

Department of Labor • Mine Safety and Health Administration • Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association

# ***BULLETIN***

November - December 2007

**NEW YEAR  
2008  
NEW CHALLENGES**



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The Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration and 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 to 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).

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# Joseph A. Holmes Scholarship Committee Seeks Your Help

by Sylvia Ortiz

The Joseph A. Holmes Scholarship committee contains members from all over the United States. They work hard to publicize the scholarship program throughout the country.

The program aims to get mine operators, vendors, and others in the mining community involved in scholarship program.

For information concerning the scholarship program, please contact Sylvia Ortiz, Chairman of Scholarship Committee at:

512-232-2232 or  
via e-mail at [s.ortiz@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:s.ortiz@mail.utexas.edu)

## 2007 Scholarship Recipient Profile

Logan Hall, of Welch, WV, is one of two 2007 Joseph A. Holmes Scholarship recipients. He received a big Texas welcome when he was a surprise guest during the Texas State Holmes Association luncheon. Sylvia Ortiz, Chair of the Joseph A. Holmes National Scholarship Committee, and previous Chair Bob Novello, presented Logan with a mock check and a duffle bag containing gifts.

The Scholarship Committee members wanted to particularly thank Pinnacle Mining Company, which sponsored Logan's trip to Texas. Pinnacle Mining agreed without hesitation to cover Logan's expenses and made it possible for him to attend the state meeting in Texas to receive his scholarship award.

Pinnacle Mining employs Logan as an intern during his summer breaks from West Virginia University, where he is studying mine engineering. It is cooperation and support from companies like Pinnacle Mining that helps educate miners of tomorrow.



The Joseph A. Holmes Scholarship is solely supported by contributions from mine companies, operators, vendors, and others in the mining community.

Best wishes to Logan and his fellow scholarship recipient, Robert Villa. We look forward to seeing their applications for the Joseph A. Holmes Scholarships for 2008.



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# J A H Receipt



*Sylvia Ortiz, Chair of the Joseph A. Holmes National Scholarship Committee, and previous Chair Bob Novello, presented Logan with a mock check and a duffle bag containing gifts; photo on next page.*

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## Joseph A. Holmes Scholarship

### Update: by Sylvia Ortiz

In June 2007, the Joseph A. Holmes Association held its annual national meeting in San Diego, California. The week was filled with outstanding presentations and a wide variety of vendors. The National Holmes Scholarship Committee also awarded scholarships for the 2007 academic year.

The Committee received 11 scholarship applications from people throughout the United States, including 5 from Texas. Contributions allowed the Committee to award two scholarships to the following individuals:

Logan Hall of Welch, WV, was awarded a scholarship for \$3,000. Mr. Hall attends West Virginia University and is working toward a mine engineering degree. He works as an intern at Pinnacle Mining Company to help pay for his education.

A scholarship of \$2,000 was awarded to Robert Villa of Red Oak, Tex. Mr. Villa interns at Trinity Material, where his father is a miner, to help pay for his education.

Congratulations to both our winners!



*Sylvia Ortiz, is see here giving Logan a duffle bag containing gifts.*

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# 30 YEARS

## Woman miner hits 30-year mark; Mining milestone

by Jacqueline Perry,  
The Mining Journal,  
June 2004

Polly Oates never thought about the milestone she was setting while working at the Tilden Mine for the past three decades.

Oates recently became the first female hourly employee to work on the Marquette Iron Range for 30 years, according to Cliffs Michigan Mining Company, the combined operation of the Empire and Tilden mines.

"It's not really something I've thought about. I just come to work like everyone else." The 58 year old Negaunee native said. "Thirty years sounded like a long time when I first started, but it's gone by pretty fast."

Women began working as hourly employees on the Marquette Iron Range in 1973 when Cliffs hired three women to work at the former Humboldt Mine, said spokesman Dale Hemmila.

"There were woman hired before Polly, but she is the first female hourly employee to

reach 30 years of service," Hemmila said. "Women, such as Polly, who began working for us as hourly employees in the 1970s are pioneers. They paved the way for all other women who have subsequently worked here."

Oates was hired in May 1974 and was trained at the research lab in Ishpeming as a plat tester and began using her skills at the Tilden Mine in November of the same year, she said. This was the first of many jobs she's held throughout her years at the mine.

"I was a tester for about the first 10 years, but I switched jobs to keep working day shift," said Oates, who is currently a general laborer. "I used to drive the service truck, and I've done maintenance work. I've done a little bit of everything, which is nice. It keeps it interesting."

Working at the mine isn't something Oates planned to do; it just happened, she said.

"I was 27 years old working at Symon's Hardware in Negaunee," Oates said. "I heard that CCI was hiring women, so I submitted an application. I figured if I was going to be working 40 hours a week, I'd better work somewhere with a good wage and benefits."

In 1973, Oates was called to go to work at the Mather B Mine, but she turned down the offer. "It was an underground min, and there weren't any facilities for women at the time, so I passed, she said. "But I didn't think twice when they offered me a job at the Tilden."

Her decision proved to be valuable over the years.

