

Fact Sheet

Small Mine Office

Mine Safety and Health Administration

U.S. Department of Labor

In October 2002, MSHA created the Small Mine Office (SMO) to reach out to small mining operations to help them improve or develop safety and health (S&H) programs tailored specifically to the needs of their miners and operations. These operations typically do not have the resources to employ full-time S&H professionals.

Small mines – those employing 5 or fewer employees – represent about 50 percent of all U.S. mining operations: approximately 500 small coal mines and approximately 6,600 small metal/nonmetal mines. From 2000-2002, the incidence of fatalities at these small mines was approximately 2^{1/2} times greater than that of larger mining operations in the United States.

What Does SMO Do?

Specialists from the Small Mine Office show small mine operators that S&H programs do not have to be expensive, time consuming or complicated. In fact, knowing what to do and having strong S&H programs in place can save small mine operators time and money.

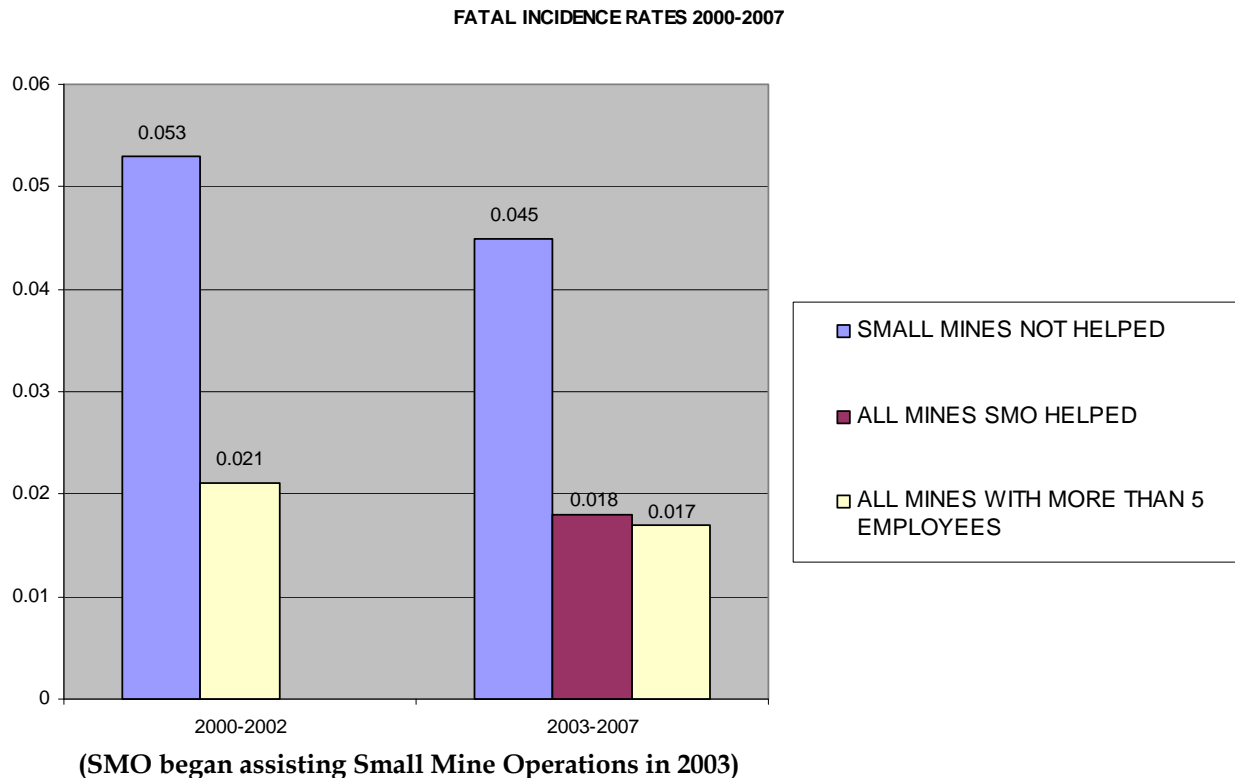
SMO specialists work one-on-one with small mine operators and miners showing them the business case for good S&H practices. SMO specialists show small mine operators how to develop and maintain an effective S&H program and encourage them to adopt the SMO model S&H policy.

SMO specialists also make small business owners aware of other sources of assistance offered by MSHA, including States Grants, Educational Field Services, Technical Support, and the Holmes Safety Association. SMO helps small mine operators and their miners with compliance concerns, and they make presentations at seminars and workshops highlighting the benefits of effective S&H programs.

SMO visits can last from two to eight hours and cover various topics including:

Part 41 Legal Identity	Part 46 or 48 Training Plan
Part 56 Safety Standards	Part 46 or 48 Records of Training
Safety and Health Audit	Part 47 HAZCOM
Health and Safety Policy	Part 50 Accident Reporting
Mobile Equipment Exams - Checklists	Part 50 Quarterly Reports
Workplace Examinations - Checklists	Part 62 Occupational Noise
Guarding	Occupational Dust Control
Continuity and Resistance Test	Citation and Order Review
Fire Fighting Equipment Inspection	Miner Rights
First Aid	Risk Assessment
Part 45 Independent Contractor	Holmes Safety
State Grants Contacts	Education Field Services Contacts

What Has SMO Accomplished?



- Since January 2003, the SMO has helped the operators of approximately 6,500 mines develop a written S&H program tailored to fit their individual mining operations.
- These mines include underground and surface anthracite coal, surface bituminous coal, sand & gravel, crushed stone, dimensions stone, and underground gold mining operations.
- During the 5 years (CY 2003 – 2007), small mine operators assisted by the SMO reduced their fatal incidence rate to 0.018 (a 66 percent reduction from the 3-year average rate for CY 2000 - 2002).
- In contrast, small mine operators not assisted by the SMO had a fatal incidence rate of 0.045 (a 15 percent reduction from the 3-year average rate for all small mines for CY 2000 – 2002).
- By comparison, the fatal incidence rate for large mines was 0.017 (a 19 percent reduction from the 3-year average rate for large mines for CY 2000 – 2002).

It should be noted that assistance to small mines by SMO does not mean that those small mines receive any less enforcement attention by MSHA. In fact, MSHA continues its robust enforcement at all mines, which directly influences safety and health outcomes.

How Do I Contact SMO?

Contact MSHA's Small Mine Office representative in your area, listed below, for further information.

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