

DECEMBER 2025

ISSUE 04

# Hard Hat™

HEADLINES

MAGAZINE

## CROSS MOUNTAIN MINE DISASTER

### 2025 TRIBUTE

TO THOSE WE LOST:  
WE WILL NEVER FORGET

## WHEN WINTER BITES BACK

THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE COLD IS PREPARATION, NOT  
REACTION.

Read more at  
[HardHatHeadlines.com](http://HardHatHeadlines.com)

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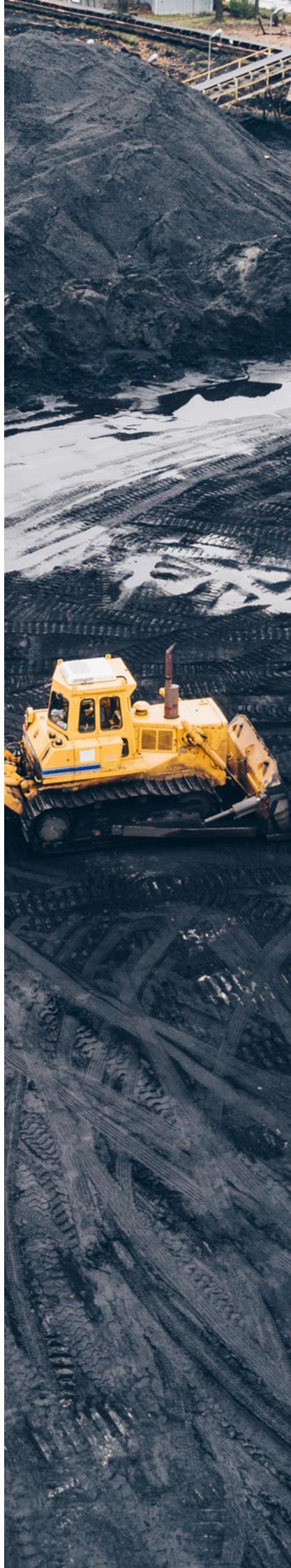
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## Closing Out 2025: A Year of Grit, Growth, and Gratitude

As we close the final pages of 2025, I find myself reflecting on a year that tested the mining industry's resilience like few others. It was a year of challenge, yes—but also one of learning, of courage, and of undeniable progress toward a safer tomorrow.

From the deepest underground operations to the most remote surface pits, miners and safety professionals across the world stood united in one mission—to return home safe at the end of every shift. While the road remains long and the work far from done, 2025 showed us that change is possible when heart and hard hat meet purpose.

Here at Hard Hat Headlines, we've seen tremendous growth—more readers, more contributors, more voices joining the conversation for safety. Your engagement, your stories, and your shared commitment have shaped this publication into something far more powerful than news alone. You've made it a community. For that, I offer my deepest thanks.

This December issue is more than an ending—it's a bridge. Within these pages, we honor those we've lost, learn from the tragedies we must never forget, and look toward 2026 with clear eyes and steady hands. The ambition ahead is bold: zero harm, deeper accountability, and stronger safety culture at every level of mining.

So as the year closes and lights glow across our towns, take pride in the work you do—the unseen, the tough, the vital. And remember, every ounce of prevention, every safety check, and every watchful eye matters.

Here's to you—the miners, the families, the safety champions, and every reader who believes that tomorrow can be safer than today.

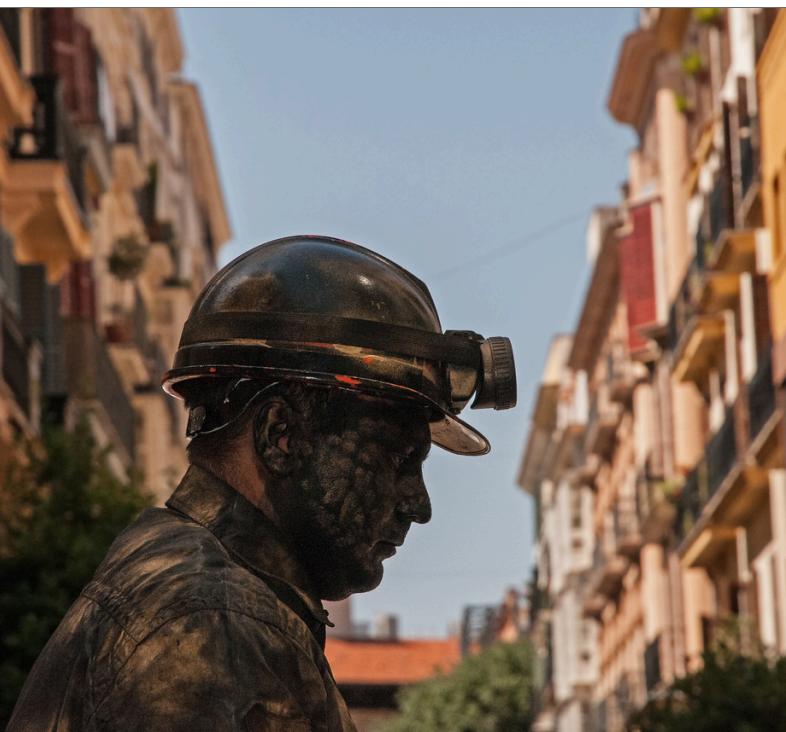
From all of us at Hard Hat Headlines: thank you for standing with us, learning with us, and believing with us.