"When my husband died in 1988, I didn't have to worry about how I was going to fend for myself," Oates said. "I already had a job that I could support myself with; I was grateful for that."

Oates said she feels lucky to have continued working during the various downsizing and restructuring efforts implemented to create the CMMC operation.

“There have been some tough times for people, but I’ve been lucky,” she said. “Some people that started working here in November (1974) ended up being laid off. The six months of training beforehand has always kept me working.”

Oates is now considering retirement, she said.

“I’m looking at the end of July, but it’s not official yet,” she said.

She’ll have plenty to keep her busy when she does retire, she said.

“I have to catch up on all the work on my house,” said Oates, referring to her hunting camp on Helen Lake that she has called home for the past 10 years.

Accompanied by her dog, Sophie, and Smokie, her cat, Oates also plans to spend time camping, gardening and traveling, she said.

Of course, Oates will find time to hunt deer, she said.

“I take at least one week of vacation every November to deer hunt.” Oates said. “When I do retire, it will feel strange not having to sign up for vacation... but I’m sure I’ll get used to it.”

“Woman Miner hits 30-year Mark; Mining Milestone” was -Published in The Mining Journal, June 2004, by Jacqueline Perry.

*Shortly after the article was published, Oates retired as planned in July of 2004. She was honored by the recognition that Jacqueline Perry gave her in The Mining Journal.*

*She credits routine safety meetings, a safety minded management, and her own determination as how she managed 30 years without any major accidents at the mine. She made it clear that she couldn’t afford to have an accident and be out of work for anytime. Independence motivated “me to make a conscious effort to work safely both at work and home.”*

*Oates recalls, “I didn’t encounter any real challenges as a woman working in the mining industry.” When asked about her employer and coworkers, she had nothing but positive comments. “They were all very supportive safety oriented people. If you needed help, they helped or found a safe way for you to do it yourself.” She pointed out the importance of never letting her pride get in the way. “I didn’t have to prove anything to anybody, not even myself.”*

*She remains positive and upbeat about life and has been enjoying retirement from the mining industry for three years now. She savors her time relaxing and gardening; she enjoys visiting her family and friends as often as possible. The one thing she said she does not miss is “plowing snow in the mornings before work.”*

*Belinda Browning  
Bulletin Editor*



# **JOB TRAINING ANALYSIS PROGRAM**

**By Keith Palmer**

The Job Task Analysis (JTA) workshop is an efficient and effective method of quickly determining, at reasonable cost, each step that must be conducted to effectively and efficiently perform a job. The JTA process analyzes all aspects of the job including safety, production, and maintenance. The group dynamics of the simple but highly effective exercises capture the most complete listing of job steps possible. This process uses a group of experts to define, document, organize, and assign importance levels to the individual duties, steps and tasks that make up a job.

At the conclusion of the JTA workshop, an organization using the worksheets can expect: improved job performance because of more effective training, shorter learning curves, improved safety performance through a reduction in mistakes, increased performance consistency, performance objectives,

performance evaluation tools, a training outline, and a more effective, results oriented job training program.

## *Capturing Accumulated Working Knowledge*

Throughout our working lives we have acquired experience and knowledge in carrying out our jobs -- everything from sweeping floors to operating roof bolters. In most cases we accumulated this knowledge through on-the-job (OJT) training.

On-the-job training can be broken down into two types: Unstructured and Structured (sometimes called planned and unplanned). Unstructured OJT is nothing more than "following Joe around." Trainees typically train themselves by observing others and duplicating their successes and failures. The drawback to Unstructured OJT is that without a written plan, guideline, or analysis on the specific job, production demands can often outweigh the primary objective of training an employee to effectively perform a job. Although unstructured OJT may seem less expensive to conduct in the beginning, it brings employees to a level of acceptable performance much more slowly than a formal program, which costs the employer more over time.

Structured OJT takes more initial planning and may be more expensive; however, the learning curve is accelerated and brings workers to an acceptable level of performance much more quickly than Unstructured OJT. Structured OJT puts more emphasis on the trainer and gives the trainer the tools to more effectively transfer knowledge and job experience to the trainee.

Effective tools for structured OJT include a comprehensive plan, checklist, guideline, or analysis of the job or task. A properly devel-



oped analysis of a job or task should contain the key job steps associated with the task. Using an analysis to conduct OJT reduces the variability of the training from trainer to trainer, ensuring that each employee receives the same information in a consistent manner.

## **CHOOSING A JOB OR TASK FOR ANALYSIS**

What criteria should you use to determine which job or task is analyzed for the purpose of structuring OJT? Some suggestions include, but are not limited to:

- No training program currently exists for the job position
- An existing training program for the job position is not based on a current, valid job step list
- There is a need to improve performance (safety, production, maintenance)
- New equipment is being introduced
- Noticeable variability exists in the performance of jobs
- Risky non-routine tasks are performed
- Major changes in the work process of the operation

## **JOB TRAINING ANALYSIS (JTA) WORKSHOP**

The JTA workshop has five elements: the brainstorming exercise, the spider development, the worksheet job step validation, the job step importance ranking, and the importance narrative.

