Mine Safety Agency Issues Hand-Injury Advisory

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The Mine Safety and Health Administration has issued an advisory warning to mine operators and employees about the dangers of hand injuries.

The agency said that from January 1, 2010, through August 31, 2016, there were 5,678 hand injuries at the country's coalmines. Of these injuries, 1,863 resulted in an average of 39 lost time days. The agency said the following were the top four activities that miners were performing at the time of the injuries: handling supplies or material; handling non-powered hand tools; conducting machine maintenance; and roof bolting. MSHA said these four categories account for 4,197 or approximately 74 percent of the reported hand-injury accidents.

The agency recommends the following best practices to avoid hand injuries:

- Keep hands away from pinch points and rotating or moving machine parts.
- Never operate machinery or equipment without guarding nor when emergency shut-off switches, such as a panic bar, are not operable.
- Wear metacarpal gloves or proper fitting gloves that give employees the needed dexterity for the job task. The glove should fit snugly to reduce or prevent minor cuts, bruising, or pinching. Loose fitting gloves can get caught in machinery.
- Mechanically secure the material on which employees are working with clamps or vices, not with hands.
- Keep work areas clear of tripping hazards when handling supplies or material, maintain control of material when lifting.
- Use the correct tool for the job.
- When using box cutters, knife, or other sharp tools, cut away from the body.
- Remove jewelry, such as rings and bracelets, before handling material or using hand tools.
- Train miners to recognize hazards of each activity and how to use equipment and tools safely.

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