



# Coal Contractor Mining Facts - 2002

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) defines an independent contractor as "any person, partnership, corporation, subsidiary of a corporation, firm, association or other organization that contracts to perform services or construction at a mine." Contractors that perform specific types of work are required to report the number of employees who perform work at coal mines and at noncoal mines.

1. In 2002, a total of 2,820 **contracting companies** reported employment at coal mines to MSHA.
2. A total of 30,332 coal contractor **employees**, corresponding to 16,795 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees,<sup>1</sup> were reported to MSHA in 2002. This represents an 8.4% decrease in FTE coal contractor employees from 2001.
  - The highest proportion of coal contractor employees was found in surface production operations (66.6%),<sup>2</sup> followed by preparation plants (21.3%), and underground operations (12.1%).
3. Seven work-related **fatalities** occurred among coal contractor employees in 2002, compared to six in 2001.
  - In 2002, coal contractor employees had a fatality rate of 41.7 fatalities per 100,000 FTE employees, compared to a fatality rate of 25.4 fatalities per 100,000 FTE coal operator employees.
  - The underground work location fatality rate was 142.2 per 100,000 FTE employees in 2002 (n = 3) compared to the 2001 fatality rate of 37.6 (n = 1).
  - The fatality rate at surface work locations was 38.2 per 100,000 FTE employees in 2002 (n = 4).
4. There were 641 **nonfatal lost-time injuries** among coal contractor employees occurring at a rate of 3.8 injuries per 100 FTEs in 2002. A total of 36,347 days lost from work<sup>3</sup> resulted from these injuries.
  - For coal contractor employees, the median number of days lost from work as a result of nonfatal lost-time injuries was 21. The median was 26 days for coal mine operator employees.
  - The highest injury rate among coal contractor employees was found in underground coal operations (13 injuries per 100 FTE employees). The most frequently reported types of accidents among coal contractor employees were handling material (n = 238; 37.1%) and slips or falls (n = 140; 21.8%).
  - Among the most frequently reported types of accident (greater than 10% of total), the most severe injuries (as measured by the median number of days lost) were associated with powered haulage (n = 77, median = 36.0) and slips or falls (median = 30.5).
  - The most frequent nature of injury, sprains and strains (n = 270), resulted in 15,491 days lost from work.
  - Among coal contractor employees, those with the MSHA job title of "laborer/utilityman/bull gang" had the greatest number of nonfatal lost-time injuries (n = 119; 18.6%).
5. Eighteen cases of **occupational illness** in coal contractor employees were reported to MSHA in 2002.<sup>4</sup> There were four cases of systemic poisoning; three cases each of hearing impairment, black lung (coal workers' pneumoconiosis), and unclassified occupational diseases; two cases of joint, tendon, or muscle inflammation or irritation; and one case each of dermatitis, heat stroke, and other injury.

<sup>1</sup> Computed using reported employee hours (2,000 hours = 1 FTE); excludes office employees.

<sup>2</sup> Surface production operations include strip mines, surface operations at underground mines (excluding preparation plants), auger mining, culm banks, dredge, and surface shops and yards.

<sup>3</sup> Includes actual days away from work and/or days of restricted work activity. For permanently disabling injuries only, statutory days charged by MSHA were used if they exceeded the total lost workdays.

<sup>4</sup> Because of the complexity of attributing disease causation to the workplace, occupational illnesses may be underreported.



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1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

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E-mail: [pubstaft@cdc.gov](mailto:pubstaft@cdc.gov)

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