The brainstorming exercise is the initial attempt by the “subject matter experts” (SME) to individually list all of the job steps (as they know them) required to perform a particular task. The job steps are then organized into logical units called duties.

Using specialized computer software, the job steps and duties are input as data into the computer developing a “spider.” Using the computer and a projector, job steps are listed and validated by a process of consensus. After the completion of the spider, the duties and associated job steps are projected onto a screen in a Word document format.

Each job step is reviewed by the SME’s and is assigned an importance ranking number while simultaneously validating the accuracy of the job step listing. The rankings are from 1-3; one is important; two is very important; and three is critical. The more critical the job step is to safety, production, and/or maintenance, the higher the ranking.

Finally, importance narratives (consequence statements) are developed and added to the document. Importance narratives illustrate reasons why job steps must be conducted and the possible consequences if they are not done or not done correctly.

The final JTA Word document is a multi-functional tool that can be used by trainers to more effectively transfer job knowledge in a structured, efficient and effective way.

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<http://www.msha.gov/interactivetraining/task-training/index.html>



## Winter Holiday Hazard Prevention

by Janet MacGregor

As winter approaches, many of us turn our attention to the excitement of the holiday season. While we are traveling, shopping, illuminating Christmas trees, or preparing for celebrations, it's important to remember and avoid safety hazards that can turn this joyous time of year into a dangerous one.

### The Dangers

A Christmas tree fire can engulf an entire room in a few seconds. The National Fire Protection Association reports that each holiday season, an average of 359 Christmas

tree fires kill 14 people, injure 41 people, and cause about 16.4 million in direct property damage. These fires occur mostly in homes but also in workplaces and public facilities. The number of fires peaks during the week around Christmas.

Messy food preparation and holiday feasts left out too long can cause food poisoning, which has results that range in severity from inconvenient to life-threatening.

Walking on icy sidewalks, hanging decorations on slippery roofs, and climbing up ladders while wearing thick winter clothing can put people at risk for falling. According to a study (2004) performed for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on fall injuries during the holiday seasons between 2000 and 2003, nearly half of those treated

fell from ladders, and over a third of those treated had broken bones.

Driving is always potentially dangerous, but driving on slick roads increases the risk of accidents. Throw in some drunk drivers, and you've got a deadly game of vehicular pinball.

Amid the joy of the holidays, the holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. Tight holiday schedules, long check-out lines, year-end deadlines at work, party preparation, and unfortunate weather can contribute to greater stress and strain on health and relationships.

## Hazard Prevention

Fortunately, all of these dangers are avoidable. The following tips can help keep us safe and healthy this holiday season:

## Preventing Christmas Tree Fires

The following tips are found on the National Fire Protection Association (2006), National Safety Council (2005), and American Academy of Pediatrics (2005) Web sites:

- Choose a fresh-cut Christmas tree or one that is not shedding its needles. If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is flame-retardant.
- Cut the trunk at an angle.
- Place the tree in a deep, non-tip stand, far from heat sources and exits.
- Water the tree frequently, and remove it if it becomes dry.
- Check every light you hang on your tree for loose connections, frayed wires, or broken sockets, even if you have just purchased them.
- Turn off all lights before going to bed.

## Avoiding Food Poisoning

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after food preparation, after touching raw meat, before eating, and after using the restroom or changing diapers.
- Thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator, not on the counter where germs can more easily be spread.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Promptly refrigerate and store leftovers.

Don't let perishable food sit at room temperature for more than two hours.



## Avoiding Winter Falls

- If you must use a ladder, set it on, and against, a flat, tractioned surface. When using a ladder outside, dress in more thin layers rather than fewer thick layers.
- When walking on flat slippery surfaces, increase your balance by keeping your hands free, taking short steps, and pointing your toes slightly outward.
- Avoid walking on icy spots. But if you need to walk on icy surfaces, try using strap-on ice cleats such as Yaktrax™, GET-A-GRIP™, or STABILicers™.

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## Preventing Vehicle Accidents

- Don't rush. Give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going. If you're late, at least you're alive.
- Give other drivers and pedestrians plenty of time.
- If you're giving or attending a party where alcohol will be served, think ahead and



make wise decisions. Remember that whether you act responsibly or not, you are responsible for your consequences.

- If possible, avoid driving during lunchtime, dinnertime, and late at night.

## Curbing Holiday Season Stress

- Again, don't rush.
- Avoid overcommitting yourself. Some times this means simply doing less than you normally do. Don't be afraid to take time for safety.
- Finish your holiday shopping early. Budget your time wisely to avoid the rush.
- Relieve stress in others by being extra courteous toward people on the road and on the sidewalk.

As our anticipation builds for the coming holidays, remembering and avoiding these hazards will help ensure our safety and keep the season bright.

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# A Moment in Mining History

by Janet MacGregor

The Silver Valley, located in beautiful northern Idaho, holds a wealth of mining history. Touted as the “richest silver mining region in the world,” this area has reportedly produced over 1.1 billion ounces of silver in its 120-year history.



