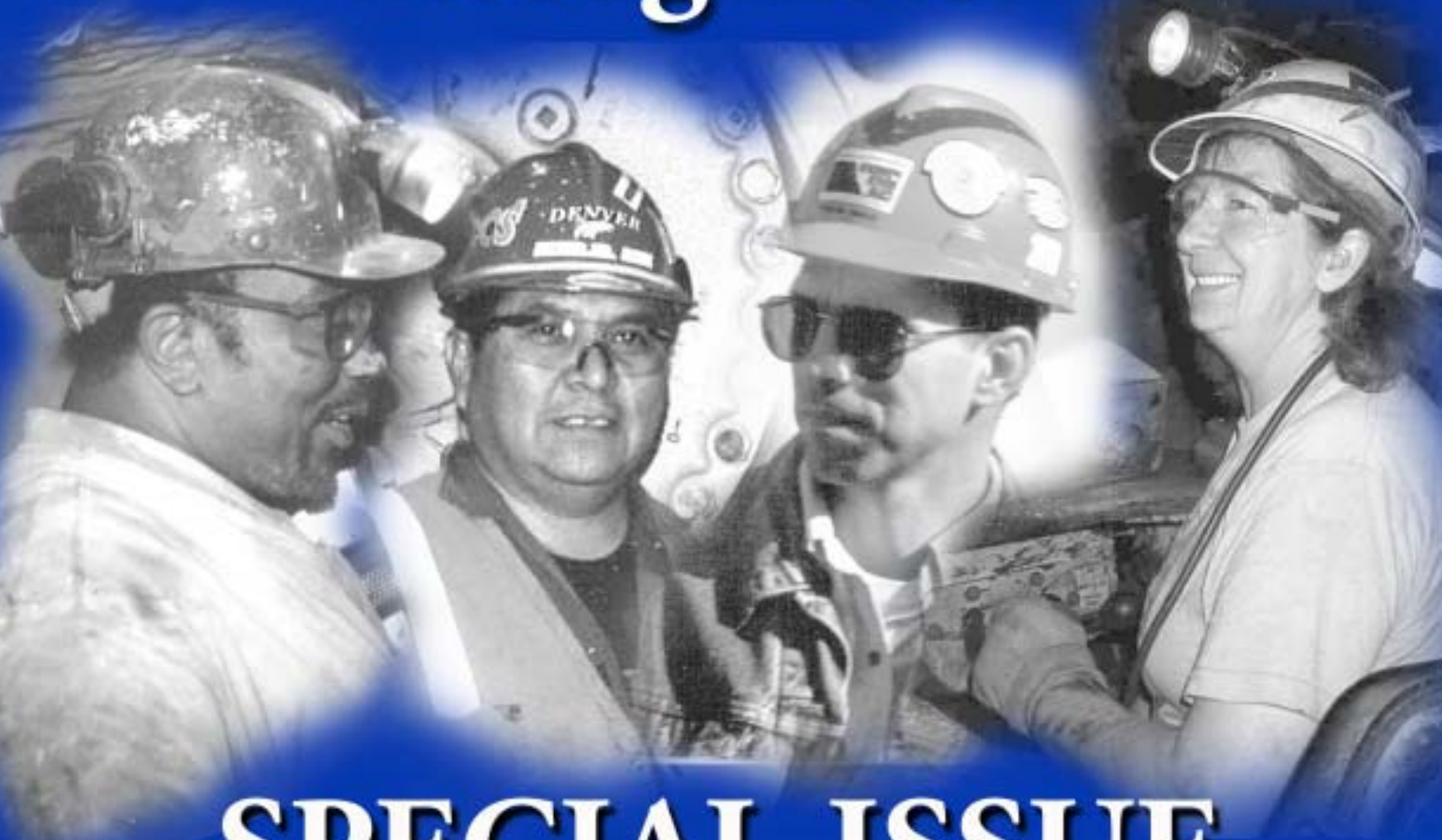


Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association

# BULLETIN

June 2004

## Professional Miner Recognition



# SPECIAL ISSUE

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The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Bulletin contains safety articles on a variety of subjects: fatal accident abstracts, studies, posters, and other health and safety-related topics. This information is provided free of charge and is designed to assist in presentations of groups of mine and plant workers during on-the-job safety meetings. For more information, visit the MSHA Home Page at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

**Please Note:** The views and conclusions expressed in Bulletin articles are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing official policy or, in the case of a product, represent endorsement by the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

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# Professional Miner Recognition



# Professional Miner Recognition



**Platinum Level**



**Gold Level**



**Silver Level**

Over the past three years, the mining industry has recorded all-time record low numbers of fatalities and injuries. All parts of the mining community working together contributed to setting these records.

Mines with exemplary safety records (and their employees) have been recognized through the Sentinels of Safety program and through the Holmes Safety Association. The challenge before us now is to continue this downward trend in fatalities and accidents. The purpose of the Professional Miner Program is to help meet this challenge.

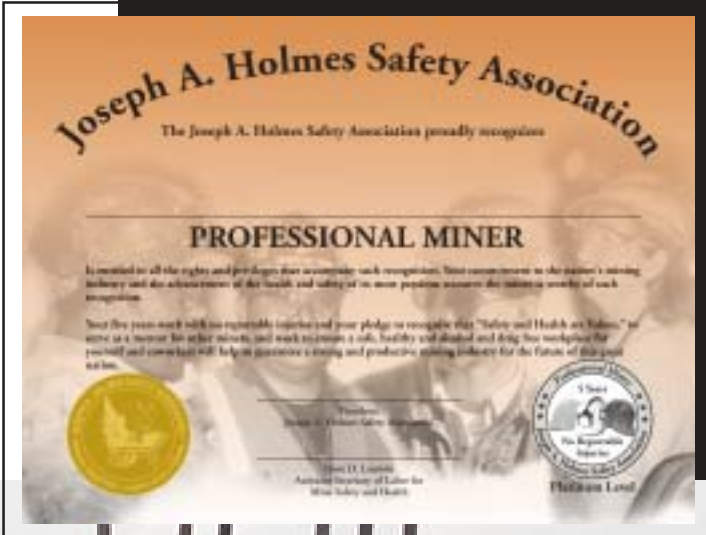
The Professional Miner Program, sponsored by the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, is intended to recognize individual miners who have worked injury free for at least three years.

