

# HARD HAT HEADLINES

*Fall Edition*

WEATHER  
**ALERT**

*Impoundments*  
**SLURRY PONDS  
TAILING PONDS**

Let's Discuss  
National Dam Inventory

*Mental Health  
in  
Mining*

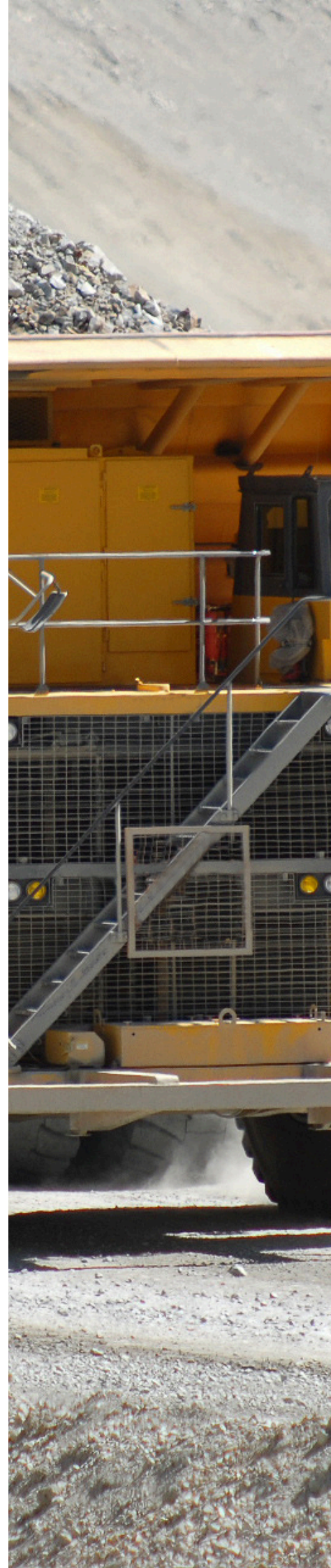
Remembering Buffalo Creek:  
A Legacy of Loss and Lessons

**SAFETY  
FIRST**



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## WELCOME fall

As we move into the fall season, this issue of Hard Hat Headlines brings together important lessons, reminders, and reflections for the mining community. We begin with Last Month's Loss, a solemn review of the lives taken too soon in September. These reminders reinforce the purpose behind our commitment to safety and the responsibility each of us carries to protect one another.

Our Close Call Corner examines past near miss that highlights how quickly circumstances can change in our line of work. By studying these moments, we gain valuable insight into prevention and strengthen our ability to identify and address hazards before they escalate.

This month's Safety Spotlight takes a closer look at Impoundments, Slurry Ponds, and Tailing Dams. With seasonal changes approaching, these critical structures demand heightened awareness and diligent monitoring to ensure their integrity and to safeguard both miners and surrounding communities.

As always, this issue provides a Toolbox Talk designed to encourage meaningful discussion at the job site. These conversations remain one of the most effective ways to build awareness, engage teams, and reinforce safe decision-making. **All miners should concentrate on the discussion and be fully engaged!!**

Finally, this issue includes a fall PPE awareness and a Special Tribute to those who lost their lives in the Buffalo Creek Disaster of West Virginia. As we honor their memory, we reaffirm our dedication to ensuring that such tragedies are not forgotten and that the lessons learned continue to shape a safer future for miners everywhere.

