

Metal and Nonmetal Quarterly



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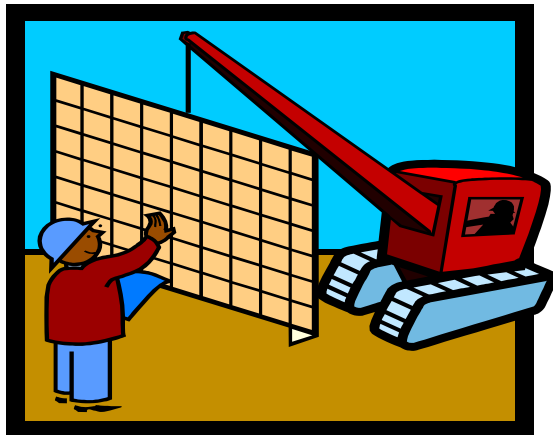
“Safety and Health are Values”

Spring 2004

Keep the Crane off Your Cranium

ARLINGTON, Va. - Approximately 350 miners have been involved in accidents while working with cranes since January of 2000. Thirteen of these accidents were fatalities – six in 2003 and one in 2004. “When performing any heavy lifting around the mines, cranes are a great manual assist,”

says Tom Loyd, MSHA’s Metal and Nonmetal Chief of Safety. “Many mine sites couldn’t function without them; however, they create serious concerns for mine operators and miners. When working around cranes, miners must be aware of the potential hazards,” Loyd warns.



Many of the accidents occur because the individuals operating cranes are not certified and may not understand the requirements for lifting loads at different boom angles.

Mike Hancher,
Safety and Health
Specialist in Metal

and Nonmetal Accident Investigations, advises, “All miners and operators working with or around cranes should follow MSHA’s best practices for cranes.”

Best Practices for Cranes include:

- De-energize the power when cranes are located near energized high-voltage power lines.
- Familiarize yourself with the crane's load chart.
- Determine the weight of the load and the crane's net capacity.
- Never work under a suspended load.
- Ensure that all stabilizers are extended and set prior to lifting or moving the load.
- Use rigging that is free of defects and designed to safely lift the load.



- Balance the load by placing the crane or hook block directly above the load's center of gravity.

Hancher stressed, however, that the most important factor in safe crane operation is experience and good crane training.

By following these best practices and using trained, experienced operators, miners working around cranes can get the job done in a safe and efficient manner and be able to return home at the end of every shift.

Mine Experience Makes a Difference

The question “How long ya been working here?” may tell you more than you think. In the metal/nonmetal mining industry, how long a miner has worked at the specific mine is a factor in the likelihood of their having an accident, but not the way you might think. “We’ve identified a group of miners where safety training can yield a high return for the time and effort: the experienced miner new to a mine,” said Tom Loyd, Chief of the Metal and Nonmetal Safety

Division. The time miners have been working at a mine makes a significant difference in their safety. This applies whether they are experienced miners or are just starting their mining career.

Figure 1 shows that experience at a specific mine site is an important safety concern, possibly more important than overall mining experience. On average, fatal accident victims had less mine-specific experience than mining or job

experience. Approximately half of miners who died in mining related accidents from 1999 to 2003 had less than two years experience at the mine where they died.

While it is recognized that new, inexperienced miners need training and careful supervision, the newly hired or newly transferred experienced

miner also needs safety training, supervision, and co-worker help. "There may be several reasons," Mr. Loyd stated. "Supervisors and co-workers feel that because a miner has worked at mines in the past, he knows the hazards. Although he may know the general hazards associated with

mining, he may not know the specific hazards at the new mine. The new, experienced miner may also be embarrassed to ask questions because

he is experienced, or he may just assume something is done a certain way because 'that's the way we did it where I came from.' Every mine has its own rhythm and flow, and

everyone, regardless of their mining experience, needs to learn how a mine operates to work safely. Mine operators shouldn't let a miner's past experience take the place of the safety and health training they need."

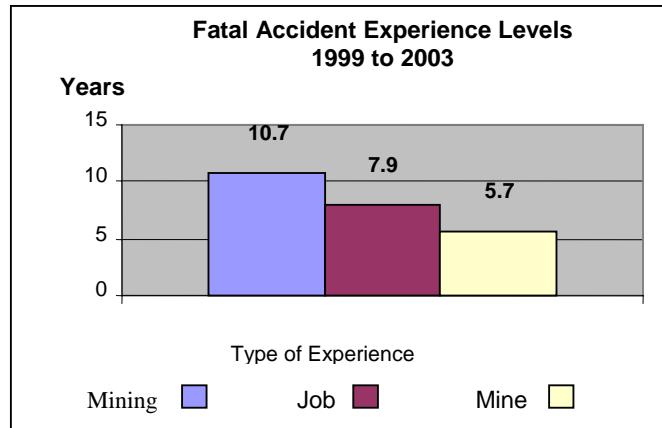


Figure 1

IT'S NOT JUST ANOTHER HOLE IN THE GROUND

Every year, 30 people die in recreational accidents while exploring or playing in and around active and abandoned mines. "Young people have a natural curiosity for the unknown," said Dave D. Lauriski, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health. "Unfortunately, old mines and quarries often

are located in secluded places or in pristine settings, making them quite a temptation for those who like to explore the outdoors."



There are 14,000 active mines and close to 500,000 abandoned mines in the United States with dangers such as deep vertical shafts,

air that is not breathable, horizontal openings with rotting timbers, unstable rock, and unused or misfired explosives.

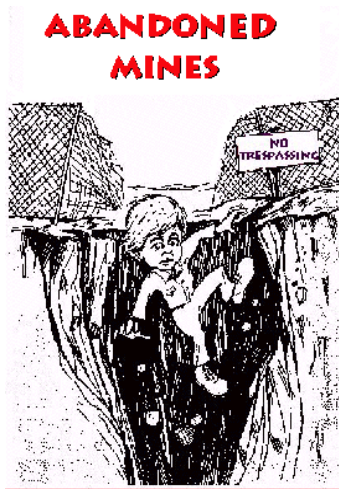
Water-filled quarries are very attractive to kids as swimming holes in the summer; however, these pits may contain rock ledges and old machinery that can't be seen before diving. The water in these holes is often deceptively deep and may contain dangerous levels of chemicals or hazardous waste materials.

Old surface mines contain loose materials in large stockpiles or refuse heaps that can easily collapse and bury people.

In 1999, MSHA began its "Stay Out-Stay Alive" campaign to educate people, particularly children, regarding the hazards they may encounter when visiting active or abandoned mine sites. During May, MSHA personnel highlighted their year-long campaign by delivering safety talks and distributing educational materials in schools throughout the

country to educate children about the importance of staying away from these types of mines.

The mining industry must take the lead in this effort by informing persons in their community about the hidden dangers of active and abandoned mine sites. More information and various free educational materials can be obtained by going to MSHA's web site at: <http://www.msha.gov/media/press/2004/NR040426.htm> and <http://www.msha.gov/SOSA/SOSAhome.htm>



Previous issues of the *Metal and Nonmetal Quarterly* are available on the MSHA website at

<http://www.msha.gov/District/MNM/QuarterlyNewsLetters/MNQuarterlyNewsletter.asp>



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