

# Mine Safety & Health Administration Small Mine Office



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U.S. Department of Labor  
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### MSHA's Small Mine Office—Serving the small mines in America

**E**stablishing a safe and healthful working environment is good for everyone. No one wants to see a worker hurt on the job, but you can't assure it won't happen if you don't take steps to prevent it. The entire work force – from the owner to the most recent hire – must recognize that worker safety and health is a core value and is central to the mission and key to the profitability of the mining company.

MSHA wants to offer leadership and encouragement to workers and employers to help them fulfill this responsibility. We want to help small mine operators and their employees focus on reducing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities and to increase their commitment to improved safety and health. To help with this effort we've created the Small Mines Office to help you provide a safety and health program tailored to fit your mine that will reduce the chances of incidents that cause injury and illnesses.

We can help small mine operators and others through a variety of tools, including partnerships, compliance assistance, education, training and outreach.

*Why is a safety and health program important for a small business owner like me?*

for every \$1 invested in their safety and health program. It's the right thing to do,

Safety is good business. Some mining companies have realized a cost savings of \$3 to \$10

and doing it right pays off in lower costs, increased productivity, and higher employee morale.

Protecting workers makes good business sense. Accidents that cause injuries are more expensive than many realize. Costs mount up quickly. According to recent information, a workplace death can cost more than 1 million dollars and the average estimated cost of a lost-time injury is \$29,000. Substantial savings in workers' compensation and lost work-days are possible when injuries and illnesses decline. In addition, as an employer, you have a duty to protect your workers from injury and illness on the job and MSHA can help you.

*How can I reduce employee injuries and illnesses?*

Your continued compliance with MSHA rules will help. Additionally,

an effective voluntary safety and health program can reduce your costs by preventing injury and illness from occurring. An organized plan that systematically focuses on the specific workplace hazards at your mine is critical. Buy-in from the owner and every employee is essential. Everyone has to work at safety and health.

Each safety and health program should be tailored to fit the company, to blend with its unique operations and culture, and to help employers maintain a system that continually addresses workplace hazards. There are five elements

that every effective program should have: management leadership and employee participation, workplace analysis, hazard prevention and control, safety and health training and education, and program evaluation. An MSHA small mine compliance assistance specialist can help you get started.

**What do you mean by management leadership and employee participation?**

Employers and employees must work together on safety and health issues.

For example, this partnership can be achieved when you:

- Post the company's written safety and health policy for all to see
- Involve employees in policy and decision making on safety and health issues
- Take an active part in safety activities
- Hold meetings that focus on employee safety and health
- Abide by all safety and health rules
- Show your commitment by investing in your safety and health program

**What's a worksite analysis and how often should I do it?**

A worksite analysis means that you and your employees analyze your worksite conditions

to identify and eliminate existing or potential hazards. This should be done on a regular and timely basis. There should be an up to date hazard analysis for the jobs at your mine that your employees know and understand. To do this, it is helpful to:

- Request a site visit from the Small Mine Office
- Become aware of hazards in your industry

- Encourage employees to report workplace hazards
- Review your worksite examination records
- Have trained personnel conduct inspections of the worksite and correct hazards
- Ensure that any changes in process or new high-hazard facilities are reviewed by a competent person
- Seek assistance from safety and health experts

**After I identify hazards at my mine, how can I prevent or control them?**

The next part of a good safety and health program is your continual review of your work environment and

work practices to control or prevent workplace hazards. This can be done when you:

- Regularly and thoroughly maintain equipment
- Make sure that employees know how to use and maintain personal protective equipment and understand why it is provided
- Ensure that all employees understand the reasons for safe work procedures and follow them

**What else can I do to minimize potential accidents and injuries?**

It is important that everyone at the mine be properly trained, from the miners to the supervisors, managers,

contractors, and part-time and temporary employees.

This can be done when you:

- Allow only properly authorized and trained employees to do a job
- Make sure no employees do any job that appears unsafe
- Hold emergency preparedness drills for employees
- Assure employees learning new tasks are given proper job and hazard awareness training upfront
- Train supervisors to recognize hazards and understand their responsibilities
- Encourage all employees to report any hazardous conditions to their supervisors

*Tell me more about MSHA's Small Mine Office that you mentioned earlier?*

MSHA's new Small Mine Office operates various voluntary compliance programs to assist small mine owners.

Small mine compliance assistance specialists help owners and their miners identify potential hazards, improve their safety and health efforts and embrace safety and health as a value. They can help you develop and maintain an effective safety and health program to fit your company's needs and help you get other types of help such as training and technical support. Your small mine compliance assistance specialist will maintain regular contact with you and help you with your safety and health and compliance efforts. This service even includes follow-up visits to your mine. This service is separate from MSHA's inspection effort; no citations are issued or penalties proposed.

The visit begins with an opening conference between the small mine safety and

health specialist and the mine owner followed by a tour of the mine. For more information on these services, contact your nearest MSHA small mine office listed at the end of this publication or visit MSHA's website at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

*Can I get other help from MSHA?*

MSHA also provides other services and assistance to help small mine owners and others. Additional

information concerning all of these services can be found at our Website by clicking on the Education and Training button.

These include the following:

- State Grants - MSHA gives training and education grants to 48 states and the Navajo Nation to develop programs and materials to provide safety and health training for miners. Much of the training is free or is provided at a nominal cost.
- Educational Field Services (EFS) specialists located throughout the country are available to help mine operators develop effective safety and health training programs. In addition, they provide assistance to help mine operators enhance their safety and health programs.
- Electronic Information/Internet – MSHA standards, interpretations, directives, interactive software, compliance assistance materials, and additional information are available online at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).
- Videos, CD-ROM, DVD -- Directives, standards, interpretations, and safety

and health training materials on video, CD or DVD can be ordered. through MSHA's National Mine Health and Safety Academy.

Publications list and single copies of various MSHA materials can be obtained by sending a written request to the:

National Mine Health and Safety Academy  
Department of Instructional Materials  
Printing & Property Management Branch  
1301 Airport Road  
Beaver, West Virginia 25813-9426

(304) 256-3257  
(304) 256-3368 FAX  
E-mail: [DistributionCenter@msha.gov](mailto:DistributionCenter@msha.gov)

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