

From: john stewart [stewart113@yahoo.com]
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To: comments@msha.gov
Subject: COMMENTS ON NEW DUST RULES

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MSHA/OSRV

To Whom it may concern:

My name is John Stewart I have been a coal miner over 32 years, 29 of them being underground. In that 32 years I have seen a lot of changes in the mine, most of them have improved conditions for the miners, thanks to the UMWA, State Laws, and MSHA. I am now the National Black Lung Association President, and on a daily basic I deal with widows, who have lost their husbands due to black lung disease, and members who are slowly and painfully dying from black lung. From 1968 to 1992 there was approximately 59,000 deaths from black lung. In the last 10 years there has been another 18,245 deaths from black lung disease, this is reported deaths probably more unreported. That is a total of 77,245 known black lung deaths, this is coal miners life's and their families we are talking about. Most all these coal miners die of black lung due to 2.0 milligrams of respirable dust per cubic meter of air in the atmosphere, which is federal law and has been since 1969. Black lung disease was discover in 1831 now 172 years later our miners are still dying of black lung disease. Every 6 hours a coal miner died of black lung disease! The emotional impact on our miners and their family, who are dying of this preventable disease is beyond measures. We expect MSHA would set standards to assure that working conditions are free of respirable dust concentrations, and that no miner will suffer material impairment of health from black lung disease. The NBLA urges that MSHA scraps its proposed dust rules and draft new ones that would improve, rather than reduce coal dust protections for our coal miners. Coal miners need to be better protected from life-threatening working conditions and not placed at greater risk of getting black lung. Black lung disease remain a major challenge for the NBLA, UMWA, the Industry and I hope for MSHA also. But implementation of these rules could quadruple the amount of dangerous coal dust that miners breath-coal dust that leads directly to black lung disease, with the cost of tens of thousands of coal miners lifes. The end result of the proposed new rules will be increased dust levels in coal mines nationwide, and inflict our miners with more disease, agony and death. MSHA's new rules represent a very dangerous step backwards in the ongoing fight to eliminate crippling black lung and will create an even more unhealthy and dangerous workplace for coal miners. The NBLA believe as the UMWA does that requiring personal continuous dust monitor at all mines is the best solution. We would hope MSHA sees the importance of this device that it would ensure a miner is not exposed to harmful levels of coal dust, personal continuous dust monitors should not be ignored. With the Coal Company's money and the politicians, doctors, and lawyers they buy, our miners can't even get, the benefits they need to treat the disease, before they die from it. Over 160 individuals or companies have been convicted or plead guilty to criminal charges of respirable dust fraud, with continuous dust monitoring on miners this would not happen. All these issues and facts I speck of, MSHA is well aware of, being the federal agency charged with protecting miners health and safety. The NBLA is requesting that MSHA withdraws the proposed rules and instead draft ones that will increase protections for miners, not decrease them. Hopefully MSHA's home office and the agency's leaders understands that there is a major lack of support for these dangerous and ill-advised dust rules.

The National Black Lung Association are demanding MSHA:

- **Not to kill tens of thousands more coal miners over and above what is dying of black lung disease already.**
- **Not to increase the coal dust in the mines.**
- **Not to decrease the sampling of coal dust.**
- **Not to break the law of the 1969 coal act.**

AB14-COMM-100
AB18-COMM-100

For if you do the burden of these coal miners lifes, and their familys income and well-being will be on your shoulders.

Respectfully Yours,

John Stewart

President of the National Black Lung Association

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