

Technical Assistance for Safe and Healthful Mining

Sometimes mine operators and miners need special technical assistance to help control the hazards at their workplaces. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has a staff of scientists, engineers, and industrial hygienists who can suggest solutions to difficult mine safety problems.

Besides working directly with individual mining operations, MSHA's technical specialists conduct investigations at mine sites, perform laboratory studies, and perform safety-related tests of mining equipment. They also provide special on-site technical assistance during mine emergencies.

Safety And Health Technology

MSHA gives direct assistance to mines around the country from its Technology Center in the Pittsburgh area. Specialists work with mining companies and local MSHA inspectors to gather information on safety and health problems and to offer engineering or other types of solutions. MSHA provides mining companies with help in overcoming health hazards such as harmful dusts, liquids, vapors, and gases, or physical agents such as noise, ionizing radiation, and heat stress. Specialists also work to ensure safety by giving help with ventilation and electrical systems, roof support and ground control methods, mine waste facilities, equipment use, and many other aspects of the mining environment.

In addition, the staff of the Technology Center work to keep the mining industry current with state-of-the-art information on mine safety and health issues. MSHA regularly sponsors lectures, seminars and training classes and publishes reports on the latest scientific and technical information.

Testing Products Used In Mining

MSHA tests a wide range of mining equipment, components, instruments, and materials to ensure that they meet government standards for safe design and construction. This work helps to ensure that the various products will not contribute to an explosion, fire, electrical failure, vehicle crash, or other kind of accident.

The extensive list of mining products that MSHA must approve, pursuant to the Mine Act, includes multi-ton coal loading scoops, electrical cable and splice kits, panic bar designs, fire-resistant hydraulic fluids, vehicle braking systems, conveyor belts, diverse kinds of electrical equipment, hoses, explosives, mine illumination systems, and mine monitoring devices such as methane gas detectors. These products may be used in both coal and non-coal mines.

MSHA conducts these tests and investigations at the Approval and Certification Center (the Center), near Wheeling, WV. The Center includes laboratories, a test track, explosion galleries, and offices for administrative work and recordkeeping.

MSHA specialists also publish a number of analytical studies and reports each year for use by the mining industry and the general public.

For more information on MSHA technical support programs, contact:

- MSHA's Directorate of Technical Support on (202) 693-9470;
- MSHA's Pittsburgh Safety and Health Technology Center on (412) 386-6902;
- MSHA's Approval and Certification Center on (304) 547-0400;
- Your local MSHA office. (Check your local phone book, under "U.S. Government.")