# News Release

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## MSHA publishes final rule that requires flame-resistant conveyor belts and other fire protection measures in underground coal mines

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) will publish a final rule tomorrow in the *Federal Register* that implements the recommendations of the Technical Study Panel on the Utilization of Belt Air and the Composition and Fire Retardant Properties of Belt Material in Underground Coal Mining (Panel). The Panel, established under Section 11 of the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act of 2006, conducted an independent scientific engineering review and issued its report on December 20, 2007.

"This final rule calls for improved flame-resistant conveyor belts to better protect miners in underground coal mines," said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "It also includes requirements for fire prevention and detection in belt entries, standardized tactile signals on lifelines, and approval of the use of air from the belt entry to ventilate working sections."

Under the final rule, underground coal mine operators are required to:

- Place in service conveyor belts that are more flame resistant than those currently used beginning one year after the effective date of the final rule (existing belts must be replaced within 10 years).
- Request MSHA approval in the mine ventilation plan to use air from the belt entry to ventilate working sections.
- Replace point-type heat sensors with carbon monoxide sensors.
- Improve belt maintenance by requiring belts to be aligned, damaged rollers to be replaced, and by prohibiting materials in the belt entry where they may contribute to a frictional heating hazard.
- Standardize signals on lifelines in escapeways to identify direction of travel to the surface, SCSR storage caches, personnel doors and refuge alternatives.
- Establish airlocks where high air pressure differentials exist on personnel doors along escapeways to allow safe access to adjacent entries.
- Require lower dust levels in belt entries for mines that use air from the belt entry to ventilate a working section if the working section is on a reduced dust standard.
- Within one year after MSHA approves smoke sensors for use in underground coal mines, install smoke sensors in addition to carbon monoxide sensors in mines that use air from the belt entry to ventilate the working section.

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