

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Enhanced Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program

"The first priority and concern of all in the coal or mining industry must be the health and safety of our most precious resource, the miner."

~Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, amended 1977

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Enhanced Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program (ECWHSP) studies the causes and effects of respiratory diseases related to coal mine dust exposure and provides vital health information to coal miners through health screenings and surveillance.



Photo by NIOSH

Program Background

The NIOSH ECWHSP is an extension of the Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program, which was established by the Federal Coal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1969 to provide early detection of coal workers' pneumoconiosis, also known as black lung, and to prevent progression to severe lung disease. The program offers easy access for coal miners to health screenings and allows researchers to identify trends in disease progression across the nation.

Coal Mine Dust Lung Disease

Exposure to dust in coal mines can cause several lung diseases. These include black lung, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), bronchitis, and emphysema.

Mobile Testing Units

NIOSH state-of-the-art mobile testing units travel to convenient community and mine locations to provide health screenings to all coal miners (past and present).

Screenings include:

- Work history questionnaire
- Chest radiograph
- Respiratory assessment questionnaire
- Lung function testing (spirometry)
- Blood pressure screening



Photo by NIOSH

Screenings usually take about 30 minutes. NIOSH directly provides each miner with their screening results. By law, each person's results are confidential. No individual information is publicly disclosed.

Participation in this program gives coal miners:

- An easy way of checking their health status
- A confidential report about their lung function
- A confidential report on whether or not they have radiographic evidence of black lung



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health

Frequently Asked Questions

How often does the NIOSH mobile testing unit provide lung screenings and where?

As a supplement to the Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program, our mobile units travel to different coal mining regions across the United States every spring and summer. Locations are based each year on areas where more extensive health information of coal miners is needed.



Photo by NIOSH

How will I know when lung screenings are available?

Announcements begin in March each year and run throughout the summer through NIOSH press releases, the Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program Facebook page ([@CWHSP](#)), [@NIOSHBreathe](#) Twitter, and the [Coal Workers' Health Surveillance Program](#) webpage at [cdc.gov/niosh/topics/cwhsp](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/cwhsp). Announcements are also made through local newspapers and radio stations.

Who can participate in the screenings?

All coal miners (current and former underground, surface, contract miners) are eligible to participate.

Do I have to pay for lung screening?

No. Screenings are free to all former and current coal miners as part of the Federal Coal Mine Safety and Health Act.

What is lung function testing (spirometry)?

Spirometry is a test that evaluates how well your lungs work by measuring how much air you can inhale and exhale, and how quickly you exhale. The test can help determine if a miner has a lung condition and helps to monitor conditions over time.

When and how do I receive my screening results?

Miners will receive their confidential results within 4-6 weeks after testing. Results are sent by mail directly to the miner's home address.

Does ECWHSP save my results for future screenings or send them to my doctor?

Yes, we keep confidential records for each miner's screening results to compare with past and future screenings. This enables us to identify changes in your lung health. We can also send results to your doctor with a signed release from you.