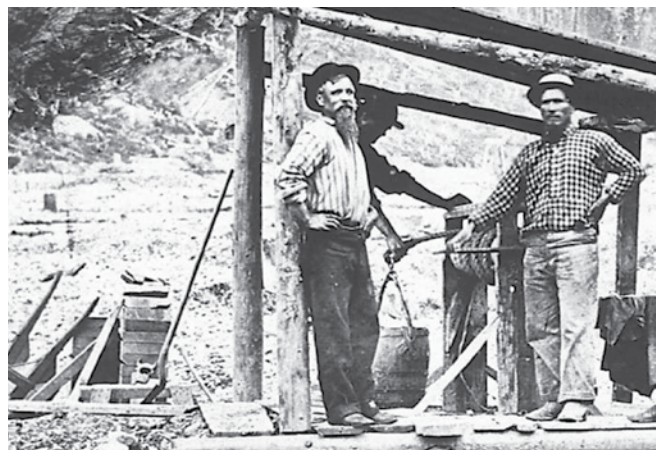
In 2004, 5.6 million ounces of silver were produced from mines in this valley, with production growing steadily due to the dramatic increase in the price of silver (Silver Valley Mining Association).

The historic town of Wallace, Idaho, also known as the “Silver Capital of the World,” is rich in mining history. The streets of this small town (population 960) are lined with buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Wallace draws visitors of all ages interested in learning about the hard work, hardships, work and home life of days gone by.

The Silver Valley is home to museums and exhibits aimed at preserving the rich history of mining. The Sierra Silver Mine is one such example. This mine was discovered around 1900, yet its ore bodies were never rich enough to warrant active mining. Fortunately, in 1982, a non-profit organization was formed in an effort to utilize the mine and preserve the history of hard-rock mining.

This organization, the Sierra Silver Mine Tour, Inc., offers tours to the general public, giving people a rare opportunity to don hardhats and experience the underground world of mining. This trip through the main drift of an underground mine gives visitors a glimpse at the unique culture of hard-rock mining and a chance to safely observe equipment in operation.

Bunker Hill, America’s largest underground mine, and the Sunshine Mine, America’s



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richest silver mine producing over 300 million ounces of silver are among the riches found in the Silver Valley.

*There is more to this story than silver...*

With the discovery of gold in 1860, the vast land that would someday be known as Idaho was the destination of thousands looking to find their fortune.

While the Boise Basin was recognized as the most significant gold mining district in Idaho, the Silver Valley was prospering as well.

Murray, a small town in the Silver Valley, was booming during the mid 1880s when more than 10,000 people traveled to the gold fields in hopes of striking it rich. Murray established itself as the central city of the last great



gold mining stampede in the lower 48 states and became known as the "Cradle City of the Coeur d'Alene Mining District." Silver, gold, lead, and zinc have been produced in this district since that time.

Murray is home to the Sprag Pole Museum which was created for the purpose of educa-

tion and preservation of the area's colorful history. The museum contains an acclaimed mining exhibit as well as other collectibles from this important time in history. For more information on gold mining and a collection of historic photographs, visit <http://www.murray-idaho.com>.

Miner's Memorial and Crystal Gold Mine are additional points of interest dedicated to the mining industry in the Silver Valley. For more information on mining in Idaho visit the Idaho Mining Association web site at <http://www.idahomining.org>.

Mining was Idaho's first industry and it remains a cornerstone of the state's economy today. This industry has supplied the nation with minerals needed for today's lifestyle; minerals that many people take for granted; minerals that are essential for building cities and fulfilling dreams. ■

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# Learning Empathy the Hard Way

By David T. Couillard

Thursday, December 30, 2004, was a significant day for me; I was retiring from my job with MSHA in Duluth, Minnesota, after nearly 32 years of service. Because New Year's Day was to fall on a Saturday, my official last day of service on Friday would be a holiday. I spent Thursday, my actual last day, shredding and discarding personal files and documents, and saying goodbye to my coworkers, who had arranged an impromptu farewell lunch for me in the North Central District conference room.

I would miss my colleagues and friends, but I was also ready to move on with the rest of my life. My wife, Dayle, and I had sold our home in Duluth the previous September, and Dayle was then staying at my parents' house about 100 miles to the south, in Rush City. Our new condo in a Minneapolis suburb was scheduled to be completed in about three weeks; in the meantime we would be shuttling, as we had since September, between relatives in Rush City and Minneapolis, only now I would no longer need to commute to Duluth on Monday mornings. We were also planning to break our routine with a week-long trip to Cancun starting on January 5, to be followed by a two month stay in Port Isabel, Texas after we closed on our new condo.

One last problem I had to face was the weather. A mixture of snow and sleet was falling, but after talking by telephone to Dayle in Rush City and then to a coworker's husband who had driven in for the party, I determined that the roads were sloppy, but drivable. After going through a couple of deep puddles on my way out of town, I started cruising down I-35. Everything was fine for the first 50 miles, but then, my car, only three

months old, started shaking. This was not good. I pulled off at the next exit and drove to a gas station, where I discovered my right rear tire was flat as a pancake, punctured beyond repair. I got a temporary replacement tire, and completed my trip to Rush City.

