



# Coal Contractor Mining Facts - 2003

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 2003, a total of 2,633 **contracting companies** reported employment at coal mines to MSHA.
2. A total of 28,672 coal contractor **employees**, corresponding to 16,098 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, were reported to MSHA in 2003. This represents a 4.1% decrease in FTE coal contractor employees from 2002.<sup>1</sup>
  - The highest percentage of coal contractor employees was found in surface production operations (63.2%), followed by preparation plants (25.1%) and underground operations (11.7%).<sup>2</sup>
3. Eight work-related **fatalities** occurred among coal contractor employees in 2003, compared to seven in 2002.
  - In 2003, coal contractor employees had a fatality rate of 49.7 fatalities per 100,000 FTE employees, compared to a fatality rate of 29.2 fatalities per 100,000 FTE coal operator employees.
  - The underground work location fatality rate was 212.8 per 100,000 FTE employees in 2003 (n = 4) compared to the 2002 fatality rate of 142.2 (n = 3).
  - The fatality rate for preparation plants was 74.2 per 100,000 FTE employees (n = 3) and 9.8 per 100,000 FTE employees for surface work locations (n = 1).
4. There were 441 **nonfatal lost-time injuries** among coal contractor employees occurring at a rate of 2.7 injuries per 100 FTEs in 2003. A total of 32,809 days lost from work resulted from these injuries.<sup>3</sup>
  - For coal contractor employees, the median number of days lost from work as a result of nonfatal lost-time injuries was 22. The median was 31 days for coal mine operator employees.
  - The highest injury rate among coal contractor employees was found in underground coal operations (9.9 injuries per 100 FTE employees).
  - The most frequently reported types of accidents among coal contractor employees were handling material (n = 154; 34.9%) and slips or falls (n = 108; 24.5%). 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 = 54, median = 42.5).
  - Sprains and strains were the most frequently reported nature of injury (n = 166), resulting in 12,561 days lost from work.
  - The back was the most frequently reported body part injured (n = 83, 18.8%).<sup>4</sup>
  - 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 = 111; 25.2%).
5. Thirteen cases of **occupational illness** in coal contractor employees were reported to MSHA in 2003.<sup>5</sup> There were five cases of black lung (coal workers' pneumoconiosis); four cases of joint, tendon, or muscle inflammation or irritation; two cases of hearing impairment; and one case each of dermatitis and heat stroke.

Note: All analyses exclude office employees.

<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.



*Delivering on the Nation's promise:  
Safety and health at work for all people  
through research and prevention*

For information about occupational safety and health topics contact NIOSH at:

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

Fax: 513-533-8573

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

[www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

**SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE™**

**DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2005-115**