Stay safe, stay strong, and we'll see you in 2026.

Hard Hat Headlines



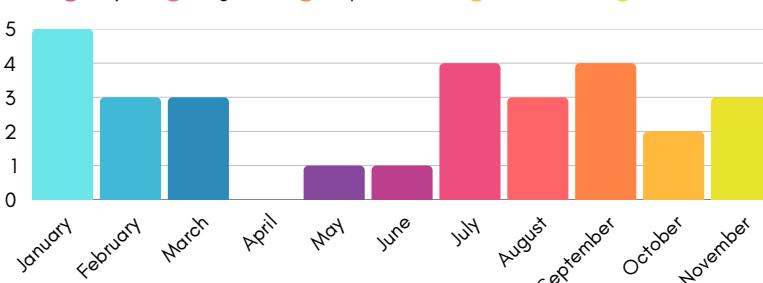
LAST MONTH  
**Loss**



**November 2025**

3

January February March April May June  
July August September October November



## Honoring Those We Lost

We pause to honor the miners whose lives were tragically lost while working to provide for their families and communities.

Each represents more than a statistic—they were fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, friends, and neighbors whose absence leaves an empty place at the table and a heavy weight in the hearts of those who loved them.

Their dedication and sacrifice remind us of the risks miners face every day, and of the responsibility we all share to continue striving for safer workplaces.

As we remember all miners across the globe, we hold their families close in thought and prayer, offering compassion, strength, and the promise that their loved ones will never be forgotten.

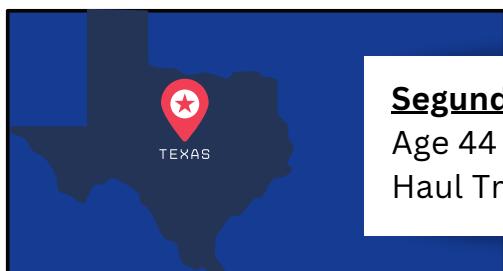
**2025 Fatality Current Total - 29**

## A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE Lost in 2025



This year, we pause to remember and honor the lives of the brave men and women who went to work—providing the resources that power our nation—and never returned home. Each name represents more than a statistic; it represents a life lived, a family forever changed, and a community that grieves their loss.

May their memory guide us, their sacrifice remind us, and their spirit strengthen our resolve to make sure every miner returns home safely.



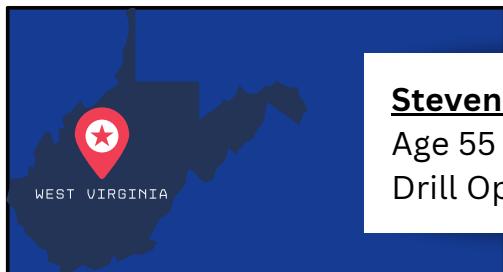
### Segundo Bosquez - January 3, 2025

Age 44  
Haul Truck Operator



### Joshua R. Mock - January 10, 2025

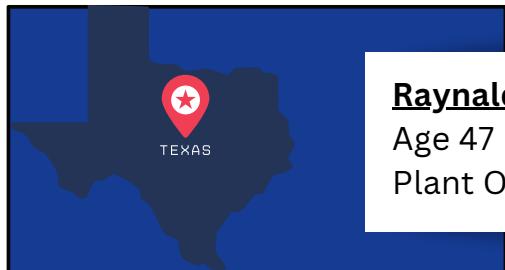
Age 34  
Mobile Bridge Carrier Operator



### Steven A. Fields - January 29, 2025

Age 55  
Drill Operator

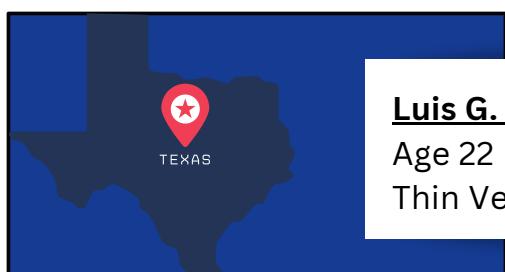
A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