A self-nominating process allows miners who meet the program criteria to apply for recognition of their status as a "Professional Miner." A miner signs the pledge to serve as a positive role model for miners and as a mentor for new miners.

## **Professional Miner's Pledge**

"As a Professional Miner, I pledge to serve as a positive role model for other miners, and as a mentor for new miners. By recognizing that "Safety and Health are Values," I will work to ensure a safe, healthy, and alcohol and drug free workplace for myself and coworkers, and promote and participate in health and safety initiatives."





Miners can apply for one of three levels of the Professional Miner Program.

**Professional Miner (Platinum Level)** – Miners with no reportable injuries over a five year period.

**Professional Miner (Gold Level)** – Miners with no reportable injuries over a three year period.

**Professional Miner (Silver Level)** – Miners with no lost time injuries over a three year period.

After the Association receives the miner’s application and pledge, a sticker, patch, certificate and other information will be sent to the miner. Professional miners will also receive additional materials relating to mine health and safety concerns.

Professional miners embrace safety and health as values that are critical to mining the many natural resources needed to keep this country strong and growing. It is time that their hard work, dedication and contributions to safety be acknowledged.

For those interested in applying for the “Professional Miner Recognition,” to to the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Website:

**<http://holmessafety.org> or call the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association at 202.693.9574  
Fax: 202.693.9571**



[See Application Form on next page](#)

## Who May Apply

Miners can apply for one of the three different levels of the Professional Miner Program.

### Professional Miner Platinum Level

Miners with No Reportable Injuries over a 5 year period.

### Professional Miner Gold Level

Miners with No Reportable Injuries over a 3 year period.

### Professional Miner Silver Level

Miners with No Lost Time Injuries over a 3 year period.

**Please check:**

#### Mine Type

- Underground       Surface

#### Commodity

- Coal                       Gold/Silver  
 Sand and Gravel       Copper  
 Limestone               Iron Ore  
 Stone                       Cement  
 Phosphate               Clay  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

I release this information for Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association use only.

Type of Certification Level for which you are applying:

- Platinum**  
(5 years, No Reportable Injuries)  
 **Gold**  
(3 years, No Reportable Injuries)  
 **Silver**  
(3 Years, No Lost Time Injuries)

## Professional Miner's Pledge

As a Professional Miner I pledge to serve as a positive role model for other miners, and as a mentor for new miners. By recognizing "Safety and Health are Values," I will work to ensure a safe, healthy, and alcohol and drug free workplace for myself and coworkers, and promote and participate in health and safety initiatives.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Send application to:

Attn: Bob Rhea  
Professional Miner Program  
Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association  
P.O. Box 9375  
Arlington, VA 22219



# Their Perfect Safety Records Are No Accident Three Miners With a Passion for Their Profession

By Amy Louviere

What a difference a century can make. America in the early 1900s was plagued by the legacy of thousands of lives sacrificed to the hardscrabble existence of mining. In 1969, passage of the landmark Coal Mine Health and Safety Act marked a distinct turnaround in societal attitudes. And in 2003, the U.S. mining industry marked the third consecutive year in which workplace deaths dropped to record-low levels.

Mining continues to present challenges in the health and safety arena, yet the milestones that have occurred over the past 100 years cannot be ignored. Today, more miners than ever are returning to their families safe and healthy at the end of each shift. For many of them, mining is no longer a forced way of life; it's a career from which they derive great satisfaction for a job well done.

Here are the stories of three unique individuals for whom mining has become a lifelong vocation. Collectively, they have amassed an astounding 148 years without a single accident or injury on the job, and have reaped the lifelong benefits of making safety and health a value each and every day.

Dallas Chaffins has never shied away from an honest day's labor. When he was just 11 years old, the southwest Virginia native started working in the timber industry, alongside his father. Six years later, he entered his first underground coal mine and he never looked back.



*Dallas Chaffins*

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His mining resume begins with the Buchanan Co. Coal Company in 1948. He progressed from hand-loading coal to brakeman, during which time he was responsible for uncoupling the shuttle cars that carried coal out of the mine. When the operation shut down eight years later, he simply moved on to another mine. Over the years, Chaffins has worked at a number of small coal mines that straddle the borders of Kentucky and Virginia. Currently, he is employed by the Sassy Coal Co., Inc., No. 4 Mine, in eastern Kentucky.

Chaffins' duties have varied over the years, from continuous miner operator to beltman to mine foreman to superintendent. "Just about anything you've seen in the mines, I've done it," he says. And over a span of an inconceivable 56 years, he's done it safely.

The 73-year-old Chaffins has a simple credo for staying injury-free – pay attention to what's going on around you. "When you go underground, you have to keep your mind on what you're doing in order to survive, to get out and back home," he says. "You can't be careless about your work." As a young man, Chaffins had many reasons to return home safely – 12 to be exact. Today, his dozen offspring have given him as many as 26 grandchildren (he hesitates a little over the exact count).

Chaffins' attitudes about safety weren't limited to his own well-being. "As a mine foreman, I constantly watched out for the people I worked with," he says. "That was my job – to keep them safe. And they respected my judgment."

In spite of his sterling record, there were some close calls along the way. For instance, there was the time when a miner was hand-loading coal, and Chaffins, who was running the tractor motor, insisted his colleague get out of the car to load it up. The miner complied, begrudgingly. Suddenly, a pillar collapsed,

burying the area where the miner had been sitting just moments before. "That's one time I actually saved a person's life," Chaffins says quietly.

