

# News Release



U.S. Department of Labor  
Office of Public Affairs  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Release Number: 08-1465-PHI

For Immediate Release  
Oct. 22, 2008  
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## **MSHA fines Kingwood Mining Co. more than \$736,000** *Whitetail Kittanning Mine in Preston County, W.Va., cited for 5 flagrant violations*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has announced it has assessed \$736,300 in fines against Kingwood Mining Co.’s Whitetail Kittanning Mine located in Preston County, W.Va., for repeated violations over a year. Five violations relating to accumulation of combustible materials near ignition sources were assessed under the flagrant violation provision of MSHA’s civil penalty regulation.

“The result of coal dust accumulating underground could have been a catastrophic fire or explosion,” said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant labor secretary for mine safety and health. “It is especially troublesome that the mine operator failed to take any corrective action, despite its own records and prior notice from MSHA that clearly indicated the need for corrective actions to protect the safety of miners.”

Prior to Feb. 13 and April 15, 2008 inspections at the mine, MSHA supervisors and inspectors met with mine management to discuss compliance with applicable safety standards, including addressing accumulations along energized conveyor belts. During both inspections, MSHA’s inspector found that the belt and/or rollers had been turning in the accumulations, producing dangerous frictional heat and suspending additional combustible coal dust in the atmosphere. Because the company failed to address the issue despite notice of the hazard which was also documented in their own pre-shift examination reports, the MSHA inspector cited high negligence unwarrantable failure violations.

In addition, on Feb. 27, 2008, an MSHA inspector discovered empty rock dust bags, coal and coal dust accumulations in contact with the moving rollers and the belt, producing frictional heat. As a result, MSHA issued another high negligence unwarrantable failure order for permitting dangerous accumulations of combustible coal and debris along a beltline.

In total, MSHA cited 13 unwarrantable failure violations by the mine operator between May 1, 2007, and April 15, 2008, for dangerous accumulations of combustible materials.

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