**Raynaldo Barriento- January 30, 2025**

Age 47

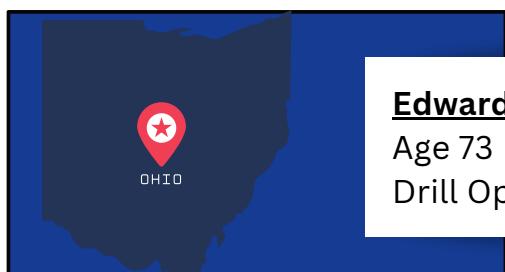
Plant Operator/Leadman



**Luis G. Sanchez-Robles - January 30, 2025**

Age 22

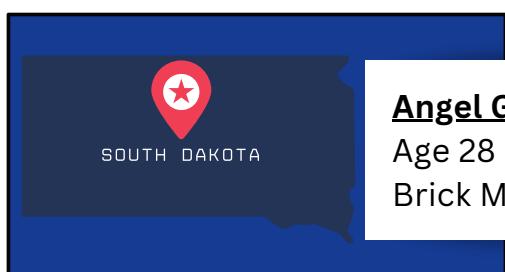
Thin Verner Saw Operator



**Edward J. Blomquist - February 12, 2025**

Age 73

Drill Operator



**Angel Gustabo-Perez-Perez - February 22, 2025**

Age 28

Brick Mason

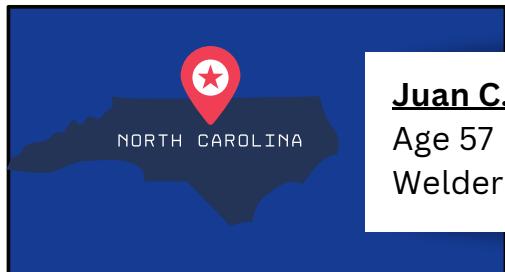


**Billy S. Stalker - February 28, 2025**

Age 46

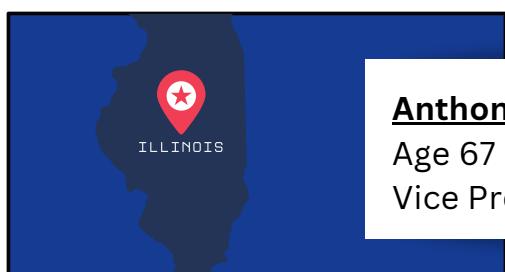
Seal Construction Worker

A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



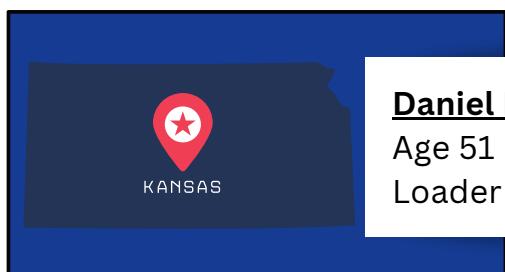
**Juan C. Maciel - March 5, 2025**

Age 57  
Welder



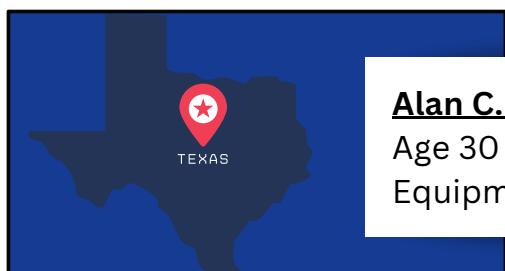
**Anthony L. Sievers - March 5, 2025**

Age 67  
Vice President



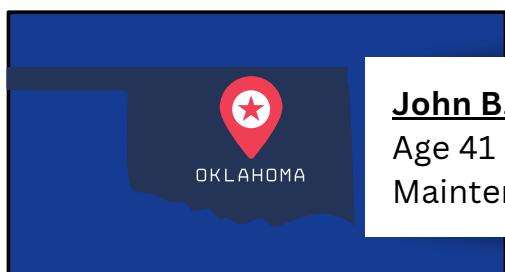
**Daniel R. Holle - March 28, 2025**

Age 51  
Loader Operator



**Alan C. Herrarte - May 1, 2025**

Age 30  
Equipment Operator



**John B. Bird - June 15, 2025**

Age 41  
Maintenance/Tech

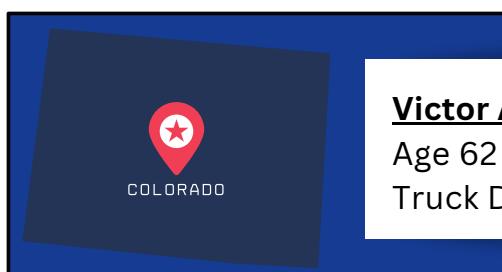
A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