*HARD HAT  
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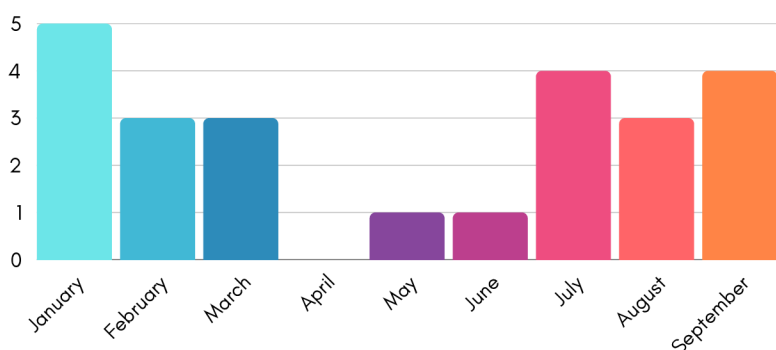
## LAST MONTH Loss



**September 2025**

**4**

January February March April May June  
July August September



## 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 - 24**



## Dozer Submerged in Pond – Operator Rescued

In a past mining accident, a surface dozer operator narrowly escaped serious injury when the machine became submerged in a pond. While working near the edge of the impoundment, the ground gave way beneath the equipment, sending the dozer sliding into the water until it was completely covered.

The operator, who was properly restrained by a seat belt, remained inside the cab during the incident. Quick thinking and immediate action by nearby workers made the difference. Coworkers used heavy equipment to trench around the pond, lowering the water level until the cab was accessible. The operator was safely rescued without life-threatening injuries.

This event underscores the hazards of operating equipment near ponds, impoundments, or soft ground. Even experienced operators can be caught off guard by unstable terrain, hidden voids, or saturated soil conditions.



### Lessons Learned

- Seat belts save lives: The operator's decision to stay belted in prevented drowning and severe injury during the submersion.
- Ground conditions must be evaluated constantly: Surfaces near water bodies can be unstable, especially after heavy rain.
- Emergency readiness is critical: Coworkers' quick response and use of available equipment turned a potential tragedy into a successful rescue.
- Barriers and berms matter: Maintaining proper berms and safe dumping procedures can keep machines from sliding into dangerous zones.

Close calls like this remind us that mining safety is not only about preventing accidents, but also about preparing to respond when the unexpected happens. Vigilance, training, and teamwork are the strongest defenses against disaster.



# Deep Dive: Submarine Kits for Dozers

## Additional Precautions for Dozers

Equipping bulldozers with enhanced safety features is critical to protecting operators in the event of entrapment incidents.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration emphasizes that cabs should be reinforced with high-strength glass rated for at least 40 PSI, supported by frames designed to withstand the pressures created when material collapses around the machine.

Submarine kits—outfitted with emergency oxygen supplies, self-contained self-rescuers, and reliable two-way communication—provide miners with vital time and resources to survive until rescue teams arrive.

Remote shutoff capabilities add another layer of control, allowing trapped operators to minimize further hazards.

Combined with proper training on identifying stockpile voids, maintaining clear markings around feeders, and ensuring diligent use of seatbelts, these safety measures transform bulldozers into safer working environments and significantly improve survivability during high-risk operations.



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**HEADLINES**





## HAZARD FOCUS & PREVENTION STRATEGIES

### **Safety Spotlight: Impoundments (Fall & Winter)**

Mining impoundments—often referred to as slurry ponds, tailings dams, or refuse embankments—are engineered structures designed to contain water, fine refuse, and other byproducts from mineral processing. Because these structures hold large volumes of material, they are closely regulated by state and federal agencies. Within the U.S., certain impoundments that meet height or capacity thresholds must have an approved plan, undergo routine inspections, and follow strict construction and monitoring requirements.

#### **Seasonal Safety Challenges**

As colder weather approaches, impoundments face unique risks that demand extra attention. Ice, snow, and freezing temperatures can mask warning signs, reduce accessibility, and place additional stress on embankment structures. Below are several critical areas to consider:

##### **Ice and Surface Freezing**

Frozen pond surfaces may conceal seepage, cracking, or settlement. Frost action along the embankment can also create structural stress. Inspectors should rely not only on visual checks but also on instrumentation to identify issues hidden beneath ice and snow.

