



# Mining Facts - 2003

1. In 2003, 14,391 **mining operations** reported employment statistics to the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). Almost half (49%) were sand and gravel mines, followed by stone mines (30%), coal mines (14%), nonmetal mines (5%), and metal mines (2%).
2. Mine operators reported 217,662 **employees** (or 221,923 full-time equivalent [FTE] workers) to MSHA.<sup>1</sup>
  - Underground mines accounted for 18.3% of mine operator employees, while surface mines accounted for 81.7% of the employees.<sup>2</sup>
  - Among underground mine operator employees, the majority (80.9%) worked in coal mines.
  - The largest percentage of surface operator employees worked in stone mines (36.9%).
3. Of the 67,855 independent **contractor employees** (or 34,969 FTE contractor workers) reported to MSHA in 2003, 42.3% were coal contractor employees and 57.7% were noncoal contractor employees.
4. In 2003, there were 56 occupational mining **fatalities**, compared to 66 in 2002. The overall mining fatality rate was 21.8 per 100,000 FTE workers.
  - The fatality rate for mine operator employees was 19.8 per 100,000 FTE workers (n = 44; 78.6%), while the rate for contractor employees was higher at 34.3 per 100,000 FTE workers (n = 12; 21.4%).
  - The fatality rate at underground operations was 35.7 per 100,000 FTE workers (n = 16; 28.6%) compared to the lower rate at surface locations of 18.9 per 100,000 FTE workers (n = 40; 71.4%).
  - Coal contractors had the highest fatality rate (49.7 per 100,000 FTE workers; n = 8), followed by sand and gravel operators (rate = 30.8; n = 10) and coal operators (rate = 29.2; n = 22).
5. There were 8,322 **nonfatal lost-time injuries** reported to MSHA in 2003. These occurred at a rate of 3.2 injuries per 100 FTE workers and resulted in a total of 467,432 days lost from work.<sup>3</sup>
  - The underground injury rate was greater than the surface injury rate (6.3 vs. 2.6 per 100 FTE workers).
  - The nonfatal lost-time injury rate for mine operator employees was higher than the rate for contractor employees (3.4 vs. 2.0 per 100 FTE workers).
  - Coal operator employees had the highest nonfatal lost-time injury rate (4.4 per 100 FTE workers).
  - The highest percentage of nonfatal lost-time injuries was due to handling materials (35.4%; n = 2,943) followed by slips or falls (24.9%; n = 2,074).
  - The back continued to be the most frequently reported part of the body injured.<sup>4</sup> It accounted for 1,755 injuries, 105,510 days lost from work, and 22.6% of all days lost.
6. In 2003, 558 cases of **occupational illnesses** were reported to MSHA.<sup>5</sup>
  - Joint, tendon, or muscle inflammation or irritation accounted for 44.6% (n = 249) of reported occupational illnesses.
  - Mining operations reported 116 cases of black lung (coal workers' pneumoconiosis) and 7 cases of silicosis.
  - There were 113 cases of hearing loss or impairment reported to MSHA (or 20.3% of all occupational illnesses reported).

Note: All analyses exclude office employees, except for the total number of mining operations.

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

<sup>2</sup> Surface production operations include strip mines, surface operations at underground mines, preparation plants, mills, 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> MSHA only reports the most severely injured part of body for accidents involving injury to multiple body parts.

<sup>5</sup> Because of the complexity of attributing disease causation to the workplace, occupational illnesses may be underreported.



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**DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2005-113**