

Mine Safety and Health Administration

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Issue

Describe the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and how to access data on MSHA's activities in Connecticut.

Summary

MSHA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor charged with overseeing the safety and health of people employed in coal mining and in other mining industries (e.g., stone and sand and gravel). As part of its duties, MSHA inspects each underground mine at least four times a year and each surface mine twice a year and assesses financial penalties for violations. Its regulations (standards) set a wide range of equipment, procedures, certifications, and training requirements ([30 C.F.R. §§ 1.1-104.4](#)).

MSHA maintains a [publicly accessible database](#) of current and historical data for individual mines. The database indicates that there are, as of the date of this report, 44 active surface mines in Connecticut, about half of which are for construction sand and gravel. It also lists an additional 427 mines that are either temporarily idle (9 surface mines), intermittent (60 surface mines) or abandoned (348 surface mines and 10 mining facilities). The database also provides specific data for each of these mines, including inspection, accident, violations, and employment data, as described below.

MSHA Mine Safety and Operations Data

Data for mines in Connecticut can be found in MSHA's [Mine Data Retrieval System](#) by navigating to the "State/County" tab, selecting "Connecticut" from the "Select State" dropdown menu, then

clicking “Submit.” Users can then access a wide range of mine safety and operations data for each of the individual mines listed by clicking on the mine identification number. This data includes the following for each mine:

1. an overview of its injuries and injury rates and citations by year;
2. inspection dates and outcomes;
3. accident histories, including the worker’s experience and occupation and a narrative of the incident;
4. violations, including their status and any penalties imposed;
5. health samples, including contamination codes and concentrations;
6. mine employment reports that show hours worked and average number of employees by quarter;
7. a comparison of the mine’s enforcement and injury data against specific “patterns of violations” criteria;
8. a calculation of the number of violations per inspection day; and
9. an estimate of underlying safety or health hazards that are likely to result in serious injury or illness.

Background

MSHA works to prevent death, illness, and injury from mining and to promote safe and healthful workplaces for U.S. miners. MSHA develops and enforces safety and health standards and provides technical, educational, and other types of assistance to mine operators ([30 C.F.R. §§ 1.1-104.4](#)). Connecticut does not have an equivalent agency to MSHA, but state agencies do regulate activities that affect mines and mining operators. (This [recent OLR report](#), for example, describes how blasting agents and explosives are regulated in Connecticut.)

The [Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977](#) (the Mine Act) created MSHA as the enforcement agency for mine safety (previously enforced by the Departments of Labor and Interior). Among other things, the Mine Act required (1) four annual inspections at underground mines, (2) two annual inspections at surface mines, (3) additional rights for miners and protection from retaliation for exercising those rights, (4) mandatory miner training, and (5) mine rescue teams for all underground mines.

The act was subsequently amended in in 2006 as the result of a sharp increase in mining fatalities. The [Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act](#), among other things, requires (1) mine-specific emergency response plans for underground coal mines, (2) new regulations on mine rescue teams and the sealing of abandoned areas, (3) prompt notification of mine accidents, and (4) enhanced civil penalties for violations.

More information on MSHA can be found on its [website](#).

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