

Mine Safety Is No Accident

(NAPSA)—Coal mining is vitally important to the economy of this country—and the health and safety of miners is vitally important to the future of the mining industry. All of us benefit from the coal they produce when we turn on our lights, heat our houses and drive on our roads. Demand for coal is now at an all-time high. Now is the time for the mining industry to take extra safety precautions and stay focused on safe operation.

Over the years the mining industry has dramatically reduced fatalities from roof and rib falls. During the entire calendar year 2003, two miners suffered fatal injuries due to roof falls. Unfortunately, over the summer there were four fatalities caused by roof falls in mines—four too many.

MSHA Assistant Secretary Dave D. Lauriski recently sent a letter to mine operators at all underground mining operations, urging them to stay alert and follow approved and required safety measures to protect miners from injury or death.

Assistant Secretary Lauriski asked mine operators to evaluate their approved roof control plans and ensure that the plans are adequate to control the general mine roof conditions, whether mining on development or during pillar extraction, and ensure that the approved roof control plans provide the required protections for the working miners.

Mine operators should also take the following steps to ensure their miners are working safely and under properly evaluated conditions:

- Meet with all underground miners and reiterate that they must never work or travel under unsupported roof, and that they must always follow the provisions of the approved roof control plan.



Mine operators are being asked to take steps to ensure worker safety.

- Remind mine examiners of the necessity of making frequent and thorough workplace examinations that could detect changing roof, rib and face conditions.

- Remind employees to use the sight, sound and vibration method of roof evaluation to determine if the roof is competent, and to consistently scale all loose rock or ribs prior to starting work.

- When adverse roof conditions are encountered, miners should install additional roof support materials.

- More importantly, make sure workers, particularly new employees, are properly and adequately trained in effective roof control procedures.

- Finally and most importantly, mine operators can help protect and preserve the safety and health of miners who work in their operations by ensuring that mine foremen and supervisors provide strong supervision and oversight of miners during retreat mining operations. This action alone will help ensure that every miner goes home safe and healthy at the end of each shift.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration believes good safety and health practices are values to business, to community and most importantly to mining's most valuable resource—the miner.