The next day I drove to a tire dealer and got a new tire. After spending the holiday with my parents, Dayle and I drove on Sunday to her mother's home near Minneapolis to spend a few days before our trip to Cancun. I resolved to visit the dealership where we had bought our car to check into my warranty options regarding the blown tire.

So, fairly early on Monday, January 3, 2005, my first real day of retirement, I drove to the dealership. The first thing I noticed after entering the inside service area was that the people I had always seen in past visits were not there, probably because of the holiday weekend. As I suspected, the man in charge said the dealership was not responsible for the blown tire; I would need to check with the tire manufacturer. He appeared to be visibly disappointed that I hadn't requested an oil change, or any other maintenance work. He became a bit more agitated when I handed him a rain check for a car wash.

In all my prior experiences at the dealership, the service manager on duty had offered to wash the car without me even asking, and I had never been required to surrender the rain check, which had been one of the "perks" I had received at the time I bought the car. On this early January day, with the temperature hovering at eight above zero Fahrenheit, and my car fairly coated with grime after the drive from Duluth, getting a free wash struck me as an eminently sensible idea. Unlike my past experiences, this time the man in charge

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snatched the rain check, and instructed one of the shop employees to take my car through the wash. He also told him to bring the car to the lot in front of the service area for me to pick up after the wash was completed.

In my previous visits, my car had always been driven into the inside service area after the wash, which provided me with an opportunity to safely wipe off my doors. With the cold weather, I obviously wanted to wipe off the doors to keep them from freezing. When my car was brought to the section of the parking lot in front of the service area, I noticed that several cars were parked against the building, perpendicular to where my car was idling. Since I was perfectly visible and my car was blocking any movement, I decided it was safe to go ahead and wipe off the doors. That turned out to be a serious miscalculation.

As I was wiping the right rear door, suddenly one of the parked cars, which had been backed into the space directly in front of me, lurched forward. I immediately started shouting for the driver to stop, but to no avail. I found myself pulled under the car, my legs twisted like pretzels, my left shoulder pinned to the frame, and my right side wedged against the frozen pavement. Directly in line with my head was the left front tire, from which I could not avert my gaze.

In my mind I saw 32 years of fatality reports that described, and often contained illustrations of, victims staring at tires the instant before they were crushed to death. Even under this extreme duress, the irony of my situation was apparent to me. I imagined the headline: "Career Safety Professional Run Over in Parking Lot on First Day of Retirement."

As I lay there contemplating the end, I realized that the car had stopped. I hollered for the driver to back off me. "I'm trying," he replied, which was not a very encouraging

response. Finally, he did back away, leaving me exposed to the elements and unable to move, but alive.

Soon, people came to inspect my condition. I remember a policeman asking questions. Apparently, the car, equipped with a manual transmission, had lurched forward when the driver had put the key in the ignition without simultaneously stepping on the clutch. I've been told since then that such a thing is not supposed to happen, but that was the explanation I heard at the time. All I knew was that I was shivering and hurting on the cold ground.

An ambulance was called, and I was lifted onto a stretcher and placed into the back of the vehicle, feeling considerable pain in my legs and discomfort in my left shoulder, which prevented me from lifting my left arm. As I was being carried into the ambulance, I told the service manager to call my wife; amazingly I had enough presence of mind to remember my mother-in-law's phone number. The service manager then said, "What about your car?"

"My wife will pick it up later," I replied, feeling rather miffed that the man seemed more concerned about the car than my condition.

I was then taken to a hospital, where I spent a long time in the emergency room. I remember mentioning that this was my first day of retirement, and that my wife and I were planning to go to Cancun in two days. The doctor attending me assured me that I'd be patched up and on the beach as planned. I knew he was lying.

After x-rays and further examinations, the doctors determined that two bones in my left lower leg were broken, and surgery would be required to set and bind the bones. There was also a hairline fracture of the small bone in my lower right leg; the doctors said the



damage was slight enough that the bone would heal itself with no special treatment. No one seemed too concerned about my left shoulder; my caregivers' main concern was to treat my broken legs.

I had surgery the next evening, and began the long recovery process. I was sent away from the hospital the following Saturday, but since I had no real home to return to, and I could not even stand up without assistance, I was taken by ambulance to a rehabilitation facility.

My wife was left with all the problems of dealing with caregivers, insurance agents, the car dealer, canceling travel arrangements, notifying friends and relatives about the accident, then closing and moving into our new home. One thing she discovered pretty quickly was that we needed to hire an attorney to look after our interests. People she met at the car dealership mainly wanted the car, and my wife, to go away; they had no intention of accepting any responsibility for what happened. The insurance agents were mainly interested in settling quickly. She contacted a law firm whose representatives met with us in my hospital room, heard my story, and agreed to take me on as a client.

