

Employee safety is the highest priority of the mining industry. Enacted last Congress with the support of the entire mining community and overwhelming bipartisan majorities, the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act has helped the mining community make significant safety improvements. We remain committed to aggressive implementation of the MINER Act—including those provisions that are awaiting regulatory interpretation or the results of special studies. Imposition of conflicting legislation at this time will interfere with implementation of the MINER Act, compromise ongoing safety efforts and potentially result in several mine closures. Full implementation of the MINER Act and the recommendations of the independent Mine Safety Technology and Training Commission should precede consideration of any new legislation.

Legislation

- The “Supplemental Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2007” (H.R. 2768), sponsored by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-Calif.), passed the House by a vote of 215-199 on Jan. 16, 2008. This bill is opposed by the National Mining Association.
- The “Miner Health and Safety Enhancement Act of 2007” (S. 1655), sponsored by Senate Health, Education, Pensions and Labor Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), is a companion bill to H.R. 2768. This bill is opposed by the National Mining Association.
- H.R. 3486, sponsored by Rep. Brad Ellsworth (D-Ind.), contains a package of tax incentives meant to further aid mine safety equipment investments that exceed the requirements of current law, as well as investments in mine safety and rescue training. The National Mining Association supports passage of H.R. 3486.

Background

The mining industry has made significant progress in implementing the major requirements of the MINER ACT, including: placing 125,000 self-contained self-rescuers (SCSR) into service, with 100,000 more on backorder; quarterly training on SCSR usage and evacuation procedures; installation of systems to track miners in an underground mine; installation of redundant communication systems in separate entries; approved plans to provide post-accident breathable air to miners awaiting rescue; and the addition of 40 new underground coal mine rescue teams.

The industry is also implementing the recommendations of the Mine Safety Technology and Training Commission, an independent panel of technical experts convened to analyze mine safety technology and training needs and to provide recommendations to improve mine safety. Many of the commission’s recommendations go above and beyond the requirements of the MINER Act.

This past summer’s Crandall Canyon mine tragedy has focused congressional attention on mine safety. However, the best course of action is to allow for full implementation of the MINER Act and an assessment of its results before additional legislation is considered.

The safety record of underground coal mining has been on a steadily improving trend for the past 30 years, and the mining community is committed to continuing that improvement and reaching our goal of zero fatalities in underground coal mines. Over the past 25 years fatalities have decreased 81 percent in our nation’s coal mines and the industry continues striving to return every miner home safely at the end of every day.

For more information about mine safety visit www.nma.org.