

Mine Safety Agency Issues Alert on Falls at Metal and Nonmetal Mines

By Raymond Perez, II

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After the deaths of 29 miners over the past decade from falls in metal and nonmetal mines, the Mine Safety and Health Administration has issued a safety alert on reducing the risk of dangerous falls, reminding employers of best practices.

MSHA said the falls occurred in workplace areas where heavy equipment, ladders, and conveyor walkways were found. The safety alert recommended that employers follow best practices, including:

- Make available mobile or stationary platforms at high-risk locations;
- Assign a safety harness and lanyard to each miner who may work at an elevated height or locations where a fall can occur;
- Construct stable, durable, and secure anchor points for miners to attach lanyards at all locations where a fall hazard exists and inspect these anchor points frequently;
- Post signage, "FALL PROTECTION IS REQUIRED HERE," to notify employees of safety requirements;
- Place stable and secure physical barriers around all floor openings through which miners may fall;
- Avoid yellow caution tape as a barrier, because it is not an acceptable barrier;
- Design work areas and develop job tasks that minimize fall hazards; and
- Always comply with the four standards required of mine operators and independent contractors to prevent falls from occurring (§§56/57.11001 Safe access and §§56/57.15005 Safety belts and lines).

Jackson Lewis workplace safety attorneys can assist employers to comply with safety alerts and regulations.

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