While I had never been a particular fan of litigation, I had come to understand the helplessness and pain, both physical and emotional, that an accident victim feels. Whatever disdain I might have felt in the past for ambulance chasing lawyers and frivolous lawsuits, I realized pretty quickly that if you do not have someone looking out for you, the system can eat you alive. Even though I felt violated and unjustly injured by the accident, the medical bills would still be sent to me. Having legal representation allowed me to concentrate on my recovery; thirty percent seemed a fair price to pay in return for a fair settlement and peace of mind. Ultimately, I received enough from the various insur-

ance companies to cover my medical bills and some of my other expenses. I certainly did not get rich from the settlement, but after going through the ordeal, I certainly do not begrudge other accident victims who have received bigger awards. There really is no way to fully compensate for pain and suffering.

I remember talking on the phone to my brother Terry from my bed at the rehabilitation facility. I was complaining about how odd and helpless I felt at not being able to stand up, walk, and do other things I had taken for granted all my life. Terry responded to my complaint by saying, "Welcome to my world."

Whoa! Because of his feistiness and the fact that he never asked for special favors, sometimes I would forget that Terry, one year older than I, had been stricken with polio as an infant, and for his entire life had not had a functioning left leg. Walking for him was impossible without the use of a heavy brace. He had retired to Florida to escape northern winters after slipping on ice, falling, and breaking his hip. For the first time in my life, I had an inkling what his world was like. I apologized to Terry for being so insensitive, and thanked him for giving me some much needed perspective. I would recover from my disability; Terry had never known anything else.

After excellent care, I did recover from my injuries. I was discharged from the rehabilitation facility at the end of January. While we never got to Cancun or Texas that year, Dayle and I took a trip to Acapulco in March; by that time I had graduated from a wheelchair and walker, and was able to get around fairly well with a cane. In another month, I was able to walk decently without assistance. By October, when Dayle and I traveled to Italy

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and France, I was fit enough to walk through miles of narrow European streets and beachfront promenades. The only sour note in my recovery was my sore left shoulder. Because of damaged and deteriorated tendons, surgery on the rotator cuff was unsuccessful; consequently, I still lack strength in my left arm.

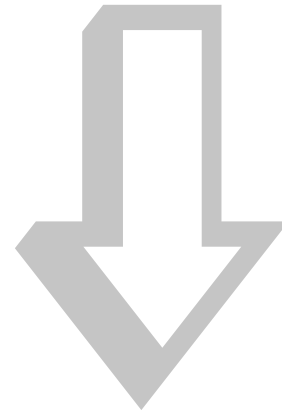
The whole experience provided me with hard earned empathy for people disabled through injuries or illness. I had known intellectually that accidents did not always happen to someone else, but I probably did not wholly accept my vulnerability until I found myself trapped beneath that car, staring at that tire directly in front of my head. My subsequent disability and recovery removed any doubts I might have unconsciously held regarding the fragility of my own life.

In my working life, whenever I visited a mine, I was extremely conscious of potential hazards. I knew enough not to wander in the path of production trucks and other heavy equipment. I knew all about the blind spots that obscured my presence from equipment operators in their high cabs. I knew enough to stay away from loose ground and rock flying from crushers. Why, then, did I not sufficiently recognize the threat posed by cars in a parking lot?

The fact is, from the time I drove into the service area at the dealership, I could sense that things were not quite right. I could have insisted that my car be brought back inside after it was washed, or, once it was in the parking lot, I could have driven to a safe parking spot to dry off the doors. Instead, I considered the hazard of drying off my doors in front of the parked cars, and decided it was safe enough to proceed. I have to admit that, even though my actions did not directly cause the accident, a different decision on my part could have prevented it from happening. I

had heard an inner voice telling me to act differently, but I chose not to.

While I am grateful for learning empathy, getting smacked by a moving car was a hard way to learn. I would prefer to have bones not held together by plates and pins, and a left shoulder with a working rotator cuff. I have learned to listen to the inner voice that tells me, "This situation doesn't look right. I don't think it's safe." If you hear that inner voice, pay attention! Learn from my mistake. You don't need to learn empathy the hard way. ■



*Here is Dave Couillard, well recovered from his injuries, enjoying retirement at his rented home in Port Isabel, Texas, March, 2007.*

In low-seam mining, keeping knees strong and healthy ensures a long career that is prosperous for both the mine worker and the mining company. At the start of each shift, mine workers put on a pair of kneepads to protect their knees while kneeling and crawling to perform tasks. But strong and healthy knees do not start and stop with kneepads. NIOSH has devised a training package entitled “Keeping Knees Healthy in Restricted Work Spaces: A Look at Low-Seam Mining.” It consists of three modules designed to reduce mine workers’ risks for developing knee injuries.

# Keeping Knees Healthy

*in Low-Seam Mines*



- **Symptoms of Knee Injuries Module** – Introduces common causes and symptoms of serious knee injuries and encourages mine workers to see a health care provider at the first signs of injury.
- **Protect Your Knees While at Work Module** – Identifies postures and practices that increase risk for developing knee injuries and suggests alternatives.
- **Protect Your Knees for a Lifetime Module** – Provides basic techniques for increasing strength and flexibility that do not require the use of equipment and may be performed at home.