Those kinds of accidents are, thankfully, much rarer today. Chaffins credits techniques such as roof bolting with eliminating the number of roof falls and improving mine safety underground.

By their mid-70s, most working Americans have retired or at least have considered slowing down. Not Chaffins, who last February, received the Joseph A. Holmes Association Certificate of Honor for his career in underground coal mining. "I guess I just got used to working; I don't want to just sit around," says the septuagenarian. He can still keep up with the young ones, Chaffins claims, including two of his sons who are also coal miners. "For that, I give the Lord all the credit," he says.

Since Jack Redding first went to work 52 years ago, there have been a number of changes at Florida Rock Industries. The Tampa-based operation, which serves the aggregate and concrete industries in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states, has changed hands a number of times, but through each transition, Redding has been one of its shining — and most constant — stars.



*Jack Redding*

Redding, a Tampa native, first signed on as a laborer in the early 1950s for then-General Portland Cement. He quickly became a switchman, handling railroad equipment used to ship



*Jack Redding working in the welding shop.*

cement freight from the nearby Brooksville, Florida plant.

World events soon came into play, and Redding headed overseas for a two-year stint in the Korean War. When he returned in 1955, he discovered the company had held his job for him, and soon he was working in maintenance as a welding helper. “Back in those days, I used to do a lot of heavy labor,” he recalls. “Much of my work involved replacing parts that got torn up.”

Redding, now 71 and still a welder, attributes his accident-free record to his ability to anticipate the next possible occurrence. “You’ve got to always try and look ahead and see what can happen, and be prepared to do things a certain way, if something suddenly goes wrong,” he says.

Corporate attitudes about workplace safety have changed over the years, and all for the better, according to Redding. The degree to which mining companies protect their employees

also keeps improving. “When I first came to work, we were required to wear steel-toed shoes, but there were no rules about wearing a hard hat and safety glasses,” he says. “And instead of ear plugs, we used to shove rags in our ears to muffle the noise.”

Today, the steady mantra is all things safety. “They urge us to always wear the appropriate attire in the field. That means everyone – even visitors must abide by the rules and practices while on the property,” notes Redding.

Monthly safety meetings at Florida Rock help reinforce safe work practices. Even visits by Mine Safety and Health Administration inspectors are welcome. “I’m glad we have MSHA; they’re looking out for us,” says Redding. “They can be a pain in the butt,” he admits with a smile, “but I believe they’re trying to do the right thing for the working people.”

Like Dallas Chaffins, Jack Redding has no

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plans to retire. “When you do this kind of work, you can look back and see what you’ve accomplished,” he says. “I still enjoy what I’m doing and the people I work with, and the best part is, the younger miners look up to me,” he says. They would be hard-pressed to find a better role model.

If not for changing economic conditions, Jim Reddinger might still be employed at Homestake Mining Co., once the oldest and largest gold mine in the United States. Unfortunately, when the Lead, South Dakota, operation shut down in 2002, the 61-year-old Reddinger involuntarily wrapped up a lengthy mining career. But not before stringing together an exemplary 40 accident- and injury-free years with the company.

Reddinger began his career with Homestake by cleaning muck and breaking rock. Initially, he figured to spend a year underground, then return to the construction industry. “I stayed because it was a good job, paid good money and offered year-round security,” he says. After 22 years, Reddinger transferred into electrical work. When there was an opening on the rope crew, he advanced to maintenance mechanic, where he inspected compressors, pumps and cages, both underground and on the surface.

Over the years, Reddinger recalls, there were many opportunities to get hurt in the mines. “Things don’t always go as they should. You’ve got to think before you do something; you have to use common sense,” he says.

As do Chaffins and Redding, Reddinger acknowledges the dramatic changes that have occurred in mining over the last several decades. “There’s no doubt, mines are safer today,” he says. “There’s better equipment and better ways to do things.”

Communication between labor and manage-

ment has improved as well, he notes. “Every month at Homestake, we would participate in safety talks that lasted an hour or two. They really got us workers thinking and talking to each other.”

Although he admits age has slowed him down a bit, Reddinger, unemployed since last July, misses life underground. “There is a special bond that exists among miners,” he says. “We really stuck together.”

He sums it up this way: “We were a crazy group of people, but you kind of gotta be to do this kind of work.”

#### **About the Author:**

Amy Louviere is a Program Information Specialist in MSHA’s Office of Program Education and Outreach Services. She is also the chairperson of the national “Stay Out – Stay Alive” public safety campaign.



# Mining – What Does It Mean to Us?

By Steve Hoyle

Mining is a basic industry that is essential to our way of life. It occurs on the surface or underground in every state in the union. Miners provide us with materials and fuels that allow us to enjoy a standard of living without parallel in the world. Mining has a rich tradition and heritage, but it is an innovative and ever-changing industry. What does mining mean to us?

Most people really don't think too much about mines or miners and the role they play in our lives. The fact is, however, that we use mined products every day. A recent study found that each one of us uses 125 pounds of mined material a day. Where does this material go, and what is it used for?

We flip a switch and the lights come on. We go to the store to buy food. We cook our dinner on an electric stove or in a microwave. We get ice cream out of the refrigerator or get hot water by turning a tap. We use computers to pay bills, research information, read news stories, or play video games. We watch TV. We get in our cars or trucks and drive to the store, take the kids to school or go to work. We fly to a business meeting or to a long-anticipated vacation spot. We talk on the telephone. We get a prescription from the doctor for medicine to help us feel better, or we go to the hospital for tests or to be treated. We live in houses or buildings and work in factories or offices. None of this would happen without mines and miners.

Most of the electricity produced in the United States comes from coal. The materials used to build and equip power plants, and to make the cables and wires that carry electricity to our homes, businesses and other buildings come from mines. Light bulbs even come from materials that come from mines.

