

## **BRIEFLY...**

Highlights of Report Number 05-13-002-06-001, issued to the Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health.

### **WHY READ THE REPORT**

The Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health is responsible for ensuring that the office of Coal Mine Safety and Health reviews and approves roof control plans for coal mines. Roof control plans identify how mines intend to control or prevent shifting of the roof, face, or ribs and collapses, such as the one that occurred in the Crandall Canyon Mine.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a follow-up audit of audit report number 05-08-003-06-001, "MSHA Could Not Show It Made the Right Decision in Approving the Roof Control Plan at Crandall Canyon Mine," which assessed the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) process for reviewing, approving, and overseeing the Crandall Canyon Mine's roof control plan.

### **WHY OIG CONDUCTED THE AUDIT**

As part of our oversight responsibilities, we performed this follow-up audit to determine if MSHA's actions in response to the OIG's 2008 audit report improved the coal mine roof control plan review, approval, and oversight processes.

The OIG's 2008 audit made 9 recommendations to MSHA. These included: (1-5) developing a rigorous, standard, and transparent process for the evaluation and approval of roof control plans, including active management oversight; (6) requiring inspectors to document the work they perform in effectively questioning miners on mining activities and conditions in the mines; (7) issuing a policy on allowing non-rescue activities and personnel on site during active rescue operations; (8) establishing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bureau of Land Management; and (9) conducting a new review, consistent with these recommendations of all existing roof control plans.

### **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/2013/05-13-002-06-001.pdf>.

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## **MSHA HAS IMPROVED ITS ROOF CONTROL PLAN REVIEW AND MONITORING PROCESS BUT COULD DO MORE**

### **WHAT OIG FOUND**

The OIG found that MSHA's processes for reviewing, approving, and overseeing coal mine roof control plans have improved since our 2008 report because MSHA has developed guidance and checklists for reviewing and approving roof control plans; performed roof control plan reviews more frequently and undertook an effort to re-examine all roof control plans in effect at the time of the 2008 audit; issued policy regarding non-rescue activities and personnel on site during active rescue operations; and established a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bureau of Land Management to ensure information on mine conditions is shared.

However, despite these efforts, we found:

- Districts still operated under incomplete Roof Control Plan Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
- District Managers did not always document the rationale for their roof control plan decisions; and
- Enforcement personnel monitoring activities lacked required documentation.

In its response, MSHA disagreed with the OIG's interpretation of certain policies, but agreed to revise them to clarify their intent. MSHA also believes that the documentation issues identified by the OIG were administrative in nature, and that the agency has significantly improved its performance with respect to roof control plan approvals and monitoring, as evidenced by the decrease in accidents related to this type of cause. MSHA also stated that it took proactive efforts by including specific training for inspectors and continuing training for roof control specialists.

### **WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED**

The OIG recommended that the Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health make improvements in the areas of developing policies and procedures, implementing SOPs, and training. MSHA said it agreed with the recommendations and recently overhauled its centralized directives functions. MSHA will also clarify documentation guidance of inspections and investigations and will provide training to individuals involved in the roof control plan review and approval process. MSHA disagreed that controls must be included in district SOPs because it is a major undertaking in a time of limited resources.