To reinforce the recommendations in each module, NIOSH also generated a series of supplemental materials such as posters, reflective stickers, and bulletins to be hung at the mine and given directly to the mine workers. A detailed Instructor’s Guide with suggested talking points and usage of the supplemental materials is included as well, allowing this package to be easily incorporated into any upcoming training session.

For more information or to request a copy of the training package, please contact Susan M. Moore, NIOSH Pittsburgh Research Lab at 412-386-6613 or [SMMoore@cdc.gov](mailto:SMMoore@cdc.gov).



# “Safety is Not Negotiable” National Asphalt Products Brings the Point Home to Workers

By Melody Bragg

The wall in the National Asphalt Products office is lined with professionally done photographs of smiling workers and their wives and children. Safety is such a serious thing – what does it have to do with smiling children in family portraits?

The answer is:  
Everything!

For National Asphalt’s Professional Miner wall is designed to remind their workers of the reasons it is so important for them to return home safely at the end of every day. The greatest challenge in safety training is to get each worker to take the message personally – to accept safety as his or her personal responsibility. National Asphalt Products in Michigan has developed a safety program that brings this point home to miners in a very special way.

National Asphalt has an established commitment to safety that has resulted in NO reportable accidents during the over 175,000 hours worked between 1995 and 2007. The company has accomplished this impressive

record by incorporating a number of innovative safety programs designed to include their employees personally in the effort.

Their newest program highlights the Joseph A. Holmes Professional Miner Program which recognizes miners who have worked safety for a number of years. Certificates of recognition are awarded at the 3-year, 5-year, 10-year, 20-year and 30-year level. The Professional Miner Program has proven to be an effective safety tool and miners have responded with overwhelming enthusiasm. Since the program’s inception, over 20,000 miners have applied and been recognized for outstanding safety records.

Small Mine Office Specialist Phil Morris is an avid advocate of the Professional Miner Recognition program and works diligently to

promote the initiative. During an initial Small Mine visit to the Spruce Hill operation, Morris assisted Foreman Rodney Vislosky in submitting qualified employees for recognition in the Professional Miner Program as he does at all the mines



assigned to him.

Operations Manager Fred Peltier, Plant Foreman Rod Vislosky, and Quality Control Inspector Laura Bonino devised a plan to carry the Professional Miner Recognition program one step further and incorporate it as an active part their safety initiatives.

Peltier approached the parent company, John Carlo Incorporated, with a proposal that the Professional Miner Certificates of their em-



ployees be framed and hung prominently in the company offices with photographs for the miner's families. He says, "When I suggested we hire a photographer to have the employee's family portraits taken, it was approved on the spot. The Carlo family felt that it would cement the point that they have been trying to make all along."

To emphasize employee safety achievements, the company hired a professional photographer to take portraits of the Professional Miners with their families. These portraits are hung with the certificates to illustrate the concept; "Of all the reasons there are to work safely, your family is the most important one." When Morris returned to the mine, he was so impressed with the program that he brought it to the attention of his supervisor. Small Mine Office, Assistant Manager, Jim Myer agrees that the program is both innovative and effective. This program has proven effective in giving employees ownership of their personal safety responsibility by reminding them daily of the people who depend on them. Myer says, "It is a constant reminder for the employees and management of this mine to always put safety first."

Peltier explains the company's safety position this way, "Overall our safety program is a result of many small changes that continue to improve the safety and well-being of our employees. It is something that all employees participate in improving, not just management. All ideas are carefully considered, and many of the current policies use the information gathered from the people who perform the work. If an employee participates in writing the policy, they now have ownership in it and are much more likely to understand it fully and follow it without exception." National Asphalt has put these goals into motion with a variety of safety initiatives including:

- Clearly written programs outlining policies and procedures for:

- Part 46 Training
- Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities
- Haz-com
- Hearing Conservation
- Fall Protection
- Confined Space Entry
- Lock Out / Tag Out
- General Lifting
- Vehicle Safety
- Drug and Alcohol
- EEO
- Interactive 15 minute "Toolbox Talks" with employees weekly.

Required annual refresher training programs to discuss the policies and procedures as they apply to this specific operation. Equipping every employee with a reflective vest which must be worn whenever they are out of their vehicles or equipment to make sure they remain visible to all traffic Building ladders and elevated walkways to access the common maintenance points on and around the operation. If they find they use a ladder in the same position more than once or twice a year, or if they determine that a ladder may not be the safest way to access a problem, they fabricate a permanent ladder, platform or walkway with the proper handrails and toe guards to eliminate the hazard.

Constructing passive gates at the entrances to elevated walkways and platforms that automatically close behind the miner to eliminate the fall hazard associated with the open entrance point.

Building "portable" platforms that can be temporarily placed on a conveyor so performing a belt splice or any other maintenance can be done so safely without having to stand on a ladder or sit on the belt in an effort to reach the work area.

