



Noncoal Contractor Mining Facts - 2003

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) defines an independent contractor as "any person, partnership, corporation, subsidiary of a corporation, firm, association or other organization that contracts to perform services or construction at a mine." Contractors that perform specific types of work are required to report the number of employees who perform work at coal mines and at noncoal mines.

1. In 2003, a total of 3,989 **contracting companies** reported employment at noncoal mines (metal, nonmetal, sand and gravel, and stone mines) to MSHA.
2. A total of 39,183 noncoal contractor **employees**, corresponding to 18,871 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, were reported to MSHA in 2003.¹ This is an increase of 1.8% in FTE noncoal contractor employees from 2002.
 - The highest proportion of noncoal contractor employees was found in surface production operations (65.6%), followed by processing mills (30.5%) and underground operations (3.9%).²
3. Four work-related **fatalities** occurred among noncoal contractor employees in 2003, compared to six in 2002.
 - In 2003, noncoal contractor employees had a fatality rate of 21.2 per 100,000 FTE employees.
 - Two fatalities occurred in surface work locations (fatality rate = 16.2 per 100,000 FTEs), and two occurred in preparation plants or mills (fatality rate = 34.8 per 100,000 FTEs).
4. There were 257 **nonfatal lost-time injuries** among noncoal contractor employees, occurring at a rate of 1.4 per 100 FTE employees in 2003. A total of 15,213 days lost from work resulted from these injuries.³
 - For noncoal contractor employees, the median number of days lost from work as a result of nonfatal lost-time injuries was 24. The median number of days lost from work for noncoal operator employees was 15 days.
 - The injury rate among noncoal contractor employees in underground operations was 2.3 per 100 FTE employees, compared to 1.9 in processing mills/preparation plants and 1.1 in surface mining operations.
 - The most frequently reported types of accidents among noncoal contractor employees were handling material (n = 91; 35.4%) and slips or falls (n = 61; 23.7%).
 - Of the most frequently reported injuries (greater than 10% of total), the most severe injuries (as measured by the median number of days lost from work) were associated with fractures and chips (median = 51 days; n = 49).
 - The back (n = 45; 17.5%) was the most frequently reported part of body injured, accounting for 2,669 days lost from work.⁴ Injuries to the finger were also frequently reported (n = 33; 12.8%), and accounted for 1,474 days lost from work.
 - Among noncoal contractor employees, those with the MSHA job title of "mechanic/repairman/helper" had the greatest number of nonfatal lost-time injuries (n = 41; 16.0%), followed by those with a job title of "truck driver" (n = 32; 12.5%) and "laborer/utility man/bull gang" (n = 29; 11.3%).
5. Twelve cases of **occupational illness** in noncoal contractor employees were reported to MSHA in 2003.⁵ There were five cases of heat/sunstroke; two cases each of hearing loss or impairment and joint, tendon, muscle inflammation or irritation; and one case each of asphyxia, noncontact electric burn, and an unclassified occupational disease.

Note: All analyses exclude office employees.

¹ Computed using reported employee hours (2,000 hours = 1 FTE).

² Surface production operations include strip mines, surface operations at underground mines, preparation plants, mills, auger mining, culm banks, dredge, and surface shops and yards.

³ Includes actual days away from work and/or days of restricted work activity. For permanently disabling injuries only, statutory days charged by MSHA were used if they exceeded the total lost workdays.

⁴ MSHA only reports the most severely injured part of body for accidents involving injury to multiple body parts.

⁵ Because of the complexity of attributing disease causation to the workplace, occupational illnesses may be underreported.



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