**Alan Whitaker - July 12, 2025**

Age 36

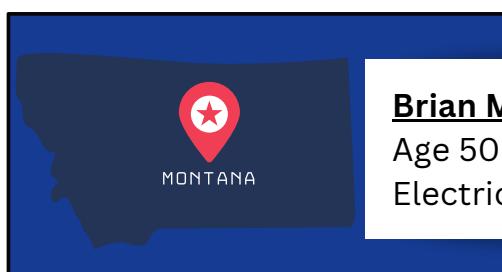
Miner 2



**Victor Armas - July 12, 2025**

Age 62

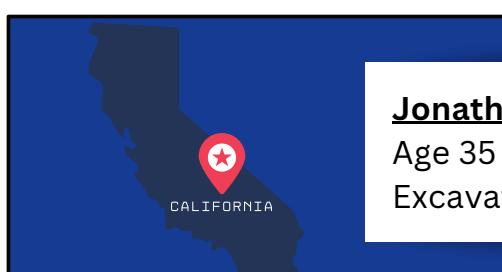
Truck Driver



**Brian M. Hanson - July 26, 2025**

Age 50

Electrician



**Jonathan Swarthout - July 29, 2025**

Age 35

Excavator Operator

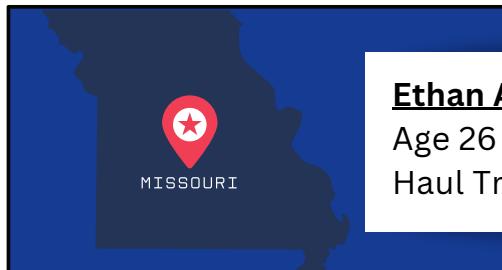


**Terry Johnson - August 7, 2025**

Age 50

Blaster

A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



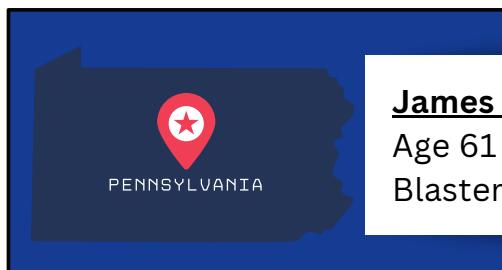
**Ethan Amberger - August 25, 2025**

Age 26  
Haul Truck Operator



**Eric A. Bartram - August 26, 2025**

Age 41  
Certified Electrician



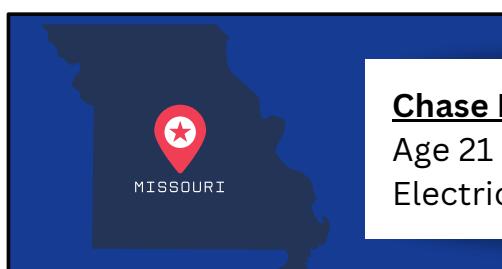
**James Gershman - September 2, 2025**

Age 61  
Blaster



**Steve F. DiTomasso - September 8, 2025**

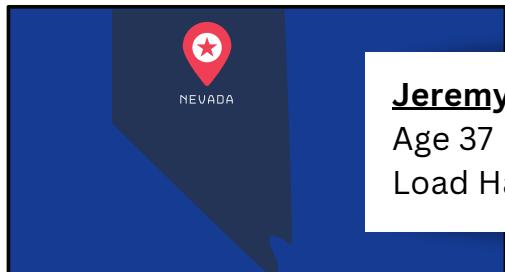
Age 74  
Truck Driver



**Chase D. Conrad - September 13, 2025**

Age 21  
Electrician

A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



**Jeremy H. Smokey - September 29, 2025**

Age 37

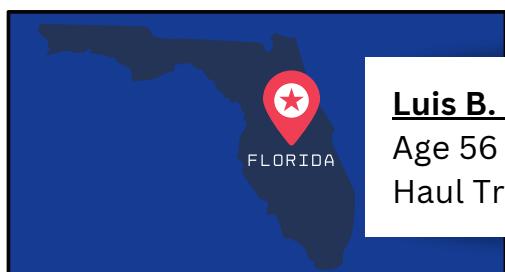
Load Haul Dump Operator



**James J. Hayes - October 16, 2025**

Age 34

Production Laborer



**Luis B. Espinosa - October 28, 2025**

Age 56

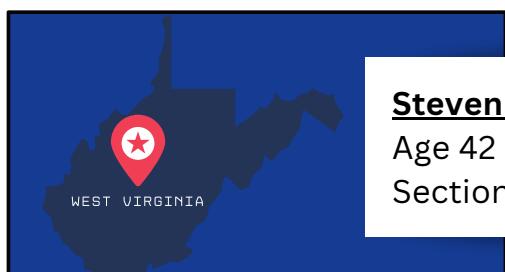
Haul Truck Operator



**Joseph D. Mitchell - November 6, 2025**

Age 25

Scoop-Utility

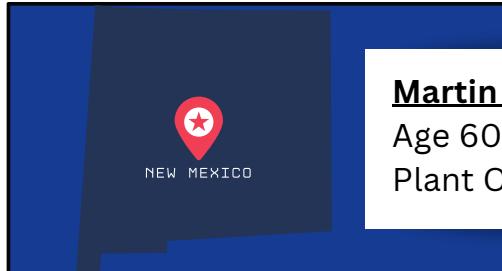


**Steven M. Lipscomb - November 8, 2025**

Age 42

Section Foreman

A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WE  
**Lost in 2025**



**Martin A. Delgado - November 22, 2025**

Age 60  
Plant Operator



## When Ice Fell from the Sky

The cold months of winter often bring a different kind of danger to mining—one that can't always be seen, but can strike without warning. In a chilling near-tragedy that occurred during a winter descent into an underground shaft in December 2022, three miners came within inches of losing their lives when a massive chunk of ice broke free high above and plummeted down the shaft.

The crew had started their shift like any other, descending hundreds of feet below the surface in the elevator cage. It was routine, mechanical—until the silence of the shaft was broken by a sound that no miner forgets. Without warning, a block of ice, formed by leaking water and freezing temperatures, detached from the shaft wall. It fell an estimated 1,500 feet before striking the top of the elevator.

