

BRIEFLY...

Highlights of Report Number 05-10-001-06-001, to the Assistant Secretary for the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).

WHY READ THE REPORT

This report examines MSHA's efforts to provide initial training for newly hired (entry-level) inspectors and periodic retraining for experienced (journeyman) inspectors. Without sufficient training, MSHA inspectors may not possess the up-to-date knowledge of health and safety standards or mining technology needed to perform their inspection duties.

To insure the health and safety of miners, MSHA personnel conduct frequent inspections in the nation's 14,000+ mines each year. As required by the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, MSHA develops and maintains programs for the training and continuing education of these inspectors. The training is based on the specific technical needs associated with examining mines within an inspector's assigned program area – Coal or Metal/Nonmetal.

Training for entry-level inspectors combines classroom instruction (21-23 weeks) at the Mine Health and Safety Academy intermingled with on-line training components and on-the-job training conducted in the field. Journeyman inspectors are required to receive one week of specified retraining each year, or two weeks every other year.

WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE AUDIT

The OIG audited MSHA's Mine Inspector Training Program to answer the following question:

Do MSHA inspectors receive training to effectively execute their regulatory responsibilities?

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full agency response, go to:

<http://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2010/05-10-001-06-001.pdf>

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JOURNEYMAN MINE INSPECTORS DO NOT RECEIVE REQUIRED PERIODIC RETRAINING

WHAT OIG FOUND

During fiscal years (FY) 2007-2008, MSHA increased the number of inspectors by 26 percent and provided initial training to more than 350 entry-level inspectors. However, 56 percent of the 102 journeyman inspectors we sampled had not completed MSHA's required retraining during the FY 2006-2007 training cycle. MSHA lacked controls to track and assure completion of required periodic retraining by journeyman inspectors, and there were no consequences for not attending retraining courses.

MSHA also authorized one individual to perform inspection duties without requiring him to complete the minimum entry-level training requirements. MSHA had not defined circumstances that permitted a waiver of the training requirements nor had they documented the rationale for waiving the training requirements in this instance.

We identified several examples of training records for entry-level inspectors that lacked timely supporting documentation. MSHA's system for recording training activity lacked sufficient controls to assure that adequate documentation was maintained to support training completion.

WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED

We made seven recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health. In summary, we recommended that MSHA hold supervisors accountable for assuring that journeyman inspectors complete retraining, suspend an individual's health and safety inspection activities if designated retraining was not completed, re-emphasize MSHA management's commitment to training, develop policies and procedures to justify and document waivers of minimum training requirements, strengthen requirements and controls for recording and supporting completed training, and re-emphasize the importance of entry-level inspectors performing OJT tasks under proper supervision of an experienced inspector.

The Assistant Secretary generally agreed with our recommendations and committed to implementing corrective actions.