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Internally produced and distributed “Safety Bulletins” to all of our asphalt, concrete, aggregate and recycle plants whenever they have an applicable accident or near miss. National Aggregates perfect safety record is a direct result of the company commitment to protecting its workers. The Professional Miner Family Portrait wall is an effective reminder of the reason the worker gets up and goes to work each morning and the reason it is so important for him or her to make it home in the evening.

The company’s commitment to safety is obvious in the first line of the strategic plan: “Safety is Not Negotiable.”



*From left to right: Fred Peltier, Operations Manager  
Phillp Morris, MSHA Small Mine Office  
and Rodney Vislosky, Plant Foreman*

*“Of all the reasons there are to work safety, your family is the most important one.”*



*National Aggregates’ Wall of Honor featuring Professional Miners and their families.*



*Left to Right: Fred Peltier, Operations Manager; Laura Bonino, Quality Control Inspector; Rodney Vislosky, Plant Foreman.*



*Back Row - left to right: Rodney Vislosky, Foreman; Chad Potter, Bulldozer Operator; Kevin Kreiner, Loader Operator; Matt Ecelheny, Loader Operator; Jeff Ruchgy, Plant Maintenance; Scott Bollen, Loader Operator.  
Front Row - left to right: Phillip Morris, MSHA Small Mine Office; Jim Myer, MSHA Small Mine Office, Assistant Manager.*



*Left to Right: Phillip Morris, MSHA Small Mine Office  
Jim Myer, MSHA Small Mine Office, Assistant Manager.*



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

## 2008 National Joseph A. Holmes Conference

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, the Mine Safety Institute of America, and the National Association of State Mine Inspection and Training Agencies are pleased to invite you to our 2008 Joint National Meeting.

The 2008 meeting will be held in Lake George, New York, at the Great Escape Lodge and Water Park during the week of June 10-13, 2008. This meeting will provide a variety of Safety and Health workshops presented by experts from around the U.S. and representing all sectors of mining.

The Great Escape Lodge is situated in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains in Lake George, NY. The Adirondack Park is also the largest park in the continental United States with approximately 6 million acres. Lake George itself is a 32-mile lake surrounded by pine-covered mountains and are located next to I-87 and is the southern gateway to the Adirondack Park.

Websites of Interest:  
[www.greatescapelodge.com](http://www.greatescapelodge.com)

[www.holmessafety.org](http://www.holmessafety.org)

[www.americade.com](http://www.americade.com)

Lake George is home of one of the largest bike rallies in the country. This event is the week prior to the conference.

For Additional Information Feel Free to Contact:

Scott McKenna – [smckenna@catamountconsultingllc.com](mailto:smckenna@catamountconsultingllc.com)

Or

Jessica Russell – [jrussell@catamountconsultingllc.com](mailto:jrussell@catamountconsultingllc.com)

Office Phone – (518) 623-2352

Additional Registration Information to Follow!





## Event Schedule

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION
January 23 & 24, 2008	12th Professional Development Mine Safety Seminar for Supervisors; to register, or for more information contact Kathy Johnstonbaugh: (814) 865.7472	Holiday Inn Conference Center, Lehigh Valley, Allentown, PA
June 10-13, 2008	National Holmes Conference	Great Escape Lodge & Water Park, Lake George, NY

## Council Update

The Northwest Ohio Council met November 13th in Perrysburg, Ohio. John Crawford made an interesting presentation on Coupler Safety. Eighteen people were in attendance.

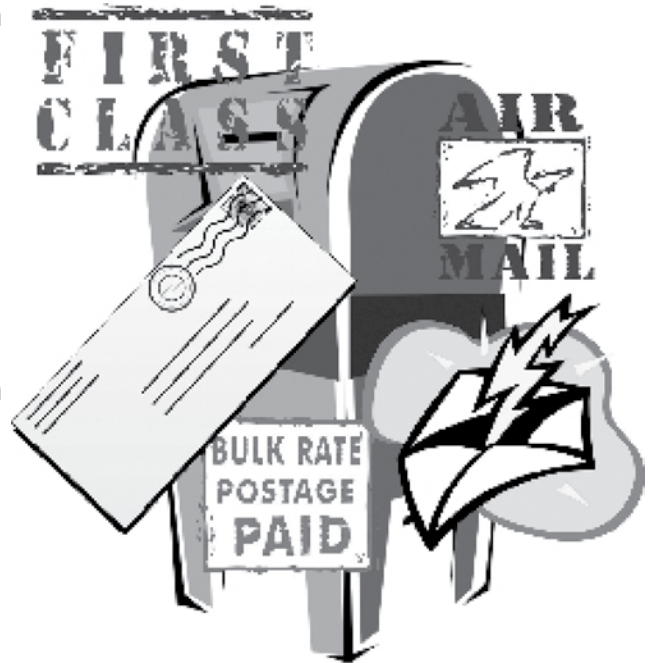
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E-mail: browning.belinda@dol.gov



Reminder: The District Council Safety Competition for 2007 is underway—please remember that if you are participating this year, you need to mail your quarterly report to:

Mine Safety & Health Administration  
Educational Policy and Development  
Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association Bulletin  
P.O. Box 9375  
Arlington, VA 22219

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*Seasons Greetings  
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Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association*