How Operators Can Maximize the Benefits of MSHA’s New and Improved Mine Data Retrieval System

Monday, June 17, 2019

On June 13, 2019, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) announced it had completed its upgrade of its Mine Data Retrieval System (MDRS). Under the new system, mine operators will have new tools to help review compliance with MSHA regulations as well as assessing employment and production records. The upgraded system will also enable mine operators to track accidents, inspections, violation history, and health sampling data. The new MDRS website is located by navigating to this link.

The major improvements in this upgrade allow mine operators to see and analyze data in real-time, as well as easily research various reports through new and improved search capabilities. A key component of the upgrade allows mine operators to download data into Excel or PDF documents. The reports available for mine operators to search include the following (with a discussion of the new tools for each report):

• **Mine Information**

Each mine will have a dashboard to view the mine, operator history, current operator, and controller. The mine information also contains the address of record and mine location.

• **Overview**

The overview provides new data for mine operators to review. Included in this section is data on fatalities, NFML and incidence rate, citations, orders and safeguards, mine information, nationwide fatalities trend, and nationwide NFML trend, all in a clickable format. An interesting new feature is the data provided under the citations, orders and safeguards search function – mine operators can now see the type and number of enforcement actions as well as proposed penalties and paid penalties broken down by year.

• **Accidents**

Mine operators have the ability to review past accidents, which will show date of injury, degree of injury, classification, occupation, and a narrative of the injury. Under this report, mine operators can also search nationwide accident data by accident classification, degree of injury, coal or metal/nonmetal mine, and mine type.

• **Inspections**

MDRS allows mine operators to search previous MSHA inspections at the mine and see the number of enforcement actions issued during each previous inspection. Under this report, mine operators can also see the number of nationwide citations and orders issued by year.

• **Violations**
Like the old MDRS, mine operators can view their violation history and see recent enforcement actions issued, the section of the Mine Act, whether it was S&S, the standard cited, and the proposed penalty.

• Health Samples

Mine operators can review health samples, including inspector samples and operator samples, under this report.

• Employment/Production

Like the old MDRS, mine operators can see quarterly hours and production as well as annual production. A new benefit is searching by calendar year to enable operators to easily compare different years.

• S&S Calculator

The S&S calculator provides data to compare an operator’s mine with the national S&S rate, as well as the number of S&S enforcement actions issued and inspection hours.

• POV Report

The POV report is also easily reviewed to determine if the mine is approaching POV status.

• VPID Report

The new VPID report provides an excellent resource to see which standards have been cited the selected date range.

Next, the new MDRS provides reports on mine employment and coal production, MSHA at a glance, mining fatalities by state report, fatalities by accident classification, top 20 most frequently cited standards, citations and orders by case number report, and high dollar citations and orders report.

Finally, the new MDRS provides a new searchable MSHA dataset search updated every Friday afternoon (unless noted) with information on accident injuries, area samples, coal dust samples, conferences, civil penalties dockets and decisions, contractor employment production (quarterly and yearly), controller operator history, employment production (yearly), inspections, and mine addresses.

The new MDRS should be a benefit to the mining industry based on the information every mine operator can obtain. As Dinsmore attorneys have discussed in presentations to the mining industry across the country, having information and being one step ahead (or at least on the same step) of an MSHA inspection is key. The data now available on the MDRS will enable mine operators to see the inspection history of their mine, national trends including MSHA’s top 20 list, and compare data from year to year. Of utmost importance is the fact this information – although previously available – is now easier to obtain. Moving forward, all mine operators will be able to see more information to prepare for future MSHA inspections. Instead of being surprised when an inspector arrives on mine property with information that was not easily accessible in the past, mine operators can now be better prepared for inspections.

Mine operators should explore the MDRS and use it as a tool in training sessions for management and top level safety personnel. The data from MDRS can be used to understand issues at each mine – i.e., repeat housekeeping violations or accumulation violations – to get ahead of MSHA. Because MSHA inspectors will come to each mine with most of the information now contained on MDRS, mine operators can now arm themselves with the same information to level the playing field during an inspection.

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