The impact was violent. The metal panels on the cage severely damaged. In an instant, the miners were thrown to the floor, crushed beneath twisted steel. When the dust cleared, they were bruised, bleeding, and in shock—but alive. The miners suffered closed head injury, abrasion of face, abrasion of right leg, and traumatic hematoma of upper left arm. One miner also received a concussion, stitches inside the mouth, and an injured knee. The fact that no one was killed remains a miracle.

As emergency crews worked to extract the injured, the realization set in: this was not a freak occurrence. It was a preventable hazard—one made worse by winter's grip and a simple oversight that allowed ice to accumulate unnoticed.

### The Hidden Hazard of Winter Shafts

Cold weather changes everything underground. Moisture turns to ice; condensation hardens along steel; and water lines, valves, and shafts all become potential sources of deadly debris. What forms quietly one day can fall like a missile the next. When ice forms hundreds of feet above a work area or travel path, gravity becomes the greatest enemy.

In this case, the combination of freezing air, leaking water, and limited shaft visibility created a perfect storm. No one saw the ice forming, and no inspection caught the early warning signs. That's where this near-fatal moment becomes more than an accident—it becomes a lesson.

# WINTER ICE FALL NEARLY TURNS FATAL

## THE LESSONS THAT MATTER

The takeaway is clear: winter changes the rules of safety. Every shift in freezing weather requires a heightened sense of vigilance, especially in shafts, hoists, and travelways.

- Inspect for ice before every descent. Ice buildup can occur overnight or between shifts.
- Control water leaks immediately. Even minor seepage can create ice layers heavy enough to kill.
- Communicate conditions. Every crew member should know the risks before entering or traveling in a shaft during cold conditions.
- Preserve the scene after incidents. Accurate reporting and investigation are vital to prevent future tragedies.



