safety Agency Reports

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Practices

Workplace Safety and Health

Fiscal year 2016 saw a record low number of mining deaths, the [Mine Safety and Health Administration has reported](#). The agency also continues to encourage the mining community “to reach zero mining deaths.”

MSHA reported that in FY 2016, 24 miners died at the more than 13,000 mines in the country. This is the lowest number of deaths since fiscal year 2013, when there were 34 deaths.

Joseph A. Main, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Mine Safety and Health Administration, said, “The extensive efforts by MSHA and the mining community that held metal and nonmetal mining deaths to three during a 7-month period were instrumental in driving these numbers.”

But noting that MSHA recorded four fatal mining accidents in September 2016, Main said, “We are eroding the gains we have made on behalf of our nation’s miners. Eliminating mining deaths and reducing injuries and illnesses is a goal that must be shared by all of us. We can — and must — strive to reach zero mining deaths.”

In a recent conference call with industry leaders, MSHA asked participants to “reinvigorate” their efforts to reverse the trend in mining deaths. “We are calling on all of our stakeholders, including mine operators, miners’ organizations, associations and trainers, to increase their attention to the conditions and hazards that are leading to fatalities,” Main said.

In related news, MSHA said there was progress in the levels of respirable dust in underground coalmines. The yearly average decreased to 0.64 milligrams per cubic meter, from 0.70 milligrams per cubic meter in fiscal year 2015. According to MSHA, its “[End Black Lung – Act Now](#)” campaign, launched in 2009, has contributed to an annual decrease in average respirable dust levels and associated diseases.

The dust sampling results were collected under a new respirable coal dust rule that went into effect in August 2014 and revealed historic lows in respirable dust.

MSHA said the agency and mine operators have collected nearly 154,000 respirable dust samples under the new rule and 99.3 percent of those samples met compliance levels.

“The new respirable dust rule is working to reduce miners’ exposure to unhealthy conditions, and that is good news for miners,” Main said.

The agency also said that operator sampling with [continuous personal dust monitors](#) (CPDM), beginning in April 2016, showed optimistic results. From April 1, 2014, through July 31, 2016, mine operators collected nearly 40,000 valid CPDM samples, with 99.8 percent in compliance.

Jackson Lewis safety and health attorneys can assist in mine safety and health regulations and compliance.

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