



NEW MEXICO BUREAU OF MINE SAFETY

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State Mine Inspector Statement Regarding Lightning Safety

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On July 29th a consultant performing archeological investigation on a mine site was struck by lightning. The individual was unresponsive afterward – not breathing and no pulse. Thanks to the quick actions of co-workers who immediately began CPR and the quick arrival of the mine rescue team and their continuation of that process, the victim was revived.

We are certainly in the summer lightning season and this incident can serve as an excellent reminder of the need to train employees in lightning safety and awareness. This also points out the importance of first aid and CPR training of employees.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons is that while training of employees is important, each employee should have the decision making ability to utilize that training to make the decision to take shelter. Here are some thoughts on lightning safety from the mine operator at the site where the accident occurred:

“If we can use this incident to avoid another...we should do that. The issue we found is that most operations do not have a specific range where miners 'on foot' are required to stop work and seek shelter. Most operations leave it up to the supervisor to make that decision. In my opinion, this is the most important learning from this incident...and therefore the most important recommendation.”

***William E. "Bill" Beaver**
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It is recommended that a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for lightning be developed by any organization working outdoors or conducting any type of field activities. The SOP should include contractors on the property. All employees and contractors should be trained in lightning safety and the organization's SOP. And last, each employee should have the stop work authority to utilize the training to reduce the risk of lightning.