

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2015

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Re: Support for Mine Rescue Equipment

Dear Director Donovan:

We are writing you to seek your support for funding of next generation mine rescue communications equipment for all U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) mine rescue teams in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request.

MSHA currently has several field offices with federal mine rescue capabilities including: Price, Utah; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Denver, Colorado; Beckley, West Virginia; and Madisonville, Kentucky. Currently, MSHA only has fully equipped communication and tracking systems in Pittsburgh and Denver. They have limited systems at other locations and no systems available for southern USA which has large mining operations (e.g. Alabama). The current MSHA response plan and equipment allocation potentially requires long transport times staged from these two locations when supporting any underground mining accident.

Since the passage of the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act in 2006, wireless mine safety communications and tracking technology has made every day mining operations significantly safer and more efficient. However, until recently these technological advances have not been available to mine rescue first responders.

Traditional mine rescue communications systems require running spools of cable with page phones or radios, which is a tedious, slow and ineffective process compared to deploying wireless technology. Running cumbersome communications cable to coordinate mine rescue operations delays the mine rescue mission and unnecessarily puts rescuers at risk. In response, for the past three years, MSHA has worked with industry to develop wireless next generation mine rescue communication capabilities for federal mine rescue teams, which can significantly reduce response time after mining accidents.

The need for rapidly deployable, lightweight and rugged communication and tracking systems, including atmospheric sensors, to support mine rescue first responders, is of high priority to the over 300 mine rescue teams (federal, state and private) in the U.S. This technology has been proven in actual deployments across the country over the past several years. Recent examples include supporting a Colorado gold mine recovery operation, a salt mine fire in

Texas, and a coal mine accident in Indiana. Rescue operations, which once took days, now can be completed in hours if equipment and teams are readily available.

Accordingly, please include appropriate funding for all MSHA mine rescue teams in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request.

Best regards,



Robert Hurt
Member of Congress

Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress

Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress



Mia Love
Member of Congress

Robert C. Scott
Member of Congress