



DMM Safety Alert: Work Place Examinations

Work place examinations are fundamental to ensuring a safe work environment. Accidents investigated by the Virginia Division of Mineral Mining (DMM) and the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) continue to show that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on work place examinations. In Virginia, the certified foreman is required to examine active work areas at the beginning of each shift for hazardous or unsafe conditions (**4 VAC 25-40-130,450**). Virginia also requires all miners to inspect their mobile and stationary equipment prior to use (**4 VAC 25-40-145**) and to examine their work areas prior to starting work and frequently thereafter (**4 VAC 25-40-460**). Any safety defects or unsafe conditions found by miners must be corrected or reported to the designated certified foreman. The certified foreman is responsible for making sure that all unsafe conditions found or reported to them, are corrected prior to miners starting or resuming work. Mine operators are required to cooperate with certified foremen in carrying out their duties as required by the laws (**Section 45.1-161.292:8 of the Mineral Mine Safety Laws of Virginia**). In order for this process of inspection and hazard correction to be successful in eliminating accidents, DMM recommends the following:

- Mine operators must empower their certified mine foreman to identify and correct unsafe conditions/hazards.
- The certified foreman, in turn, must empower and train miners working under them to properly identify safety defects and unsafe conditions and to correct or report them.
- The certified foreman must display daily, a strong work ethic in carrying out and documenting the beginning of shift examinations, which will help reinforce the importance of these examinations to the miners.
- Hazard recognition should be a key element in the training of all miners. Task training for equipment operators should include how to do a pre-operational equipment inspection and properly identify safety defects.
- The certified foreman should observe and periodically accompany personnel during their pre-operational equipment inspections and work area inspections, to ensure that they are being done properly.
- The mine operator and certified foreman must instill a culture/environment where miners are confident that the mine foreman will correct safety defects and unsafe conditions in a timely and appropriate manner.
- The mine operator and certified foreman must keep prompt and accurate records as required by state and federal laws.

