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To the Mining Community:

In 2011, I began providing the mining industry, trainers, and grantees quarterly information on the types of fatal accidents that are occurring in mining and the best practices to prevent them. Below is a summary of information from calendar year 2012.

Our top priority is to reduce fatalities, injuries and illnesses in our nation's mines. As we reported last year, mining fatality and injury rates were the lowest ever in history in 2011. Preliminary data show that we are continuing to move mine safety in the right direction with the fatality rates in 2012 for all mining reaching an all-time low for the second straight year. This means if the preliminary data for mining deaths for 2012 hold, more miners than ever before are going home to their family and friends safe and healthy at the end of their shifts. We know it has taken the efforts of all of us in the mining industry to reach these new milestones. We also know that while mining deaths and injuries have reached historic lows, more action is needed by all to prevent mining injuries, illnesses and deaths.

From January 1 to December 31, 2012, preliminary data show that 19 coal miners and 17 metal/nonmetal miners died in work-related accidents, for a total of 36 mining fatalities during calendar year 2012 – the second-lowest fatality total on record, one more than the 2009 historic low of 35. Seven miners died in West Virginia, five in Kentucky, three each in New York and Alabama, two each in Montana and Florida, and one each in Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Virginia.

The leading cause of fatalities in the U.S. mining industry during 2012 was powered haulage, which claimed the lives of 10 miners. Other leading causes included machinery accidents, which killed six, slip or fall of person accidents, which also claimed six lives, and rib falls, which killed three miners.

Several issues of concern stand out among the deaths that occurred in 2012. Most notable was the number of supervisor deaths. Supervisors accounted for 9 fatalities out of 36, or 25% of the total – a much higher percentage than in previous years. In September, MSHA issued an alert on the importance of supervisor training, noting the alarming number of fatalities in coal and metal in which mine owners or supervisors were killed while performing tasks for which they were not appropriately trained.

In coal, pinning, crushing and striking accidents in underground coal mines continue to cause significant numbers of injuries and fatalities. From 1984 through 2012, 73 deaths occurred from

these types of accidents – including 33 which were associated with continuous mining machines and which could have been prevented by a proximity detection system. In addition, MSHA estimates that using a proximity detection system could have prevented several nonfatal injuries associated with underground mining machines. In 2012, MSHA believes three deaths at underground coal mines could have been prevented by proximity detection systems. Some in the mining community have already invested in this technology. Alliance Resource Partners is installing proximity detection equipment on continuous mining machines. Consol Energy and Peabody Energy are working on the application of proximity detection protections to section mining equipment, and we look forward to hearing from other companies who may be following suit.

Training for miners at all levels of experience continues to be an issue. In 2012, 8 deaths involved miners with one year or less experience at the mine and 13 of the deaths involved miners with one year or less at the job or task. Three of the miners killed at metal and nonmetal mines had less than one year of experience at the mine. Five miners had less than one year of experience at the job or task they were performing. This is also an issue in coal. At coal mines, 5 miners who died had one year or less experience at the mine. Eight miners who were killed had one year or less experience at the job or task they were performing. Miners need effective and appropriate task training before they perform a new task.

In the coal mining industry, there were 19 fatalities during 2012. That is one more than the record low of 18 in 2009. Four miners were killed in **powered haulage** accidents. Three died from **slip or fall of person** accidents. Three miners were killed as a result of **machinery** accidents. Two miners were fatally injured as a result of **rib fall** accidents, and two miners were killed in **roof fall** accidents. One miner was killed in each of the following accident classifications: **exploding vessels under pressure, handling materials, and electrical**. Lastly, two fatalities were classified as **other** types of accidents. Both of those miners drowned – one in a river and the other in an impoundment. Five of the miners (26%) killed were **supervisors**. Two (11%) were contractors.

In the metal/nonmetal mining sector, there were 17 fatal accidents in 2012, one more than the sector's record low of 16 in 2011. Six miners died as a result of **powered haulage** accidents. Three miners died in **machinery** accidents, three died in **slip or fall of person** accidents, and two died as a result of **falling material**. One miner died from a **fall of highwall**, another from a **rib fall**, and one from an **other** type of accident, a miner who died while cleaning a tank. Four (24%) of the fatalities were **contractors**. Additionally, four of the fatalities (24%) were **supervisors**.

MSHA has placed an analysis of the mining fatalities during 2012 on its website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp> along with best practices to help mining operations avoid fatalities like them, and for trainers to include in miner training.

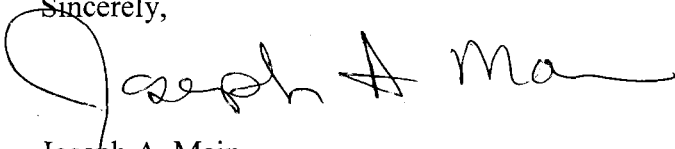
Fatalities are preventable. Many mines operate every shift of every day, year in and year out, without a fatality or a lost-time injury. Mining workplaces can and must be made safe for miners. Fatalities can be prevented by using effective **safety and health management**

**programs** in your workplaces. **Workplace examinations** for hazards, like pre-shift and on-shift examination that must be performed every shift, can identify and eliminate hazards that kill and injure miners. And providing effective and appropriate **training** will equip miners with the knowledge necessary to recognize and understand hazards, as well as how to control or eliminate them. Mine operators and Part 46 and Part 48 trainers need to train miners and mine supervisors on the conditions that lead to deaths and injuries and measures to prevent and avoid them. Miners must be free to exercise their rights under the Mine Act to be full participants in maintaining a safe and healthful workplace.

MSHA has taken a number of actions to identify mines with health and safety problems and initiated several outreach and enforcement initiatives, including "Rules to Live By," a fatality prevention program highlighting safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations. We believe those actions, along with initiatives by the mining industry, can make a positive difference.

No miner should have to die on the job just to earn a paycheck. We must all work together to ensure that does not happen. We are united in our determination that all miners go home safe and healthy at the end of each shift.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Main". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Joseph A. Main  
Assistant Secretary of Labor for  
Mine Safety and Health