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We go to the store almost every day to buy food. Our supermarkets are like none other in the world as we have numbers of high quality items to choose from. Products from mines help grow the vegetables, fruits, meats and dairy goods we buy to feed ourselves and our families.

Home appliances such as stoves, microwaves, refrigerators, hot water heaters, and even our silverware are all made from mined materials. Computers, microprocessors, TVs and telephones are everywhere. You are right if you think that their components started out in mines.

The cars, trucks and vehicles we use every day are all made from mined material. Industry figures show that more than 11 million new vehicles a year are built in the United States. At least 15 minerals are used to make each one of these new cars and trucks. The roads and highways on which we travel are made from



substances that come from mines.

We think nothing of getting on an airplane and flying from place to place for business, to see friends or go on vacation. Airplanes are made from materials that are mined. Freight and passenger trains carry cargo and people twenty-four hours a day. The materials to make the locomotives, cars, rails and roadbed all are mined.

Medicines are made from mined materials as are the instruments and equipment used to make diagnoses or perform medical procedures.

Construction is a big part of our economy. Building materials and supplies come from mines.

When you stop and think about it, there is no part of our lives that is not touched in some way by mining.



Mining plays a big part in the world and national economies. The United States alone exports about \$33 billion a year worth of minerals and processed materials.

At home, about 270 thousand people work directly in mining, and employment in mining-related industries accounts for almost 3 million jobs. Miners, like the rest of us, live in rural areas, small towns, larger communities and cities. Chances are you live near a miner. Our Nation's miners have families and take part in community activities.



*Cement Plant*



Mining jobs support your local economy because miners buy goods and services from businesses in the towns and cities where they



live. When we add it up, we find that our mines and mineral industries contribute about one-half trillion dollars to the national economy every year.

None of this, of course, happens without the miner. Day and night, dedicated professional miners are working hard to extract material from large and small, surface and underground, coal and metal and nonmetal mines.



*Coal Miner*

Miners have been part of this country since its beginning, but their jobs and what they do have changed dramatically. Computers now play a big part in mining. Computers and computer-based systems help to plan and map mining activities to protect our miners and our environment. Computers, sensors and remote control systems allow miners to mine more material, more efficiently than ever before. At processing plants, computers ensure that customers get the high quality product they need, on time, at a fair price.

Mining equipment, whether used at large or small operations, grows ever more complicated and expensive. The design of underground and surface mining equipment reflects concerns about safety and production.



Mining takes place in an environment where conditions can change in a heartbeat. Miners know and understand how important it is to pay attention to their surroundings, to work safely, and watch out for their coworkers.

Miners are special people. They have to know, and be able to apply, lots of general and specialized knowledge to do their work safely and efficiently. Miners are educated and highly trained because they have technically demanding and complex jobs. Their education and training never ends because the mining industry changes constantly.



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Everything we do benefits from mining. Our miners do a tough, essential job and they do it well. They work hard together, not just to make a living, but to supply vital products to our local, state, national and world economies. Throughout it all, our professional miners realize that the most important part of their job is to return safely at the end of each and every work-day.

**About the Author:**

Steve Hoyle is a Training Specialist/Instructor at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy.



# Harvest of the Season

By Edward M. Tomany



A 1993 article by Robert Sharp, President of Kerr-McGee Coal Corporation, commented on the “tremendous strides to protect the lives of men and women working in the mines.” The author compared reportable occupational injury statistics of mining and other industries. The same year, John A. Kneble, President of the American Mining Congress, wrote an article titled “The Season of Safety” which described the efforts exerted by the Nation’s mines and miners in competing for the prestigious Sentinels of Safety Awards. Both pieces highlighted the hard work undertaken to show the general public, legislators and regulators how the mining industry was working to reduce fatalities, lost-time injuries and accidents.

This work has been going on for a long time.

The nation’s mines began their safety season as state and Federal programs setting minimum safety standards with regulatory enforcement for compliance was implemented. During this period mines and miners continued their effort to improve both the conditions and manner in which they conducted mining.

The State of Nevada created its mine inspection system in 1909. Federal legislation which, in time, evolved into the Federal Mine Safety and Health act of 1977, began in 1910. Many states instituted mine safety programs even before these dates, and the net result was to put into place a system to help protect the lives

