

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



**For Immediate Release
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**Enzi Will Expedite Confirmation Hearing
for Head of Mine Safety Agency**

Praises Launch of Sago Investigation

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said he “fully supports the immediate and comprehensive investigation” of the Sago mine tragedy by the Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and also announced that he has scheduled a hearing to begin the confirmation process of the President’s nominee to head the mine safety agency by the end of January.

“I am deeply saddened by the news of the twelve miners who perished in the Sago mine explosion in West Virginia. Like all Americans, my thoughts and prayers are with the families that are suffering. I commend the heroic efforts of those who engaged in the rescue effort to bring these miners to safety,” Enzi said.

“In light of the urgent need to thoroughly examine the cause of this tragedy and to ensure that similar accidents are never repeated, I will expedite the confirmation process for the President’s nominee, Richard Stickler, which is pending before the HELP Committee,” he added. “The challenge of protecting workers in the mining industry while running an investigation into the Sago tragedy requires a full time administrator at the helm of MSHA.”

Enzi said he will closely monitor the progress of MSHA’s investigation and is receiving daily

updates from Secretary Chao. "It is essential that the HELP Committee be fully and timely informed on the progress of this investigation and that we have the information and evidence necessary to adequately assess the causes of this tragedy. We will continue to monitor their work through the duration of the investigation," he said.

A hearing to confirm both Stickler and Edwin G. Foulke, who has been nominated by President Bush to head OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration), will be held by the end of January, Enzi confirmed.

Stickler is the former Director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Deep Mine Safety, and has extensive experience in the mining industry spanning 37 years. His tenure as Director of Pennsylvania Bureau of Deep Mine Safety included the successful rescue in July 2002 of nine miners trapped for 77 hours in a coal mine near Somerset, PA.

Foulke, a labor relations and employee benefits attorney, is currently a partner in the Greenville, S.C. law firm of Jackson, Lewis LLP and is a former commissioner of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

Enzi praised the prompt decision by the Bush Administration to launch a comprehensive investigation into the Sago mine tragedy and promised that the HELP Committee will take an active and cooperative role in support of the Administration's review.

On Wednesday Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao announced that MSHA was beginning an investigation to "determine the cause of this tragedy and will take the necessary steps to ensure that this never happens again." MSHA's Acting Assistant Secretary, David Dye, said the investigation will "evaluate all aspects of the accident and response, including compliance with all federal health and safety standards, and how emergency information was relayed about the trapped miners' conditions."

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