Stock Photo: Does not represent accident location or equipment



### A Second Chance

The miners in this incident walked away battered but breathing—a gift many others in similar situations never received. Their story serves as a solemn reminder that safety isn't seasonal. The smallest oversight in winter can have the biggest consequence.

As we move into another cold season, let this close call be the voice echoing in every shaft, shop, and surface lot: don't underestimate the power of nature, or the danger of what you can't see.

**Stay alert. Stay alive. Safety doesn't take the winter off.**



## Spotlight: When the Cold Bites Back – Protecting Equipment in Winter's Grip

When temperatures drop, the mine doesn't stop—but the cold can turn dependable machines into unpredictable hazards. From frozen hydraulic lines to brittle metal components, harsh winter conditions put enormous stress on both people and equipment. This month's Spotlight takes a hard look at how cold weather affects mining machinery and what every operator and maintenance team should do to keep equipment safe, compliant, and reliable through the freezing season.

### The Hidden Toll of Low Temperatures

Cold air doesn't just make steel stiff—it changes the way your entire mechanical system behaves. Lubricants thicken, batteries lose charge capacity, seals harden, and moisture trapped in lines or tanks freezes, leading to bursts or system failures. Even a few degrees below freezing can reduce oil flow, slow hydraulics, and make engines work harder just to start.

When these small changes stack up, the result can be costly downtime—or worse, catastrophic equipment failure that endangers the operator and everyone nearby.

### Manufacturer Recommendations: Your First Line of Defense

Every piece of heavy equipment is designed with a temperature range in mind. Following the manufacturer's winterization procedures is not optional—it's essential.

- Use cold-weather rated fluids and lubricants that maintain viscosity in low temperatures.
- Preheat engines and hydraulics using block heaters or warm-up procedures before operating.
- Check seals, hoses, and fittings regularly—rubber and synthetic materials lose flexibility in cold weather and are more prone to cracking.
- Inspect batteries and maintain proper voltage; low temperatures can cut performance by half.
- Keep filters clean to prevent restricted flow, especially in diesel systems where gelling can occur.

Manufacturers provide detailed guidelines for seasonal operation and maintenance, and failure to follow those recommendations doesn't just risk performance—it can void warranties and violate internal safety policy.





CONTINUED

## **Spotlight: When the Cold Bites Back – Protecting Equipment in Winter’s Grip**

### **Company Guidelines and Regulatory Responsibility**

Most mining operations establish internal cold-weather safety protocols, often tied to MSHA’s requirements for equipment maintenance and safe operation. Under 30 CFR Part 56 and 57, equipment must be maintained in a safe operating condition, and defects corrected before use. Cold weather does not excuse compliance; in fact, it increases the responsibility to ensure all systems are functioning as intended.

Supervisors should confirm that winter readiness checks are documented, that employees are trained in proper warm-up and shutdown procedures, and that any equipment stored outdoors receives extra attention before start-up.

### **Don’t Let Cold Weather Write the Next Incident Report**

Winter has a way of testing preparation. A frozen line or failed starter may seem minor until it leads to an uncontrolled movement, brake failure, or unexpected shutdown in a hazardous area. Prevention begins long before the thermometer drops.

- Schedule winter maintenance early.
- Review and reinforce manufacturer and company cold-weather procedures.
- Communicate daily about equipment performance changes.
- Take unsafe equipment out of service immediately—no exceptions.

When the cold bites back, safety must bite harder. Every machine in the fleet depends on the vigilance of those who inspect it, operate it, and maintain it. So as frost covers the haul roads and snow gathers on the benches, remember: machines have limits—but safety doesn’t.



# Toolbox Talk: The Holiday Season Safety Check: Fatigue, Distraction, and the Winter Chill

The holiday season brings family gatherings, long drives, late nights, and for many of us, extra hours at work. It's a time of joy—but also a time when safety tends to slip. December and January consistently show an increase in workplace incidents across all industries, and mining is no exception.

## Fatigue: The Silent Risk

During the holidays, many of us are running on less sleep and more stress. Fatigue affects your ability to think clearly, react quickly, and recognize danger. It can slow your response time as much as alcohol impairment.

Remember:

- Don't push past your limits. If you're too tired to focus, speak up.
- Rotate tasks when possible to reduce repetitive strain and mental fatigue.
- Take your full breaks and stay hydrated—fatigue isn't just about sleep; it's about recovery.