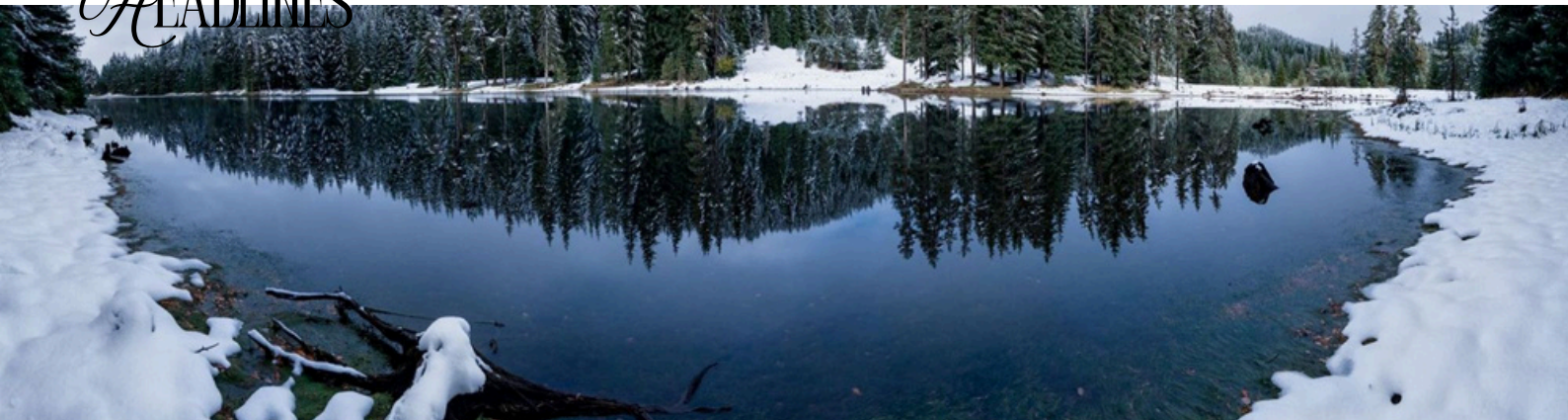
##### **Access and Visibility**

Snow accumulation and shorter daylight hours can make travel around impoundments more dangerous. Keeping access roads, walkways, and monitoring stations clear improves both safety and reliability of inspections.

##### **Drainage Concerns**

Ice can clog spillways and drainage outlets, leading to pooling or increased water pressure against embankment walls. Regular checks of drainage features are vital to ensure they remain clear and functional.





CONTINUED

## Safety Spotlight: Impoundments (Fall & Winter)

### Unusual Water Behavior

Changes in pool elevation, seepage, or pressure readings—especially when not linked to rainfall or snowmelt—may point to internal erosion or instability. These signs should be evaluated promptly by qualified personnel.

### Foundation Movement

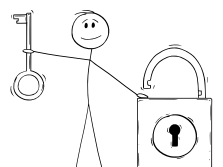
Seasonal freezing and thawing can cause soil and foundation materials to expand and contract, sometimes resulting in cracks or settlement. Impoundments built over mined-out areas require additional monitoring for these effects.

### Best Practices for Fall and Winter

- **Inspection Frequency:** Increase the number of inspections during colder months to catch problems early.
- **Monitoring Tools:** Use cold-resistant instruments for measuring water levels, pressure, and seepage.
- **Snow and Ice Removal:** Keep embankments, spillways, and access points clear.
- **Emergency Readiness:** Update emergency response plans to address cold-weather scenarios such as frozen spillways or sudden seepage.
- **Documentation:** Use inspection forms consistently to track seasonal changes and provide a reliable history of impoundment performance.
- As always, follow all regulatory requirements in your area.

