

Media Statement



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MINER Act Signed Into Law

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao today attended the White House ceremony at which President George W. Bush signed the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act into law. Secretary Chao issued the following statement:

“The Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act is the most significant mine safety legislation in nearly 30 years. It builds upon efforts by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to improve mine safety nationwide, and calls for the modernization of safety practices and development of enhanced communication technology. We need to do everything we can to continue to improve safety in our nation’s mines so miners can return home safely to their families at the end of their shifts.”

The MINER Act represents the first revisions to federal mine safety laws since the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act became law in 1977. The provisions include:

- Requiring each underground coal mine to develop and continuously update a written emergency response plan;
- Requiring each underground coal mine to make available two experienced rescue teams capable of a one-hour response time;
- Requiring wireless two-way communications and electronic tracking systems within three years;
- Giving MSHA the authority to request an injunction to shut down a mine in cases where the mine operator has refused to pay a final MSHA penalty;
- Raising the criminal penalty cap to \$250,000 for first offenses and \$500,000 for second offenses, as well as establishing a maximum civil penalty of \$220,000 for flagrant violations;
- Creating a scholarship program to mitigate an anticipated shortage of trained and experienced miners and MSHA enforcement personnel;
- Establishing the Brookwood-Sago Mine Safety Grants program to provide training grants to better identify, avoid and prevent unsafe working conditions in and around mines.

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