

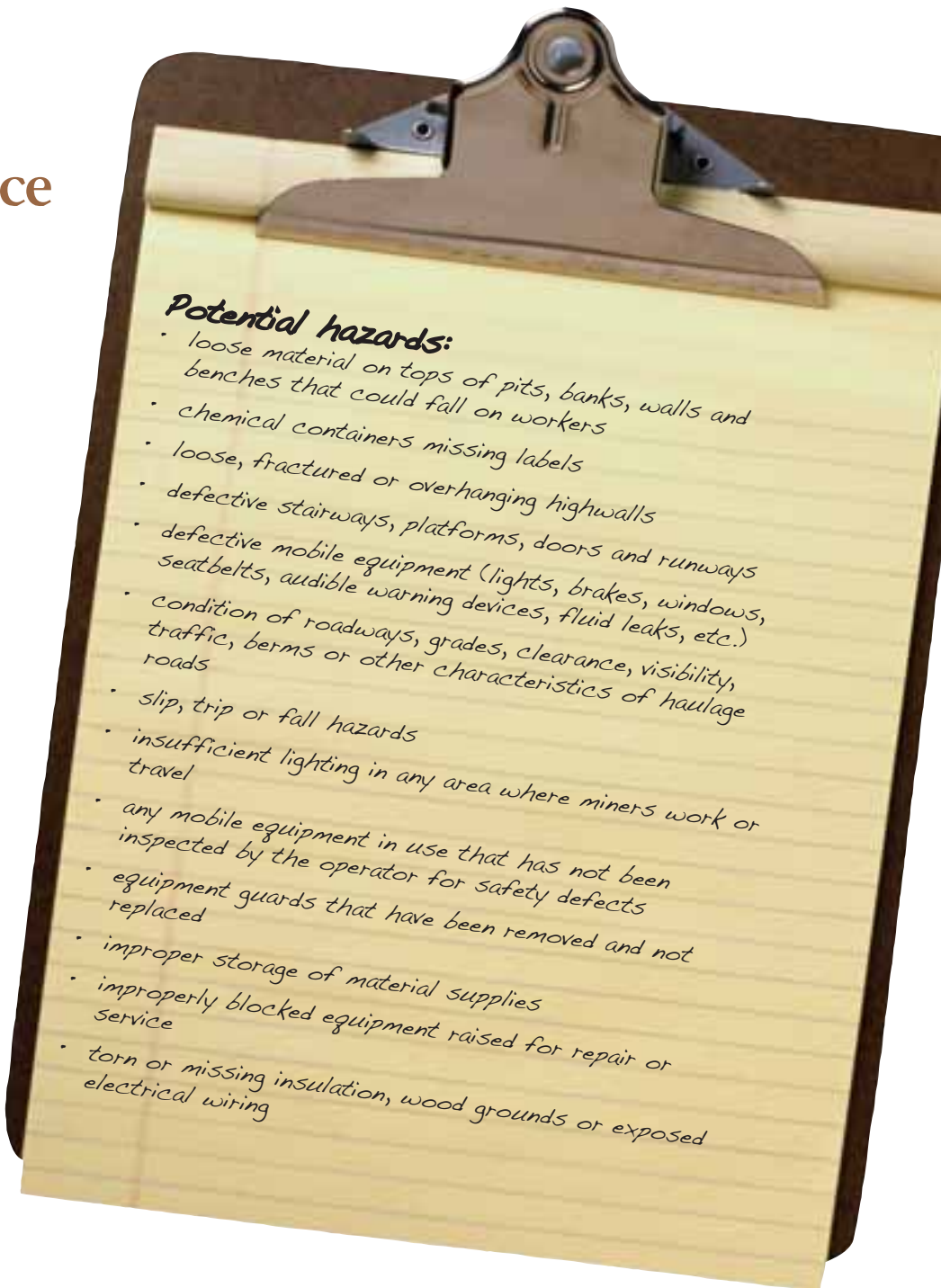


# RIP & SHARE SAFETY HANDOUT

## Check Up on Daily Workplace Exams

**D**oes your mine comply with safe operation standards pertaining to daily workplace examinations? The government provides rules for mine operators about how to examine work areas around mines for potentially hazardous conditions and how to keep records related to the examinations. When the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration inspector visits to determine if your safety practices are sufficient, rest assured that that person will review your records of daily workplace inspections.

To ensure that supervisors and managers are checking up on this aspect of safety before the MSHA inspector gets there and before a serious accident occurs, add it to your checklist of priorities. Verify that safety practices are being followed and that record keeping is up to date. The crux of the issue is that daily exams and record keeping are time consuming and tiresome and are overlooked when production is the number one priority. Don't step up safety practices only after a serious accident occurs and then let them fade quietly away again. Switch permanently; make safety number one.