### Key Takeaway

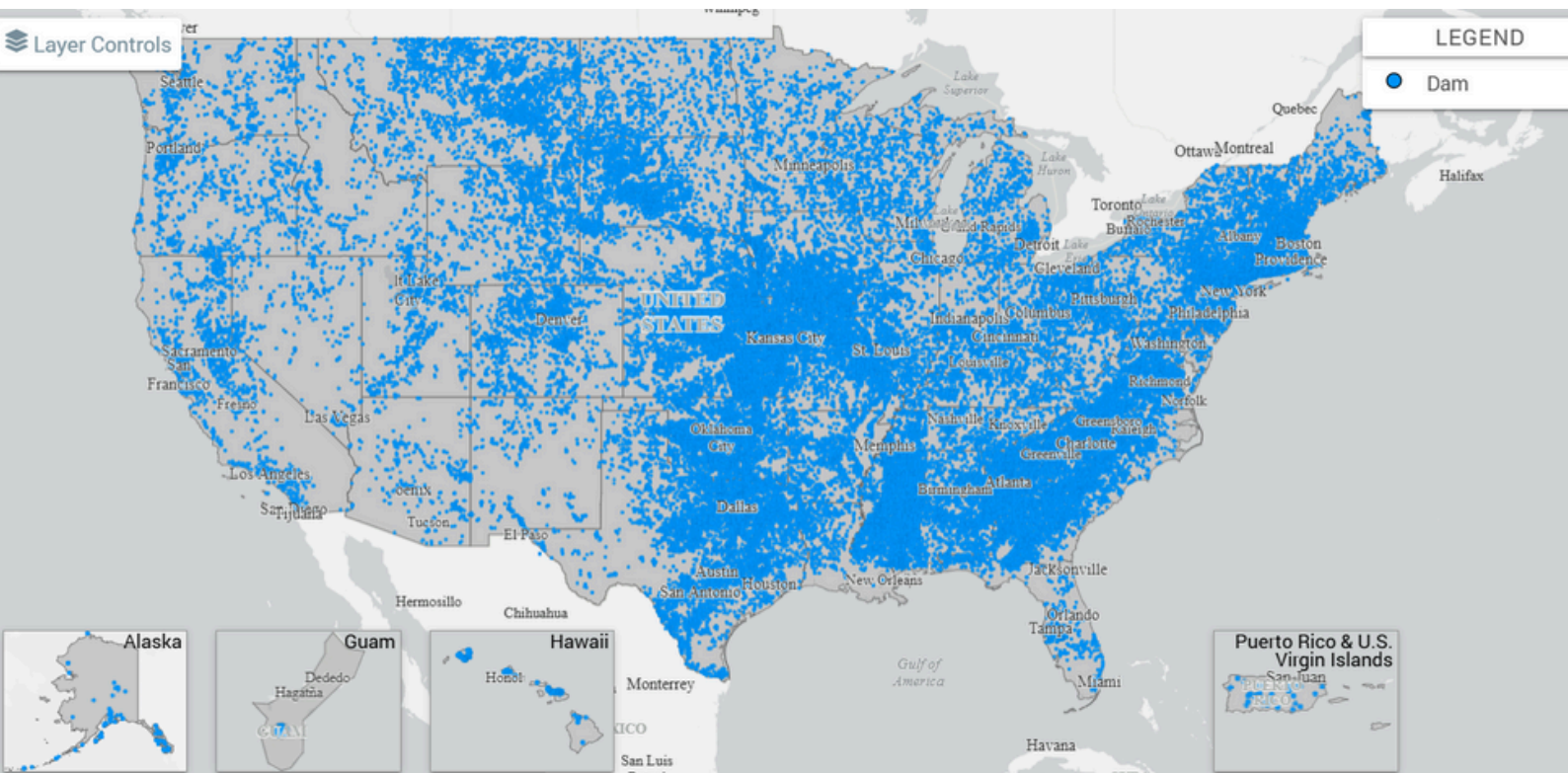
Impoundments are critical to safe mining operations year-round, but fall and winter bring added challenges that require proactive attention. By following solid guidelines and adapting inspections to seasonal conditions, operators and safety professionals can reduce risks and maintain the stability of these essential structures.





