

## Mine Safety Agency Launches 'Training Assistance Initiative' for Miners with Less Experience

By Raymond Perez, II

June 22, 2017

Recent coal-mining deaths have prompted the Mine Safety and Health Administration to launch a voluntary "training assistance initiative" for miners with less than one year of experience in mining or in their current job, MSHA has [announced](#).

During a "stakeholder presentation" on June 8, 2017, at the agency's [National Mine Health and Safety Academy](#) in Beaver, West Virginia, in which they discussed "issues and trends" the agency noticed after a series of recent accidents, MSHA deputy administrator for coal mine safety and health Tim Watkins said the data on fatalities and injuries in recent months "jumped out at us," spotlighting a need to better train miners with less experience in mining or on their current job.

Watkins said MSHA has [recorded](#) seven deaths in the coal mining industry this year (between January and May), compared to a "historical low" of eight fatalities for [all of 2016](#). Three of the deaths were in surface mines, three in underground mines, and one in a surface facility. Four deaths were in West Virginia, two in Kentucky, and one in Montana.

Seven of the 15 deaths in 2016 and 2017 were in West Virginia, six of those in southern West Virginia.

Significantly, six of the seven deaths this year involved miners with less than one year of experience at a mine and five deaths involved miners with less than a year in the specific job.

Watkins said the agency decided to start a "training assistance initiative" to assist miners in those two categories. He noted, "This is not an inspection. This is not an investigation."

The [timeline](#) for the initiative is as follows:

- Starting on June 12, 2017, Coal Districts will begin reaching out to operators to explain the details of the initiative, inquire if they want to participate, and request a list of miners hired in the last 12 months or working in their current job activity for 12 months or less;
- On June 19, 2017, MSHA will begin site visits;
- The initiative will continue through September 30, 2017, unless MSHA finds it necessary to extend the program.

"We're going to need assistance, a great amount of assistance from the mine operators to achieve our goal.... It's going to take everybody to make this work," Watkins said.

MSHA said it will seek permission from mine operators to have miners with more experience travel with MSHA to sites with less experienced miners to "actually spend time talking to these miners."

"It's not something that we're wanting to go out and just beat these people over the head. That's not the intent. Our intent is to go out and talk to these folks," Watkins said. He explained that the intention, in part, is to see if there are "any deficiencies" in their training.

Watkins continued, "This is something that we are going to need each and every mine operator to help us with. This is not something that MSHA can do on its own."

Jackson Lewis attorneys are available to assist employers with this and other safety initiatives.

### Meet the Author



[Raymond Perez, II](#)

Of Counsel  
Atlanta 404-586-1895  
Email

©2020 Jackson Lewis P.C. This material is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to constitute legal advice nor does it create a client-lawyer relationship between Jackson Lewis and any recipient. Recipients should consult with counsel before taking any actions based on the information contained within this material. This material may be considered attorney advertising in some jurisdictions. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.

Focused on labor and employment law since 1958, Jackson Lewis P.C.'s 950+ attorneys located in major cities nationwide consistently identify and respond to new ways workplace law intersects business. We help employers develop proactive strategies, strong policies and business-oriented solutions to cultivate high-functioning workforces that are engaged, stable and diverse, and share our clients' goals to emphasize inclusivity and respect for the contribution of every employee. For more information, visit <https://www.jacksonlewis.com>.

---

©2020 Jackson Lewis P.C. All rights reserved. Attorney Advertising. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. No client-lawyer relationship has been established by the posting or viewing of information on this website.

\*The National Operations Center serves as the firm's central administration hub and houses the firm's Facilities, Finance, Human Resources and Technology departments.