

MINER DETAILS

Volume 4 Issue 2

MINERS' HEALTH, SAFETY & TRAINING

April 1999

BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From The Director's Office

The first quarter of 1999 has been successful for our agency. Last year at this time, we had four mine fatalities. In the first quarter of this year, we have had two. This is a tremendous improvement but we need to do more. We set our goal for 1999 to have zero, and to concentrate on the first quarter to reduce mine fatalities. Of the two previous years, seven (7) of twelve (12) fatalities have occurred in the first quarter. It is apparent that our hard work, safety contacts and "Commit to Safety" policy in 1999 is paying off. Let's do everything we possibly can to complete this year with no more fatalities. Also, we submitted a budget requesting that we be funded at our current level. We were successful and everyone should thank their Senators and Representatives from their respective districts and counties. We also submitted two other bills: spending authority of permit fees, and reciprocity of miner and mine foreman certifications. Legislators, coal industry and labor representatives also supported these bills. I plan to meet with the Inspectors-at-large and assistants on April 12 and the safety instructors on April 19 to discuss these new laws and other items. However, we cannot be completely satisfied until we reach our goal, a fatal-free year.

On a personal note, I want to thank everyone for your thoughts, cards, flowers, phone calls, fruit baskets, and most of all, your prayers during my recent sickness. I had a heart attack on February 16; however, I am back to work now and feel that I have fully recovered.

Ron Harris, Director

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Agency Accomplishments

Recently our agency worked with the staff at the MSHA Training Academy to revise the **Surface Mining Apprentice Program**. The old training package was out of print and had become outdated, according to Mike Rutledge. We now have a new program for sale that includes 850 slides, a three-volume instructor's guide, several videotapes, and two slide/tape shows. Some of the program improvements include photos of modern mining equipment, updated accident statistics, and the latest first-aid procedures. The new program, which is helpful to trainers, and is available for \$300.

For Your Information

Records Management

In today's world of instant information, records management has become a critical issue. It is no longer simply a question of what records we keep and how long we keep them, but a much more fundamental question is what constitutes a record? Is e-mail a record? Lawyers seem to think so and e-mails are subject to subpoena. Are web pages records? What about electronic filing of

reports and electronic payments? What about the paperless office? Are digitally-stored documents accepted as a proper records management tool? How are these records going to be accessed in fifty or seventy-five years when technology has bypassed current abilities? How many of you have records stored on 5¼" floppies? How do you retrieve those? These are just some of the issues facing government records management, as technology advances.

MHS&T will eventually need to address these issues, but for the immediate future we have to address a more basic issue. We have to complete a records inventory of all current records held by the agency. We also have to file a current retention schedule listing all types of records held or generated by MHS&T.

This schedule tells us how long we keep a record and how we may dispose of it. A team has been designated to coordinate the inventory efforts in each office and you may be asked to participate. More information and a progress report will be provided in a future issue.

For Your Health

Prostate Cancer

The American Cancer Society predicts prostate cancer will strike 334,500 U.S. men this year, twice the number of male lung cancer cases. Some 41,800 will die. One out of every five American men will develop this cancer in their lifetime. The disease now ranks as second only to skin cancer in men. Men typically think of prostate cancer as a slow-moving condition that affects men well past retirement, when they are likely to die of something else. In many

cases that's still true. Experts say the recent increase in reported cases comes from new tests that make detection easier. Longer male lifespans may also play a part. One relatively new blood test called the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test has considerably increased early detection of prostate problems. The PSA test determines if there are elevated levels of a certain protein made only by the prostate gland. If so, the doctor then must decide if other testing is needed to identify the problem. The traditional test for prostate cancer is the digital rectal exam (DRE). Doctors say it's always best to use the PSA and DRE tests together to check a possible positive diagnosis. Other tests may then be used such as ultrasound imaging or perhaps a biopsy. Once prostate cancer is diagnosed, doctors look at how much the disease has grown within or beyond the prostate. This ranges from stage A, where the tumor is still microscopic and confined, to stage D, where cancer has spread to lymph nodes or to other organs. For older men with early-stage prostate cancer, some doctors advise the patient to "wait and see". The lower the stage, however, the more likely the cancer can be cured.

Seasonal Sense

Learn to swim

The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with a buddy, never swim alone. Swim in supervised areas only. Obey all rules and posted signs. Watch out for the "dangerous too's"- too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity. Don't mix alcohol and swimming. Alcohol impairs your judgement, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm. Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather. Know

how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies.

Home Pool Tips

Never leave an unsupervised child around the pool. Enclose the pool with a completely self-locking and self-closing fence. Keep toys away from the pool when it is not in use. Keep a phone near the pool when using the pool. Pool covers should be completely removed before pool use. No horseplay. Learn infant and child CPR

Did You Know?

Vic Green, Administrator of the Board of Coal Mine Health and Safety, makes the claim: "I've scored more basketball points than anyone in WV." Coach Green officially scored for South Charleston High School 1973-1974 and has scored the state boys' tournament since it has been held in Charleston. He has also scored the WVAC tournament since 1980 and the Girls' Basketball Tournament for approximately 15 years. So he truly has "scored more points than anyone else in West Virginia!"

Home Cookin'

Versatile Potato Soup

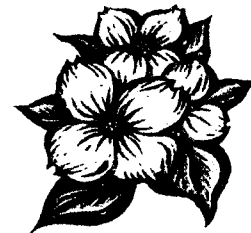
4 cups chicken broth (you may use bouillon cubes)
 4 medium potatoes (cut bite size)
 2 stalks celery (chopped)
 3 carrots (sliced)
 1 small onion (finely chopped)
 2 cloves garlic (diced or crushed)
 4 tbs. butter or margarine
 1 cup milk
 3 tbs. Cornstarch (mix with milk)
 1/8 tsp. each Cumin and Thyme
 Salt and pepper to taste.

Cook vegetables and garlic in broth until almost tender. Add butter, milk mixture, and spices. Let simmer 45-60 minutes. Serve hot. A flavorful chowder can be made from this recipe by adding a 6 ounce can of clams (drain and reserve liquid) before you simmer the soup. Add reserved liquid to taste.

Up Close and Personal

Bennie Comer in the Fairmont office is a Mountaineer fan and enjoys surfing the Net, collecting belt buckles and knives. Bennie also spends his leisure time with his children and building electronic projects. **Leon Bailey** in the Welch office enjoys working with and repairing computers, bass fishing, and home-building projects. Leon spends his leisure time with his daughters and watches them play basketball and volleyball on their respective teams. **John Collins** in the Buckhannon office is a football fan and enjoys computers, hunting, and collecting coal-mining items. John also spends his leisure time at antique shows, flea markets, and yard sales. **Ernie Pyles** in the Danville office enjoys computers and collecting carnival glass and militaria. Ernie also spends his leisure time at antique shows and auctions. **Dennie Ballard** in the Danville office enjoys computers, flea markets, yard sales, and coaching softball and basketball. Dennie also spends his leisure time with his children and recently moved into a new home.

Jennifer Vance, daughter of **Boyd Vance**, won the WV Academic Team Award, one of only 24 community college awards granted statewide. Congratulations to Jennifer who is majoring in nursing.



Willis Webb retired March 1 after 20 years of service. Best Wishes, Willis!

This newsletter is published bimonthly by the WV Office of MHS&T
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