On June 25, 2018, MSHA issued a request for data regarding new or existing technologies that can help improve miner safety. The Request for Information (RFI), which was published in the Federal Register on June 26, 2018, centers on mitigating incidents involving mobile equipment and belt conveyors at surface and underground mines. According to David Zatezalo, Assistant Secretary for MSHA, “the Trump Administration is committed to the health and safety of America’s miners. Through the deployment of modern technologies, such as proximity detection, we can help ensure that miners return home safely at the end of their shifts...MSHA is also interested in learning more about how seat belts can be more widely used in mining operations to prevent injuries.” The mobile equipment focused on in the RFI includes front-end loaders, bulldozers, and trucks. The conveyor belt focused centers on entanglement accidents and fatalities that have persisted despite enforcement initiatives aimed at guarding violations.

MSHA will hold stakeholder meetings in order to receive direct feedback from the mining community. Technological advances in seatbelts, warning devices, visibility aids, and other such engineering solutions will be reviewed and analyzed by the agency. In addition to technological remedies, best practices and training will also be discussed at the meetings. This RFI should not come as a surprise to the mining community, as Mr. Zatezalo discussed his commitment to technology and education as potential key focuses of MSHA under his watch during the confirmation process.

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