



## Letter to Stakeholders:

August 5 2015

In a single day this week three miners lost their lives in separate metal and nonmetal accidents in Nevada, North Dakota and Virginia.

On August 3, a loader operator was engulfed by a stockpile failure while standing outside his vehicle at a construction sand and gravel mine in North Dakota; a miner at an underground gold ore operation in Nevada was killed when he was struck by mobile equipment; and an 18-year-old plant operator was buried under tons of sand and stone dust when a silo collapsed at a quarry in Virginia. MSHA has launched investigations into the causes of each of these fatalities.

Not since 2002 have three miners died at metal and nonmetal mines in a single day. In the past month alone, there have been five fatalities in the industry. To reverse this unacceptable trend, the Mine Safety and Health Administration is stepping up enforcement efforts and intensifying outreach and education throughout the country.

Beginning August 10, MSHA will begin beefing up inspections with a focus on violations commonly associated with mining deaths, and its inspectors will emphasize "walk and talks" with miners and operators to disseminate information on mining deaths and best practices to prevent them. MSHA coal inspectors, along with training and educational field personnel, will be engaged in the initiative.

Last year 29 mining deaths occurred at metal and nonmetal mines, with 15 from January through August 3 of this year. MSHA inspectors will be looking hard for the types of conditions leading to these deaths and taking appropriate enforcement actions. The mining industry needs to be more proactive to prevent these types of mining deaths.

Information on each of these and other mining deaths including a picture of the accident site and a description of the accidents can be found at: [\(link\)](#) and prior stakeholder letters on mining deaths at: [\(link\)](#) identifying best practices to prevent them. I encourage everyone to review this information to assure that miners are not exposed to the conditions leading to these deaths in their workplaces. This information should also be used in training miners

Recent fatalities and accidents suggest that miners would benefit from rigorous workplace examinations conducted by experienced and trained examiners. On July 22, 2015, MSHA published a Program Policy Letter (PV-IV-01) clarifying that workplace examinations include the requirement that mine operators shall examine each working place at least once each shift for conditions which adversely affect safety or health, that the examination must be conducted by a competent person and that a record of the examination must be maintained and made available for review.

On May 21, 2015 I sent a letter to the mining community on the importance of safety and health programs to protect miners from injury, illness and death. Sound safety and health programs need to be in place to protect miners from the type of accidents leading to these deaths. Recent mining deaths identify shortcomings in safety and health programs.

Training of our nation's miners on the hazards in the workplace and how to avoid them is critical and investigations following these tragedies are identifying deficiencies in miners' training.

I ask that every metal and nonmetal operator reexamine their mines to assure that they are taking corrective actions to adequately protect miners. Reversing this unwanted trend will take the efforts of everyone in the mining community. Our miners, their families and their communities deserve no less.

Regards,

Joseph A. Main