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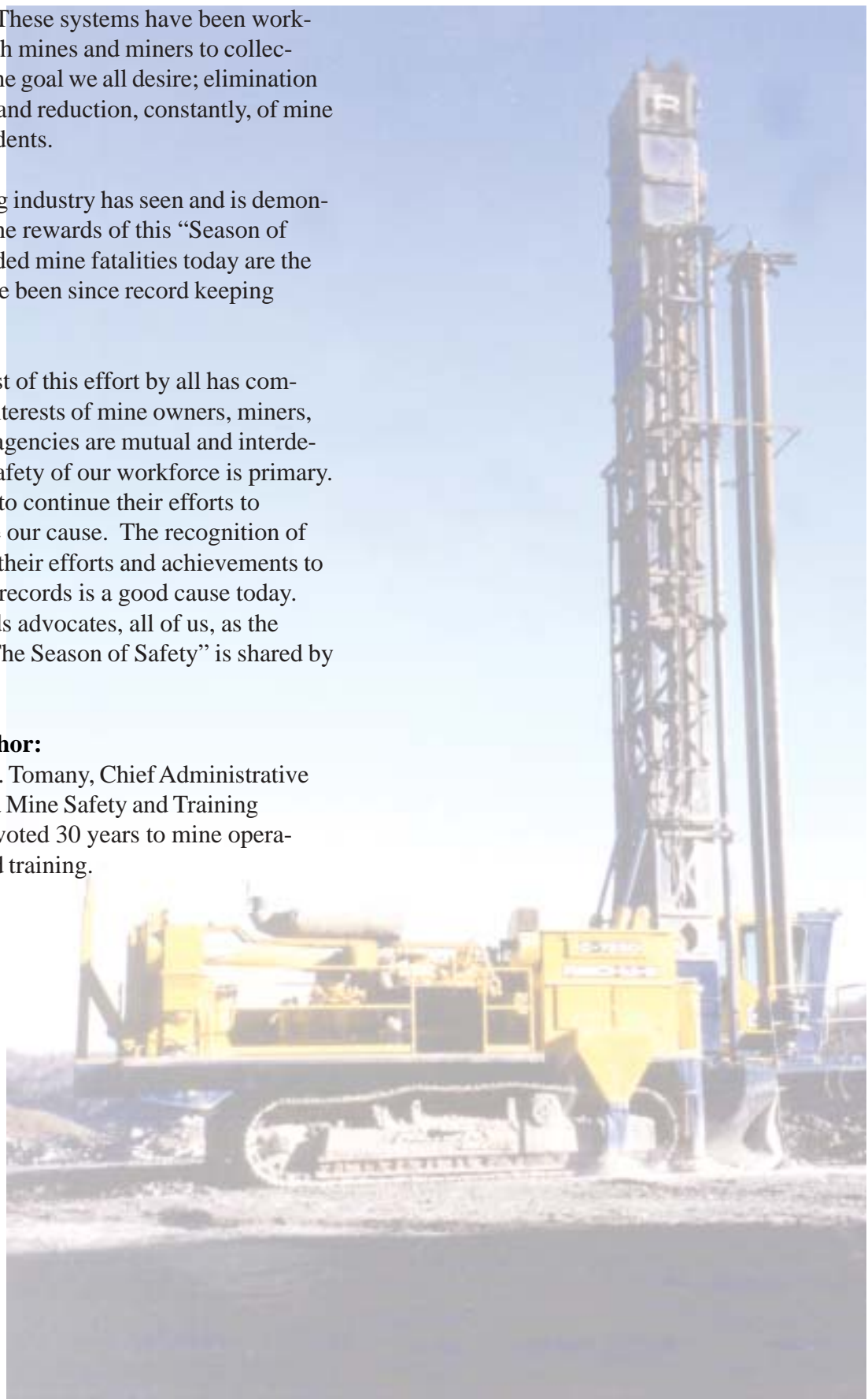
of our miners. These systems have been working together with mines and miners to collectively achieve the goal we all desire; elimination when possible, and reduction, constantly, of mine deaths and accidents.

The mining industry has seen and is demonstrating today the rewards of this “Season of Safety.” Recorded mine fatalities today are the lowest they have been since record keeping began in 1910.

The harvest of this effort by all has commenced. The interests of mine owners, miners, and regulatory agencies are mutual and interdependent. The safety of our workforce is primary. I encourage all to continue their efforts to further improve our cause. The recognition of our miners and their efforts and achievements to improve safety records is a good cause today. This cause needs advocates, all of us, as the “Harvest” of “The Season of Safety” is shared by all.

**About the Author:**

Edward M. Tomany, Chief Administrative Officer, Nevada Mine Safety and Training Section, has devoted 30 years to mine operations, safety and training.







# Developing a Safety State of Mind

By David T. Couillard, CMSP

People don't like to admit to making mistakes. Certainly, safety professionals concerned with setting a good example are reluctant to talk about safety rules they've violated or accidents they've experienced. But let's face it: I don't know anyone who hasn't sold safety short somewhere, somehow, sometime. And, no matter how well trained and knowledgeable you are, failing to apply what you know will lead to adverse consequences sooner or later.

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, I can look back at accidents I've had and recognize a peculiar state of mind I was in each time they occurred: an *accident state of mind*, characterized by distraction from my immediate task and complacency in the face of a hazard that was, at best, only dimly perceived. Such distractions as agitation over being late, a desire to finish a job quickly in order to do something else, or just plain, old-fashioned day-dreaming have, in my life, led to dented fenders, broken glass, and encounters with ditches and snowbanks.

I would dearly love to develop an internal alarm system to warn me when I begin to slip into that *accident state of mind*: buzzers, red lights, and danger signs that would simultaneously erupt inside my brain, shocking me to attention.

While in the midst of a 500-mile drive on a bright, winter day more than a dozen years ago, I was shocked to attention by an external alarm when a glance at my rear view mirror revealed the presence of a state patrol car with lights flashing. I responded by pulling over to the shoulder, stopping, and walking from my vehicle to join the trooper in the front seat of the patrol car. I was somewhat surprised to hear that my vehicle had been clocked at 11 mph over the 55 mph speed limit, an offense for which I had to pay a substantial fine.

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I was surprised because I really hadn't been paying attention to the speedometer. I had been driving through flat, farm country on dry interstate pavement, encountering very little traffic as the miles accumulated, all the while thinking of many things: the speech I was going to give the next day (a safety talk, of course!); other trips I had taken through the same country; vacation plans; song lyrics. I hadn't been thinking about my driving or the speed of my vehicle. Strangely enough, after receiving the ticket, I no longer found it difficult to concentrate on my driving or my speed.

The state trooper had done me a favor. He had pulled me out of an *accident state of mind* at a bargain basement price; far cheaper than the cost in property damage and injuries that an accident would have entailed. While failing to prevent me from speeding, my past safety training and experience had at least kept me from becoming too resentful toward the trooper and the fine. During the 55 mph speed limit era, the popularity of radar detectors demonstrated that punishment following the act of speeding often taught people to not get caught in the act again, rather than to not perform the act at all.

Traffic cops, safety engineers, mine inspectors: all of them can deter at risk behavior when they're around, but what about when they're not around – which, after all, is most of the time? How can you and I develop internal alarm systems to keep us safe and awake, and not dependent on enforcers?