## Winter Weather Hazards

Cold weather adds layers of risk—literally. Ice, snow, and freezing temperatures create slippery surfaces and slow-moving equipment. Reduced daylight means visibility drops, especially on haul roads, stairs, and walkways.

Stay ahead of the hazards:

- Wear cold-weather PPE rated for conditions (insulated gloves, non-slip boots, layered clothing).
- Clear ice and snow before beginning work; never assume a surface is safe.
- Watch for exhaust buildup in enclosed areas—carbon monoxide is odorless and deadly.
- Inspect vehicles and equipment daily; hydraulic lines, tires, and brakes behave differently in freezing temps.

## Distraction: Minds on the Holidays

It's easy to get distracted this time of year—thinking about travel, shopping, or family plans instead of the task at hand. A moment's inattention around heavy equipment or moving machinery can be the difference between a safe shift and a serious injury.

Keep your head where your hands are:

- Stop and refocus before every task—take 10 seconds to reset your attention.
- Communicate clearly; don't multitask near moving equipment or while operating machinery.
- Remind your team: safety doesn't take holidays off.

## Finish the Year Strong

The best gift you can give your family this season is your safe return home. Every inspection, every pause to check your surroundings, every decision to stop unsafe work—it all matters.

Before you clock in, ask yourself:

- Am I rested?
- Am I focused?
- Am I ready for winter conditions?

If the answer isn't yes to all three, take a moment to correct it. Safety doesn't start with the mine — **it starts with you**.

Stay warm, stay alert, and finish 2025 strong.



# MENTAL HEALTH *in Mining*



## Guarding the Mind Through the Winter Months

As the year draws to a close and winter settles across mine sites, the days grow shorter, the temperatures drop, and the long shifts seem even longer. For many in the mining industry, the cold season brings more than just harsh weather—it brings a silent struggle within.

Mining is a tough profession. It demands grit, endurance, and the ability to push through conditions most people could never imagine. But behind the strength and resilience that define our workforce, there's a side that often goes unnoticed—the toll winter can take on mental health.

## Winter Months and (SAD)

The winter months are linked to increased rates of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), depression, and anxiety. Reduced sunlight affects the body's natural rhythm and serotonin levels, leading to fatigue, irritability, and feelings of hopelessness. Combine that with the isolation of mine sites, shift work, and time away from family, and it becomes clear that even the toughest miners are not immune to emotional strain.

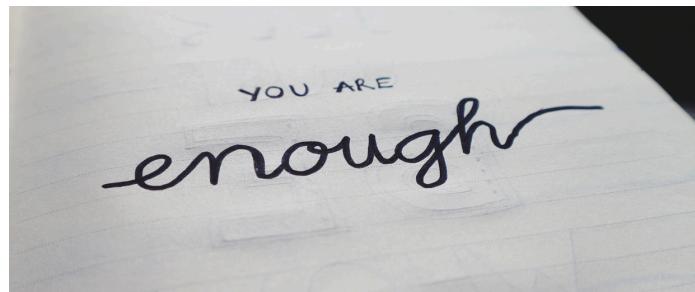


## Warning Signs

During this season, it's important to remember that mental health is just as critical as physical safety. Just as we watch for icy walkways or faulty equipment, we need to keep an eye out for the warning signs that a coworker—or even ourselves—might be struggling.

Warning signs can include:

- Withdrawing from conversation or social activities
- Sudden mood changes or irritability
- Loss of energy, focus, or motivation
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Talking about hopelessness or feeling “down” most days



## You are not alone!

If you notice these signs, reach out. A simple conversation can make a world of difference. Ask, “You doing okay?” and mean it. Listen without judgment. Sometimes, being there is all that's needed to remind someone that they're not alone.

There are confidential resources available, from workplace mental health hotlines to national supports like the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**, which offers 24/7 help.



OOOO

# THE WELLNESS WATCH



## Quick Insights: Wellness News in a Glimpse

The Wellness Watch is a monthly feature dedicated to raising awareness about chronic diseases and the impact they have on individuals, families, and communities. Each edition highlights a different condition, offering insight, support, and practical knowledge to encourage healthier lifestyles and stronger awareness.

While Hard Hat Headlines is rooted in the mining community, The Wellness Watch extends beyond the industry to remind us all that health is our most valuable resource.

