

MINER DETAILS

Volume 3 Issue 3 MINERS' HEALTH, SAFETY & TRAINING MAY 1998

BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

From The Director's Office

I suppose everyone is concerned about how the legislative session affected our agency. One of our biggest concerns was trying to obtain enough money to survive this fiscal year. We were fortunate to get a supplemental appropriation to carry us through this fiscal year, and which also made it possible to replace several high-mileage vehicles. The agency also submitted a bill taking the spending authority of the assessment account from the Director and placing that money in the state's general revenue account. This money has decreased over the past several years and has placed the agency in a difficult financial situation. As a result of this change, the legislature appropriated 1.2 million dollars to our budget. This is an increase of about 500,000 dollars from what we would have had otherwise. The agency, along with the Training Board, submitted a bill which requires all independent coal truck drivers (surface & underground) to have appropriate certifications. This bill passed and requires any independent coal truck driver to have certification effective July 1, 1998. We also submitted a bill removing the age limit for initial mine rescue team members. This bill passed and requires only that mine rescue team members pass a physical examination regardless of age. All in all, I feel we had a successful legislative session. We are already making plans for the 1999 session which I feel will again benefit our agency. I look forward to discussing these

legislative issues with you at our annual staff meeting in September.

Ron Harris, Director

Inside this Newsletter:

- *From the Director's Office*
- *Agency Accomplishments*
- *For Your Information*
- *Did You Know?*
- *Upclose and Personal*
- *Extra! Extra!*

Agency Accomplishments

New Law Books

A one thousand copy second edition of the gray, full-size law book was completed in April and is currently being printed. Sales for the first edition of this book were much greater than expected. The new law book will also have a gray cover, but will have the four changes of the laws that have occurred over the last several months. Changes include the new eight-hour truck driver training requirement, the elimination of the fifty years old requirement for mine rescue members, spending authority of contractors' permit fees for the Director for one year, and a change that sends assessment moneys collected into the state's general revenue fund. Article 2A concerning the Diesel Commission has been moved to the proper location and all index page numbers have been corrected. Identify the new law book by the words 2nd Edition on the front cover.

In-House Training

During a staff meeting day in April, Surface Inspector Mike Armentrout presented in-house training to the Oak Hill inspection staff on surface mobile drills and drilling practices. Mike pointed out the various safety features and requirements for drills along with tips on tell-tale signs to look for to assure safety and compliance. Mike's expertise in surface equipment is a good example of the valuable information available within our agency. The presentation was well-planned and informative. Thanks Mike!

For Your Information

Computer Virus Alert!

Two common computer viruses, the Antiexe virus and the Forms virus, were recently discovered on PCs in Charleston and two regional offices. A computer virus is a program designed to disrupt the normal operation of a PC. They can be destructive or non-destructive. They have a "trigger" (something that activates them) and a "payload" (such as a political message), and most are designed to replicate themselves. This allows them to spread from one PC to another. There are thousands of known viruses with new ones being created every day. Most viruses are passed from infected disks or from Internet downloads. The virus caused one MHST machine to crash, and be out of service for several days. After detection, the agency installed anti-virus software onto our PCs. This provides a level of protection, however there is still the possibility of further infection. Users should be very careful when loading or using

borrowed software or disks. If you own a PC for personal use, you should consider installing anti-virus software. There are several very good packages on the market at a very reasonable cost. An ounce of prevention may save your computer files.

Did You Know?

Board of Appeals

The Board of Appeals consists of three members with two members of the board appointed by the governor. One person represents the viewpoint of the miners, and one person represents the viewpoint of the operators. A third person chairs the board, and must not have had any connection with the coal industry or any organization representing the miners. He is selected by the two members appointed by the governor. The term of each office is five years. The function and duty of the board is to hear appeals, make determinations on questions of miner entitlements due to withdrawal orders, and rule on appeals stemming from discharge, discrimination, or suspension of certification. The chair of the board has power to administer oaths and subpoena witnesses. He may require submission of books, papers, records or other documents relevant or material to the appeal inquiry. Charles Johnson and Stephen Garcia were appointed by the governor. Clinton Smith is Chairman of the Board.

Up Close and Personal

The State of West Virginia dedicated May 4 through 8 as *Public Service Recognition Week* to honor state employees who have achieved twenty years or more of public service. Employees with at least twenty years service as of June 30, and in increments of five years thereafter, are recognized with a certificate and lapel pin. The agency is responsible for planning special recognition of employees with twenty and twenty-

five years of service. The governor hosted the annual awards ceremony and reception for employees with at least thirty years. Our agency had nine employees who achieved twenty years of service in 1998 and one with twenty-five years of service. Twenty-year recipients are Gary Ball, James Bird, Don Dickerson, Harry Linville, Roger Powell, Mike Rutledge, Kathy Sloan, James Whetsell, and Gilbert Witt. Our twenty-five year recipient is Ron Harris. These individuals were presented a certificate and pin by Director Harris in Charleston on May 9, 1998. Gary Ball presented Ron Harris with his certificate and pin.

Congratulations

You can begin calling Randall Kidd "Paw Paw". His daughter gave birth May 3, 1998, to a 6 lb. 1½ oz. baby boy, George Alexander Aiello.

Randall also took first place in the Annual Public Employees Golf Tournament held at Twin Falls State Park May 4, 1998. He defeated ninety-four other golfers to win the title. Other agency employees taking part were "Coach" Green, Doug Conaway, and John Spatafore.

Leisure Time

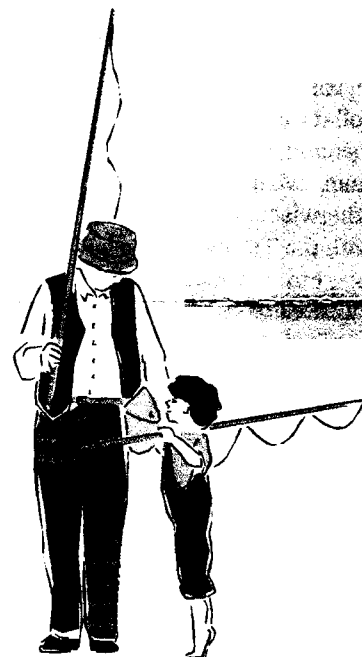
Barry Fletcher from the Buckhannon office likes to deer and turkey hunt, and play basketball. He also golfs with his three sons. Barry recently built his own house and is involved with youth groups at his local church. Boyd Vance from the Danville office spends his leisure time deer and turkey hunting, collecting hats and belt buckles, and doing wood working projects with his children and grandchildren. Brian Mills in the Fairmont office spends his leisure time officiating football and basketball games, working in the yard and garden, and playing golf. Brian was an official at the 1996

AAA high school football championship game and officiates at some West Virginia State College football games. Terry Keen in the Oak Hill office spends his leisure time deer and turkey hunting, trout fishing, and collecting Civil War artifacts. He also enjoys scuba diving Civil War ship wrecks. Bill Tucker in the Welch office spends his leisure time deer and squirrel hunting with his son and enjoys softball and bowling with his children and grandchildren.

Extra! Extra!

Traveling Newsletter

Apparently *Miner Details* is being circulated to more than just our employees. According to sources in the Welch office, our newsletter is copied and distributed to several of the mining companies in that region. Also, copies are being sent to MSHA in Arlington. We hope everyone interested in our newsletter finds it informative.



Take Time to Spend Quality Time
with a Youth !