After my encounter with the state trooper, I re-examined my commitment to safety, and strove to have my actions match my words. Setting a safe example sends a more powerful message than reciting a safety rule, just as giving lip service to rules while ignoring them sends an equally powerful negative message.

At mines where equipment operators ignore speed limits, fail to conduct pre-operation safety checks, or neglect to report equipment defects, implicit management acceptance of such practices causes them to continue. Accidents and citations bring them to a stop for a while, but do nothing to change the social environment that tolerates at risk behavior.

Creating a safer social environment requires teamwork. We need to recognize that, no matter what titles or responsibilities we hold, we are all potential “other guys” who may cause accidents. We may not be able to make ourselves 100 percent alert 100 percent of the time, but we'd have a better chance of snapping out of our inevitable distractions if our fellow workers were helping us.

Many companies have formed teams of employees who are actively involved in designing, maintaining, and improving the safety of their workplaces. Teamwork often leads to innovations that not only promote safer work practices, but improve the design of the work itself and the equipment used to perform it, so that doing the job safely becomes easier.

Pushing material into a surge pile is one of the most dangerous jobs for a dozer operator. A design innovation that has greatly improved safety for dozer operators is extra-strength cab windows. After seeing the MSHA video, “Surge Pile Survivor,” in which miner Mike Gilbert told how he was rescued after his dozer became entrapped in a surge pile void, I couldn't help thinking how extra strength cab windows like the ones that kept coal from breaking through Mike's cab could have led to a happier ending to a similar incident at an iron mine in Minnesota more than 15 years ago.



Anyone who was working at the mine that January day in 1989 remembers what happened as if it was yesterday. A 31-year-old miner backed a D-8 dozer from a 60-foot high surge pile into a feeder hopper. Despite a dramatic 9 ½ hour attempt to save him, the miner died from suffocation and hypothermia.

After having been laid off for more than three years, the victim had been recalled to work only a month before the accident. He had received training in dozer operation, but the training had not included practice at the surge pile, where dozers were used to push ore into the feeder hopper. This job was particularly tricky during the winter because ore chunks tended to freeze together, creating a cone-shaped, volcano-like opening over the feeder. Indeed, most equipment operators considered the surge pile to be the most dangerous and undesirable place to work in the mine.

Since contract language required jobs to be assigned on a seniority basis, work on the surge pile tended to be performed by the least experienced operators. The victim's supervisor had attempted to get a more experienced operator on the day of the accident, but no one else was available, and the victim had not expressed any reluctance to perform the job. So, he had begun to work on the surge pile.

After observing the dozer being operated too close to the cone, the supervisor signaled the victim to drive back down the pile. The victim acknowledged the signal, but during his attempt to drive down, the rear end of the dozer slipped over the edge of the cone, and the machine tumbled into the feeder opening, followed by a torrent of rocks. The dozer lodged at the point where the ore dropped onto a conveyor.



[Continued next page](#)

Although they couldn't see him, rescuers from below were able to talk to the victim. He answered questions quietly, talked calmly, and didn't panic. Voice contact continued for several hours.

Since rescue from the bottom was impossible, workers in backhoes and front-end loaders burrowed through the rocks from above. When they reached the blade of the dozer, they began digging with their hands, afraid that one false move with heavy equipment could hurt the victim more. Eventually they found that chunks of ore had crashed through the windows of the D-8 cab and completely covered the victim. He had been able to breathe for hours because the rocks were irregularly shaped and allowed some air to pass through. But when rescuers were finally able to get to him, he had died.

Ironically, the teamwork and concern for each other that had been lacking at the mine before the accident were much in evidence during the rescue attempt. Before the accident, training in basic dozer operation, without practice at the surge pile, was good enough; letting seniority rules put inexperienced operators into the most dangerous job was an accepted practice; and a preoccupation with a production concern – the need to move ore into the feeder hopper – distracted both a supervisor and a miner into complacency in the face of the job's known hazards: an *accident state of mind*.

After the accident, training procedures for dozer operators were changed to require three full shifts of satisfactory work on the surge pile with a qualified dozer operator. In addition, seniority rules were revised to require trained dozer operators assigned to the surge pile to have at least one year of experience. And living through the shock of a fatality caused the miners to reconsider their commitment to safety, and to each other.

Safety training doesn't begin and end in a classroom, or with instruction provided prior to performing a new task. Members of work teams learn from each other all the time as they do their jobs. If your actions demonstrate that safety is important to you, others will follow your example. By reinforcing each other's safe behavior, all of you will be less likely to become distracted and "accident prone." Rather, you will become the opposite: professional, "safety prone" workers in a *safety state of mind*.

### **About the Author**

Dave Couillard has spent 31 years helping people in the mining industry to improve their health and safety training programs.

# Miners Are Recognized as Professionals

By Bill York-Feirn



The typical miner working in Colorado in the 1800s used words such as “coyoting” to describe the sinking of a vertical shaft with radiating tunnels to chase gold deposits, and “giant powder” to describe the dynamite they used. These early Colorado miners, in many cases, had a “hard knocks” education. They used this hard-earned knowledge, strong back, pick and shovel to survive. These miners became the foundation for today’s professional who mines coal, precious metals and other products.

How does the miner of today differ from that of yesterday? To begin, today’s miners must be better trained on how to deal with the many different aspects of their profession.

For example, underground coal miners have had the opportunity to watch the evolution of mining equipment from pick and shovel to sophisticated electrically-powered equipment like continuous miners. These machines can produce, in Colorado mines, from 1,500 to 3,000 tons of coal per 10-hour shift. Many miners work in longwall operations. Longwall mining machines are among the most productive pieces of mining equipment ever developed. In Colorado, longwalls have produced as much as 32,000 tons of coal in a 10-hour shift. Haulage equipment, such as a modern shuttle car, can move 10-12 tons of coal per shift. Many miners work with continuous haulage and conveyor systems that follow the mining machine to each mining location.

