



For Immediate Release

Contact: Craig Orfield  
(202) 224-6770

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## ***ENZI ASKS FOR REVIEW OF ADVANCES IN MINE SAFETY TECHNOLOGY***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today asked National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) officials to provide a review of advances in deep mine two-way communications and breathing technologies that could be used to help locate trapped miners and keep them alive until rescued.

“The tragedy at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah highlighted the importance of better underground mine communication and tracking technology,” Enzi said. “The rescue efforts at Crandall Canyon would certainly have been helped had it been possible to know the last location of the lost miners, and to communicate with them through 1,800 feet of hard rock. When an accident occurs, rescuers need to be able to find and communicate with lost miners – their lives depend on it.”

“Improving devices to ensure that miners have adequate breathable air is just as crucial. NIOSH must play a pivotal role in developing new breathable air technologies and making them accessible, so that miners are not overly-reliant on old technologies that are often misused.”

In a letter released today, Enzi asked Dr. John Howard, Director of NIOSH and Dr. Jeffrey Kohler, Associate Director for Mine Safety and Health Research at NIOSH to review the research and advances in deep mine communications and breathable air technology, and to provide him a briefing on the progress in those areas since the enactment of the MINER Act (Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act) last year.

Enzi’s request came as the HELP Committee prepares to hold a hearing tomorrow on the Crandall Canyon Mine disaster, which occurred in Utah in August.

Under Senator Enzi’s Chairmanship, the HELP Committee wrote and passed the MINER Act, which created a permanent Office of Mine Safety and Health within NIOSH and made numerous other changes intended to enhance the development, approval and availability of new and improved mine safety technology and equipment. It also

authorized grants and contracts to appropriate entities to develop and test new technologies, safety devices, and equipment.

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Jeffery L. Kohler, PhD  
Associate Director for Mining and Construction, NIOSH  
P.O. Box 18070  
626 Cochrans Mill Rd.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15236  
Via Facsimile: 412-386-5300

Dear Director Kohler,

The accident which occurred at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah mine last month has again highlighted the urgent need for better underground mine communication and tracking technology. The rescue efforts there would certainly have been aided had it been possible to know the last location of the lost miners; and to communicate through 1,800 feet of hard rock. The need of this type of improved mine safety technology is crucial; and the role of NIOSH in achieving that end is pivotal.

I was pleased to learn that you will appear on behalf of NIOSH at the HELP Committee's October 2nd Hearing on mine safety, and am confident that you will be able to provide the Committee with valuable insight into these important issues. However, I also realize that the time and format constraints of a hearing make a full discussion of complex technical developments difficult. In light of this I would like to extend to you a supplemental invitation to brief me and my staff on NIOSH's MINER Act progress and the technological developments that have occurred since the law's enactment.

Last year's Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response ['MINER'] Act created a permanent Office of Mine Safety and Health within NIOSH and made numerous other changes intended to enhance the development, approval and availability of mine safety technologies superior to those currently in use. In particular, the MINER Act directed the creation of an intergovernmental working group to provide greater access to all of the federal government's technological resources and expertise. It also authorized grants and contracts to appropriate entities to develop and test new technologies; a program which I understand is already underway. As the primary sponsor of the MINER Act, I am closely monitoring the enactment of all of its provisions.

Jeffery L. Kohler, PhD

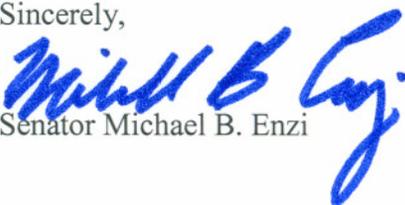
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In particular, I am interested in your review of technological developments in the area of wireless two way communications underground, tracking and breathable air. In particular, there are reports of new developments in two-way communications through the use of both wireless mesh systems and leaky feeder systems. I look forward to learning your assessment of these technologies', their deep mine capability, feasibility, cost, and any availability, maintenance and endurance issues you foresee. On breathable air, I would appreciate your evaluation of any developments in improved device design that would address the problems of long term reliance on SCSRs, including removal of the mouthpiece and general misuse.

The work of the Office of Mine Safety and Health is extremely important to miners in my state of Wyoming as well as across the nation. Thank you for taking the time to prepare an assessment of the pace of technological research and progress in these areas. Please contact Brian Hayes or Kyle Hicks in my office to set up our meeting. They can be reached at (202)224-6770.

Sincerely,



Senator Michael B. Enzi

MBE/kh