

MINER DETAILS

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MINERS' HEALTH, SAFETY & TRAINING

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BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From The Director's Office

We would like to take this opportunity to send a special thanks to everyone whose job duties require them to deal with the assessment system of the agency. We would like to begin with the inspection staff who already have a huge work load on their shoulders just conducting their inspections. We appreciate the inspectors' diligence in evaluating each violation and the Inspectors-at-Large and/or the Assistants careful review of the violations and assessment selections. Special thanks go out to the regional staff who enters the assessment information, which includes entering many cases each day in each office. Our appreciation goes out to Margie Mayhew and others in the Charleston office who help with the many problems that arise. The assessment program can only work as smoothly as it does because of all the people who work so hard to carry their own personal share of the load. We again send to each and every one of you a special thank you.

Randall Kidd
Assessment Officer

Agency Accomplishments

The mine inspector's examination was administered at the MSHA Academy on May 28 and 29. A total of ninety-four persons appeared to take the examinations. Forty-three for underground inspector, twenty-four for surface, eleven for electrical, and sixteen

for the safety instructor examination.

The tests will be re-administered on September 8 and 9, 1998 to those persons who were originally scheduled to take this last examination.

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Legislative Efforts

In a previous edition of *Miner Details*, Director Harris has noted how pleased he was with the last legislative session. What he didn't mention was how much effort he and the agency legislative team put forth to facilitate that success. Getting a bill written, submitted, and ushered through the legislative process is not an easy task. Literally hundreds of hours were spent by the team monitoring the progress of various bills, especially those dealing with appropriations. Much of the monitoring had to be done after hours and on weekends especially toward the end of the session. Several critical mistakes were caught by members of the team.

Final written versions of submitted bills are completed by staff members of the legislature and its various committees. During the last weekend of the session when all bills were supposed to be complete, a major error was found

by the team in one bill, which would have negated the entire intent of the legislation. This error was caught the evening prior to the last day of the session. The bill had to be re-routed back to the originating committee for correction and brought back to the floor for passage. Another MHS&T bill was passed by committee with errors present on two separate occasions and had to be re-submitted each time.

Boots !!

Our agency recently provided new Matterhorn mining boots for all field personnel. This certainly is a step in the right direction!

For Your Information

Training Animation Films

Recently MHS&T staff reviewed several animations created by the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals. These animations simulated roof fall accidents and moving machinery accidents. Illinois is utilizing these as training tools, as the animations are based on actual events. Those within MHS&T who have viewed the programs are impressed by the realism of the 3-D artwork. Director Harris was interested enough to schedule a trip to the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals to see first hand how they are created. Accompanying him were Mike Rutledge of the Oak Hill office and Dave Kessler of the Charleston office. From this meeting and subsequent meetings with animators in the private sector, MHS&T plans to develop animations of our own. Initially, we hope to incorporate some animation with the video and still shots taken from fatal accident

investigations. As this project moves along, further updates will be provided.

Roof Control Inspections

Eight fatal roof/rib fall accidents have occurred in the mining industry this year. Four have occurred in West Virginia. This represents 66% of all 1998 fatalities and is four times as high as this time last year. Inspectors were sent on June 22, 23, and 24 to give coal producing section crews a special safety talk to help prevent roof/rib fall accidents.

Did You Know?

Synthetic Coal Fuel Plants

Five new coal-processing plants have recently been built at various locations throughout West Virginia. These plants use new technologies to gather and dry very fine particles of coal from material that previously was being thrown away as refuse. Equipment recovers up to 120 tons of fine coal per hour, squeezes it dry, and mixes the coal with a latex binding material. In one type of plant, the resulting black, paste-like material is then heated in a gas-fired furnace (similar to an asphalt furnace) and then squeezed into briquettes like charcoal. Other types of plants squeeze the pasty material into pieces resembling short sticks of black chalk and then bake the pieces in a series of gas ovens. In both cases, the coal undergoes a chemical change during the heating process and becomes a high-grade synthetic fuel. The new fuel will not re-absorb moisture and is suitable for the steam or metallurgical markets. These new plants will create several new jobs, reduce the overall amount of plant waste, and perhaps make it profitable to clean up old refuse impoundment areas.

Good News!

The annual increment checks will be issued July 31 for all employees with 3 or more years of service. For all employees, the across-the-

board pay increase of \$765 went into effect July 1, 1998, and should be reflected on your July 16 paycheck.

Up Close and Personal

Congratulations go out to the son of Sam and Kathy Sloan, Weston, who made the baseball all star team for the second year in a row in the 9-10 year old category. Kathy who works in the Charleston office collects antiques and loves to go to yard sales.

Doug Conaway, his wife Nancy, and his mother recently returned from a two-week vacation to Italy, Israel, and the 'Holy Land'. They traveled with a group of forty, leaving the U.S. from New York, flying to Rome and later to Israel. Doug said they enjoyed themselves, getting to see other countries, how others live, and the different foods. "It will make you appreciate what you have". Doug said they experienced some culture shock in Rome because of the very different culture, but not in Israel where English is the second language.

Leisure Time

Marjorie Mayhew works in the Charleston Office and enjoys working puzzles and cooking. She loves music and enjoys taping Jerry Springer shows.

Also from the Charleston office, Tina Estep enjoys children and shopping flea markets, playing softball, riding, reading, crafts and aerobics.

Summer Safety Tips

Heat Stroke & Heat Exhaustion

Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition resulting from exposure to high temperatures. Symptoms include disorientation, loss of consciousness, headache, vomiting, and high body temperature. To treat heatstroke, move the person to a cooler location, apply cool, wet clothes and contact medical assistance immediately. Although not as critical as heat stroke, heat

exhaustion also results from exposure to extremely warm weather. Symptoms may include headache, vomiting, dizziness, excess fatigue, thirst, reduced sweating and weakness. To treat heat exhaustion, move the person to a shaded or cooler area, loosen any constricting clothing and have him or her drink cool water or other beverages to control dehydration.

- Stay in areas where it's cool or air-conditioned.
- Reduce physical activity.
- Drink plenty of water or other non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverages.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Eat several small meals throughout the day.

Sunburn

To treat sunburn, cool the skin with wet cloths or water. Seek medical assistance if the burn causes intense pain or swelling. Do not apply ointments without a doctor's approval.

To reduce the chances of sunburn:

- Avoid sun exposure between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. (when effects of the sun are the most damaging).
- Always use a sunscreen and wear a hat or cap with a brim.
- Avoid recreational tanning.

Staff Meeting

Our agency's annual staff meeting will be September 10 and 11 at the MSHA Academy at Beckley, WV.

Director Harris urges all employees to arrange your schedule so that you may attend.

