

News Release



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MSHA announces proposed rule to address workplace substance abuse *New regulation aims to bolster safety for America's miners*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced a proposed rule that would establish a uniform drug and alcohol standard for all mines by both amending the existing standards for metal and non-metal mines, and establishing requirements for coal mines.

"Mining under the best of circumstances can be dangerous," said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary for mine safety and health, "and the use of alcohol and illegal substances creates additional, unnecessary hazards in the workplace. Miners do not operate alone. They have to work together to create a safe environment. If one miner is abusing substances, everyone's safety is put at risk."

The proposed rule prohibits the possession and use of alcohol and or drugs on mine property. It also requires mine operators to establish drug testing and training programs for miners, and requires all mine operators to create and implement an alcohol- and drug-free workplace program that includes referrals to assistance for miners who violate the policy. The proposed rule also would require those miners who violate the prohibitions to be removed from the performance of safety-sensitive job functions until they complete the recommended treatment, and their alcohol- and drug-free status is confirmed by a return-to-duty test.

The notice of proposed rulemaking offers interested parties an opportunity to submit comments for consideration prior to the publication of final regulations.

The proposed rule will appear in the *Federal Register* on Sept. 8 and will be available online at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr>.

MSHA will accept comments on the proposal until Oct. 8, 2008.

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