

News Release



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MSHA publishes final mine rescue teams rule

Regulation to more than double training requirement and improve mine emergency response

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) published a final rule today in the *Federal Register* that revises existing standards for mine rescue teams for underground coal mines. This final rule implements Section 4 of the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act of 2006 to improve overall mine rescue capability, mine emergency response time and mine rescue team effectiveness. It also calls for increased quantity and quality of mine rescue team training.

“The presence of qualified, well-trained mine rescue teams is one of our greatest assets during a mine emergency,” said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “This regulation will help ensure that no matter where or when a mine accident occurs, dedicated men and women will be readily available and properly trained to assist in the rescue of their comrades underground.”

Among the requirements of the mine rescue teams rule are the following:

- Requires a person knowledgeable in mine emergency response be present at each mine on each shift and receive annual emergency response training using an MSHA-prescribed course.
- Requires two certified mine rescue teams for each mine and includes criteria for certifying the qualifications of a mine rescue team.
- Requires mine rescue team members be available at the mine within one hour from the mine rescue station.
- Requires team members to participate in training at each mine serviced by the team (a portion of which must be conducted underground), and be familiar with the operations and ventilation of the mine.
- Requires team members to participate annually in two local mine rescue contests.
- Provides for four types of mine rescue teams: mine-site, composite, contract and state-sponsored.
- Requires annual training in smoke, simulated smoke or an equivalent environment.
- Increases required training from 40 to 96 hours annually.

MSHA published the proposed rule for mine rescue teams on Sept. 6, 2007. The agency held four public hearings in Salt Lake City, Utah; Lexington, Ky.; Charleston, W.Va.; and Birmingham, Ala. In response to a request from the public, MSHA extended the comment period from Nov. 9, 2007, to Nov. 16, 2007.

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