

MSHA's First Stakeholder Call for 2019 Focuses on Large Mobile Equipment Safety and Dust Enforcement

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On January 24, 2019, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) held its first Quarterly Stakeholder Call of the year. As with previous calls, the agency emphasized its efforts to support its powered haulage safety initiative. Powered haulage accidents accounted for 48 percent of the 27 mining fatalities in 2018. MSHA classifies both mobile equipment- and conveyor-related accidents as powered haulage.

While 2018 saw the second-lowest number of fatalities ever recorded, there were four powered haulage-related fatalities in the last quarter of the year for metal and nonmetal mines—all of which related to the use of mobile equipment. Stakeholder outreach around powered haulage fatalities was a big MSHA initiative in 2018. The agency published a [request for information \(RFI\)](#) on Safety Improvement Technologies for Mobile Equipment at Surface Mines, and for Belt Conveyors at Surface and Underground Mines in the *Federal*

Register on June 26, 2018, and afterwards held several public stakeholder meetings. The RFI closed in December 2018. However, Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health David Zatezalo declined to address any plans the agency may have for rulemaking on powered haulage since MSHA is still reviewing stakeholder comments.

Beginning in February 2019, mine operators can expect MSHA inspectors to focus on best practices for improving safety for large mobile equipment operators and miners working around them. Inspectors will also be distributing written materials, including stickers, to remind miners that haulage safety starts with each individual and inform them of steps they can take to prevent accidents. MSHA conducted a [similar outreach with operators on conveyors](#) last year. Additionally, MSHA will be filming videos in the spring that operators can use to improve miner training on the prevention of accidents around mobile equipment. The agency hopes mine operators will share this information not only with their miners, but also with contractors working around large mobile equipment at their mines.

The question-and-answer portion of the call also included a tense discussion between journalists and Zatezalo regarding the agency's enforcement of its 2014 dust rule for coal mines and plans for rulemaking on crystalline silica. Zatezalo stressed that inspectors have increased dust sampling in the field and that current overexposure readings have decreased. He welcomed input from stakeholders and reminded them that MSHA published an RFI in the *Federal Register* for stakeholder comments, data, and information on the dust rule on July 9, 2018. The RFI also seeks information and data on engineering controls and best practices that can lower exposure to respirable coal mine dust. The comment period for this RFI closes on July 9, 2019.

TOPICS

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