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Mining equipment has become bigger, faster, more complex and less forgiving. These bigger, faster and more complex pieces of equipment require careful task and hazard awareness training. The intricate computer systems incorporated in modern mining equipment mean that today's miners have to receive high level, specialized training.



Modern miners have also had to learn how to keep themselves (and their coworkers) safe in an increasingly hostile environment. In Colorado, mining has reached greater depths and, in some cases, has encountered much higher gas concentrations and water inundation hazards.

Miners have to know, understand and keep up with a variety of Federal and state regulations. They have to be able to recognize and correct safety hazards in the mining environment.

Gone are the days when miners had to sacrifice their health and safety. Today's miner is a well-educated, better trained, hard-working, safety-minded individual who cares about their own well-being as well as the safety of their coworkers.



The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association feels it is about time to recognize miners as professionals. That's why the Association is excited about their new Professional Miner Program which recognizes miners for their good health and safety efforts. You will hear more about this innovative idea in the coming months. In my mind, the program provides a long over-

due recognition of you, the professional miner, and all you do to implement safe production at your mine!

#### **About the Author:**

Bill York-Feirn is the Colorado State Grants Program Manager. Based in Denver, Bill has been with the Colorado Division of Minerals & Geology's Mine Safety & Training Program for 13 years. Before that he worked for 15 years in the metal and uranium mining industries.



*Bill York-Feirn receiving an award from Dave Lauriski the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health.*



# The Professional Miner

by Steve Dunn

Missouri is blessed with a diversity of natural resources. Our state has vast hardwood, yellow and white pine forests, and clear, cold, streams and lakes. Among the rural landscapes and urban sprawl of the Show-Me State there are also secret places that produce the material that we use in our everyday life that cannot be grown or made synthetically; products that come from mines.

Missouri is also blessed with hard-working miners. Most people you talk to just don't understand what a mine is or what a miner does. To them, the lead for their car battery or the shielding that protects them during x-ray procedures appears like magic. They don't understand that the gold in their jewelry and in their teeth, the bricks and mortar in their houses, the aggregates that pave the roads on which they drive and the antacid they take for indigestion comes from the earth. If it wasn't for the mines and miners of the world the great and abundant lifestyles we know now would not even exist.

Mining has been around for a long time in our part of the world. Native Americans and their ancestors were the first to mine in what later became Missouri. They dug flint for arrowheads, iron oxide for war paint and clay used to form the bowls, pots, pipes, and other utensils for everyday life.

Mining grew along with Missouri. In those early days mining was tough, dangerous and fraught with disease, sickness and maiming injury as well as death. Thank goodness there were a few who persevered for if it had not been for them our industry would not be what it is today.

We have always recognized our industry wide successes and failures. The main problem is that we have looked at the industry as a whole and have not celebrated the successes of the individuals who worked hard to preserve the safety record, created the safety slogan of the month, or contributed a suggestion to make a mining process or product safer for their colleagues. In short, it is now time to bring individual miners and their accomplishments into focus for everyone to see.

## Ask yourself these questions.

- ◇ How many of the miners at your operation have worked for their entire mining life with no lost time injuries?
- ◇ Do you have miners in a safety organization who have tirelessly worked to prevent accidents and lead by example?
- ◇ Have you individually recognized their safety accomplishments?
- ◇ Have you rewarded a miner for making a suggestion that saved the company money or time?
- ◇ Have you honored a miner who saved the life of a fellow miner?
- ◇ Did you thank a miner who exposed a hazard that you or safety team did not know about?

If you have working at your mine or know of someone that fits any of these examples, and you or your organization has not publicly recognized them you have an excellent opportunity to salute the professionalism of the miner.

Here are some things you can do. Publish the accomplishment in the local paper, make a special certificate and present it to the miner, submit the miner's accomplishment to the local safety organization for recognition, and if it is worthy and meets the criteria submit it to your Holmes Council for recognition.

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It may not mean much to you that the miner has worked for 15 years 7 months and 11 days without a lost time injury and is retiring at the end of the month, but to that miner it means everything. It means that they have worked for a long time and returned home every day intact and ready for the next day. Show them, and the rest of the miners, that you are proud of them and thankful for the time served (especially time served safely), and you and your organization will reap many benefits.

No gold watch or steak dinner will do. It needs to be announced to all involved that this man or woman has done this deed and you are very proud of it. Today's miner needs more than just a pat on the back, a ball cap or tee shirt with a catchy slogan that 25 or 30 others have. These men and women are professionals and deserve to be treated as such not only by you and me but by their peers. Many times the miner's friends and coworkers never know if they have made a suggestion that may have saved a life or made their job easier and safer. It is time we made it known that a neighbor, friend or brother-in-law has worked for one, two or three years with no lost time injuries in one of the most dangerous occupations known.

The industry has shown its willingness to provide a good, stable, safe and healthful working environment for its employees. The miner will not usually accept an assignment with evident risk to life or limb. A miner is taught in the very beginning of their New Miner Training about their rights and responsibilities and they are not afraid to shout it to the highest. To most miners, safety is not a way of life; it's the way to live.

It is time for you the miner, and you the owner/operator/manager to build on the progress we have made in safety and health by submitting for recognition your mine or miner and their accomplishments.

The Southeast Missouri Mine Safety Association/Holmes Safety Council or the Southwest Missouri Holmes Safety Council is an avenue to use to make these accomplishments known in Missouri. SEMMSA already recognizes the mine and/or segments of the mine for a year of no lost time injuries. It is a simple matter to build on this and submit the miner that has met the criteria in the Professional Miner Program.