### *Potential hazards:*

- loose material on tops of pits, banks, walls and benches that could fall on workers
- chemical containers missing labels
- loose, fractured or overhanging highwalls
- defective stairways, platforms, doors and runways
- defective mobile equipment (lights, brakes, windows, seatbelts, audible warning devices, fluid leaks, etc.)
- condition of roadways, grades, clearance, visibility, traffic, berms or other characteristics of haulage roads
- slip, trip or fall hazards
- insufficient lighting in any area where miners work or travel
- any mobile equipment in use that has not been inspected by the operator for safety defects
- equipment guards that have been removed and not replaced
- improper storage of material supplies
- improperly blocked equipment raised for repair or service
- torn or missing insulation, wood grounds or exposed electrical wiring



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Safety requires careful, thoughtful observation of operations and consistent record keeping on a daily basis.

The concept of daily workplace exams should be taught in routine training. In addition to training miners on how to execute mining jobs – where and how to operate equipment and perform other tasks without hurting oneself or others – it is essential that they also learn to spot potentially hazardous conditions during a pre-shift inspection or during routine shift operations and react to them appropriately.

All miners can and should be on the lookout for unsafe conditions in their work areas every day – such as slippery walkways, exposed wires, broken parts, *etc.*, and know that they should stop work immediately, report irregularities to a supervisor and not resume work in the area until the issues are resolved. But simply performing inspections does not fulfill compliance requirements – record keeping does. Making check marks on a paper, however, does not mean that an inspection has been done, but holding individuals responsible for inspections and having a paper record that they have signed will raise the level of seriousness if unnecessary accidents occur because potential hazards were not addressed before they actually caused problems.

The law, specifically 30 CFR § 56.18002, requires that a “competent person” perform a comprehensive daily examination of a certain work area, not only looking for specific unsafe conditions, such as potential failures of worn equipment and work structures, but also testing the soundness of the entire work area, and that person must keep a record of the examination, whether checkmarks on a checklist or initials in a log.

It is entirely appropriate for equipment operators – whether they are working with cranes, conveyor systems, or welders or driving pick-up trucks, loaders, or large haulage trucks – to perform routine pre-shift inspection of their equipment and to keep records of their inspections. Examinations of other workplace areas will require additional knowledge and experience.

Knowledge of the mining site itself may be required. If work continues,

could loose material fall down on workers? Is a barricade necessary in a certain spot? Are excavation workers closing in on a buried gas pipeline?

In July 2000, a loader operator was injured at an excavation site of a sand and gravel mine in Phoenix when a high-pressure natural gas line ruptured while he was excavating in the stockpile leach area. The worker subsequently died from his injuries. MSHA reported that the accident occurred because management, although it knew that the pipeline was there and that excavation was under way nearby, had failed to barricade or otherwise identify the location and depth of the pipeline traversing the pipeline. MSHA concludes in its report that “Management’s failure to designate a competent person to examine the work area for conditions that affect safety was a contributing factor.”

Subpart (a) of the regulation states that a “competent person” must perform the examination. The definition does not limit the job to supervisors, foremen, superintendents and managers. Any miner who is deemed qualified by the operator may take on the job. This helps to relieve one supervisor of all responsibility. A supervisor, instead of doing all the examination work, may delegate responsibilities to those who know the work area best. Then no one person is overwhelmed with keeping records. However, in the example above involving a buried pipeline, management must choose a “competent person” with the necessary knowledge to act to keep other miners safe. Subpart (a):

*(a) A competent person designated by the operator shall examine each working place at least once each shift for conditions which may adversely affect safety or health. The operator shall promptly initiate appropriate action to correct such conditions.*

Subpart (b) states that records should be made and kept for a year, accessible to government representatives when executing routine inspections and for reference in case a reported mine accident is under investigation. Subpart (b):

*(b) A record that such examinations were conducted shall be kept by the operator for a period of*

*one year, and shall be made available for review by the Secretary or his authorized representative.*

Records must include the date of examination, the examiner’s name and a description of the working places examined. MSHA allows operators flexibility in choosing what type of record is kept to minimize the paperwork burden. Records may be entered into computer databases or documents already in use, such as production sheets, logs, charts, time cards or another format that is convenient.

According to the regulations, some potentially hazardous conditions require immediate attention, while others should be reported for future attention. Subpart (c):

*(c) In addition, conditions that may present an imminent danger which are noted by the person conducting the examination shall be brought to the immediate attention of the operator who shall withdraw all persons from the area affected (except persons referred to in section 104(c) of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977) until the danger is abated.*

Check up on your daily examinations. Don’t let safety slide. ■

*This product was developed as part of the MSHA Alliance Program. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of MSHA. Use of the Alliance Program logos is reserved for MSHA and its active Alliance partners. The MSHA Alliance Program is designed to promote miner safety and health through voluntary partnerships, which provide training and education, outreach, technical assistance and a national dialog on mine safety and health. For more information, contact MSHA, [www.msha.gov/alliance/alliances.htm](http://www.msha.gov/alliance/alliances.htm).*