### Who Is At Risk?

Anyone can develop diabetes, but certain factors increase risk:

- Age 45 or older
- Being overweight or physically inactive
- Family history of diabetes
- High blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Having had gestational diabetes during pregnancy
- Belonging to certain higher-risk ethnic groups

**If you have one or more of these risk factors, talk to your healthcare provider about getting screened.**



### In Focus: Diabetes Awareness and Management

#### What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes happens when your body can't make enough insulin or can't use it properly. Insulin is the hormone that helps move sugar from the blood into your cells for energy. When that process doesn't work, sugar builds up in the bloodstream.

#### Why it Matters?

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic health conditions in the United States, affecting millions of adults and an increasing number of younger people. It occurs when the body can't properly regulate blood sugar (glucose), leading to serious long-term health problems if not managed.

Even more concerning is how many people live with prediabetes—a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet in the diabetes range. Without lifestyle changes, many people with prediabetes will eventually develop type 2 diabetes.

For workers in the mining industry, where long shifts, stress, and irregular meals are common, awareness and prevention are key. Managing diabetes doesn't just protect your health—it supports alertness, endurance, and long-term safety on the job.



The most common type is type 2 diabetes, which often develops slowly over time. Symptoms can include:

- Increased thirst and urination
- Unexplained fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing cuts or sores

In the early stages, some people don't notice any symptoms at all. That's why regular checkups and blood sugar screenings are so important.

For additional information visit:



[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)



# Cross Mountain Mine Disaster

## Tribute to the 84

On a cold Saturday morning in Briceville, Tennessee, December 9, 1911, the men of the Cross Mountain Mine began what was meant to be another long day underground. Within minutes, a powerful explosion shattered the quiet hills. Methane gas and fine coal dust, stirred loose from a roof fall, ignited—sending fire and suffocating gases through the entries and tunnels with unimaginable force.

In an instant, the mountain swallowed eighty-four miners. Only five survived to tell their story. Their courage, and the lessons born from that disaster, still echo through every mine inspection, every safety training, and every family waiting for their loved one to come home.

The Cross Mountain explosion became one of the defining moments in American mining history. It exposed the deadly partnership between gas buildup, poor ventilation, and coal dust—a combination that could turn a safe operation into a tomb within seconds.

The tragedy also marked a turning point for mine rescue in the United States. The newly formed U.S. Bureau of Mines sent trained rescue teams to Briceville, equipped with early breathing apparatus and canaries to test air quality. Their work saved five lives and began a national focus on organized mine emergency response.

Today, the Cross Mountain Miners' Circle in Briceville stands as a quiet memorial—rows of graves encircling a stone monument. The design, a perfect circle, symbolizes the unity of miners in life and in loss, and the equality of every worker who descends into the dark.

More than a century has passed, yet the story of Cross Mountain remains a warning written in coal and fire. It reminds us that progress in safety is never complete.

As we honor the 24 miners lost across the nation in 2025, we stand in the shadow of Briceville's tragedy. Let the memory of those 84 lives fuel our commitment to ensure no other family endures the same loss.





## Your Voice

As Hard Hat Headlines continues to develop into a trusted resource for miners, safety professionals, and industry leaders, we want to ensure the content remains both relevant and impactful.

To achieve this, HHH is seeking input directly from you—the mining community. What issues, challenges, or innovations would you like to see explored in future editions? Whether it's emerging safety practices, regulatory updates, technological advancements, or lessons learned from the field, your suggestions will help guide the research and writing to better serve the needs of those who work in and support the mining industry every day.

We encourage you to share your ideas so that Hard Hat Headlines can continue to highlight the topics that matter most to you and your teams.



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Please note that while not all submitted ideas may be utilized in future editions, every submission will be thoroughly reviewed and given full consideration during the editorial process.



## Mission Statement

Hard Hat Headlines is committed to delivering independent, insightful, and timely news to the mining community. Our goal is to engage miners, safety professionals, and industry leaders by highlighting safety trends, regulatory updates, and real-world experiences from the field. We prioritize transparency, accuracy, and objectivity, using only publicly available information to provide a trusted source of information. By sharing stories, lessons learned, and innovative practices, we aim to foster a safer and more informed mining industry. Hard Hat Headlines operates independently of any government agency or private organization, ensuring that our reporting remains unbiased and dedicated solely to the needs of our readers.



**If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health challenges, drug addiction, or thoughts of suicide, please don't ignore the warning signs—reach out, speak up, and get help. You are not alone, and support is always available.**

### **Disclaimer:**

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