#### **About the Author:**

Steve Dunn has been actively involved in safety for almost four decades. He is the Program Manager for the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards, Mine and Cave Safety and Health Section, and Department Safety Representative. Mr. Dunn is a member of the Safety Committee for the Mining Industry Council of Missouri and the Southeast Missouri Mine Safety Association. He is presently serving on the Governors' COMAP Safety Steering Committee.



*Steve Dunn*



# Positive Effective Leadership: Our Role in Safe Production

By H. L. Boling, C.M.S.P.

Safety is not complicated. It is simply following the correct process. Every person plays a leadership role in safety regardless of their position in an organization (hourly or salary). Every hour of every day, we make critical decisions about how we respond to situations and how we successfully complete a job. We make the decision how safely or unsafely, productively or unproductively, we complete the task.

Every employee is a very important part of the checks and balances on the road to achieving “ZERO” for their company. In reality, it takes everyone working at a property to achieve success. Every process must have a core element as a beginning. You are that core element or perhaps we may phrase it as “holding the key to success.” Regardless of the excellence of a process, it is of no value if you cannot convince your people to follow it.

How do we accomplish our goal of convincing people to follow the process? You must start by showing:

- Positive personal attitude
- Integrity
- Caring
- Consistency
- Willingness to take responsibility
- Acceptance of accountability
- Leadership by example
- Tearing down all perceived barriers

These are nice words with much impact. However, until we ALL decide to practice them, and build a positive work atmosphere for our people that brings out the best in supervision and hourly employees, we will never reach our maximum performance level as an employee or company, or maximum job security.

The people skills process, or any process, is only as good as the positive attitude, commitment, caring and consistency of the people practicing the process.

An accident is an operating error. Simply stated; the correct process was not followed.

## Why does this happen?

First, we must remember individuals don't fail; systems fail. When we have good, consistent, systems in place and can convince people to follow the correct process we eliminate failure. Next, by developing people skills, we can have a positive work atmosphere. People don't leave a company; they leave *people* and go to work for another company. The “best of the best” companies in the future will be the ones with the best people skills. Why is this?

The “best of the best” will have developed a positive work atmosphere that is responsible,

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accountable, caring, safe, productive, efficient, and with high morale. Employees will want to go to work and perform to the best of their abilities. These employees will take hold of responsibility and of ensuring their own futures by helping the company to secure its future.



Safety is not a cost. It is a cost savings. I wonder if anyone can relate how well a job or company runs if each employee arrives at work and follows the correct process every minute of each day. If employees communicate, convince, influence, and lead by example, then they are the safest, most productive, efficient and cost effective company in the industry.

Let's go back to **YOU** and the value of what you do to make a difference at your company. Your job can be measured in lives, jobs, and security. You play a large part in the future of every employee at your company.



Let's focus on what the expectations are for you in the overall process.

## **VALUABLE GUIDELINES**

**ALWAYS** communicate the importance of following the correct job process and the need

for continuous improvement of that process. It must be understood there is no such thing as a good "shortcut". If the shortcut were the best procedure to follow, it would be the procedure.

**ALWAYS** communicate the critical importance of following the rules and regulations. The rules and regulations pertaining to safety and health were mostly written in blood. Why wouldn't we follow them? They were written for our protection! Ask yourself and your coworker if you would work for a company that had no rules?

Note: Some people get upset when they are disciplined for failure to follow the rules. Companies do not discipline people for following the correct process and doing what is right. All employees (management and hourly), must



understand a company that cares for their employees, disciplines them to correct at-risk behavior and for not following the correct process. We never do anyone, including our children, a favor when we fail to correct. In reality, we place everyone at risk. Risk leads to tragedy.

**ALWAYS** do the right thing for the right reason because it is the right thing to do. Tear down perceived barriers. The only barriers to your success or the success of the process are the ones you place there. Work areas and jobs are as safe or unsafe, productive or unproductive as you choose to make them. If you say you can, and if you say you can't, you're right.

**NEVER** compromise safety by failing to address "at-risk" behavior. Silence implies consent, and when we fail to address at risk



behavior, chance becomes a large portion of the process. Your job and mine is to remove chance from the work environment.

**NEVER** let words such as: safety, caring, trust, communication, commitment, consistency,



responsibility, accountability, integrity, and enthusiasm be words on a piece of paper. Make them a value. Make them *your values*. Believe in them and ZERO will be a reality and the norm.

My parting advice is always keep a positive attitude toward your coworkers and the company. Eliminate the word “try” from your vocabulary and replace it with the word “will.” Build a consistent process in which people can trust and believe.



Truly care and make a difference in the lives of many. Communicate to every employee to never say anything they would not be willing to write down and sign. Never ask a person to do something relating to their job or procedure you would not ask your own son or daughter to do, knowing that if you proceed in

that direction, you are asking someone’s son or daughter to perform that task.



I have been committed to zero for over 32 years. I have seen the positive result zero incidents can bring to industry and people’s lives. It is

my hope that all who read or hear about the information in this article will commit to zero in every aspect of their life; on and off the job. Through this commitment, we all can make a difference, ensuring our employees return home safely daily to their loved ones.

#### **About the Author:**

H.L. Boling has more than 32 years of experience in safety and health leadership and has worked with hundreds of national and international companies and organizations, helping to build and develop positive, safe and productive work environments. H.L. retired from active employment with Phelps Dodge Corporation in 1998. He established his own company, H.L. Boling and associates, Inc., to ensure all beating hearts could be one in the safety, health and leadership arena. His greatest desire is to see all workers in an environment of zero incidents.





# *Come Join Us*

## **Apply for Membership...**

Membership is free. Your organization can become a Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Chapter by completing a membership application and submitting it to the Holmes Safety Association.

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name you would like to call the chapter being established: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and organization of person assisting in recruiting this application: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Reminder:** The District Council Safety Competition for 2004 is underway - please remember that if you are participating this year, you need to mail your quarterly report to:

Mine Safety & Health Administration  
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# The Professional Miner