## DID YOU KNOW???

According to the **National Inventory of Dams**, there are 92,525 dams within the United States. And 76% of those dams are considered **HIGH HAZARD** with an **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)**. Only 5% are Federally Regulated and 71% by State.



The **National Inventory of Dams (NID)** website offers convenient access to comprehensive dam-related information, supported by reliable data and robust tools designed to make the user experience efficient, effective, and highly informative.



The National Inventory of Dams website can be found at <https://nid.sec.usace.army.mil/#/> or type National Dam Inventory in your search bar.





# Toolbox Talk: Shorter Daylight Hazards

## Visibility Issues During Early Sunsets and Foggy Mornings

As we move into the fall and winter months, daylight hours decrease, creating new hazards on mine sites. Early sunsets and foggy mornings can significantly reduce visibility, putting miners, equipment operators, and support staff at greater risk. Recognizing these seasonal changes and adjusting work habits is critical to maintaining a safe workplace.

### Why It Matters

- **Reduced Light:** Shorter days mean more time spent working in dim conditions, especially at shift changes or during travel to and from work areas.
- **Fog Formation:** Cool mornings often bring fog, which can obscure haul roads, walkways, and work zones.
- **Glare:** Low sun angles at sunrise and sunset create blinding glare, reducing reaction time for equipment operators and drivers.



### Common Hazards

- Equipment collisions due to poor visibility.
- Slips, trips, and falls in low light conditions.
- Difficulty spotting ground personnel near operating equipment.
- Delayed recognition of changing ground or road conditions.

# Toolbox Talk: Shorter Daylight Hazards

## Visibility Issues During Early Sunsets and Foggy Mornings

### Safe Work Practices

**Use Proper Lighting:** Ensure vehicle headlights, work area lights, and personal lamps are clean and fully functional. Replace burned-out bulbs immediately.

**Wear High-Visibility Gear:** Bright, reflective clothing increases your chance of being seen in dim or foggy conditions.

**Adjust Speed:** Reduce travel and operating speeds when visibility is limited—whether due to darkness, glare, or fog.

**Communicate Clearly:** Use radios, hand signals, and eye contact when working around equipment in low light.

**Take Extra Time:** Allow additional travel time when conditions are poor. Rushing in reduced visibility increases the chance of an accident.

**Stay Alert:** Expect that other workers may have difficulty seeing you. Always position yourself in a safe location when near moving equipment.



### Key Takeaway

Seasonal changes bring new challenges to safety. Shorter daylight hours, foggy mornings, and low sun glare require extra attention from every miner. By slowing down, staying visible, and maintaining situational awareness, we can prevent accidents and keep our crews safe throughout the fall and winter months.

**Discussion Question for Today's Crew:** *What visibility challenges have you noticed on your shift, and what steps can we take as a team to address them?*





# Suiting Up Safely

## PPE in Cooler Months: Balancing Warmth with Safety

### Avoiding Bulky Gear That Restricts Movement

As the cooler months settle in, miners and other outdoor workers face a familiar challenge: staying warm without sacrificing safety. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is designed to protect against workplace hazards, but when the temperatures drop, additional clothing layers can sometimes interfere with its effectiveness. Striking the right balance between warmth and mobility is essential to keeping crews both comfortable and safe on the job.

### The Risks of Bulky Gear

While heavy jackets, oversized gloves, and multiple layers of clothing provide insulation, they can also create hazards. Restricted movement reduces dexterity, making it harder to operate equipment controls, handle tools, or perform precise tasks. Bulky clothing can snag on machinery, limit visibility of hand signals, or prevent harnesses and other PPE from fitting properly. In some cases, too much layering can even lead to overheating, causing fatigue and lapses in attention.



### Choosing the Right Cold-Weather PPE

- **Layering with Purpose:** Instead of one thick coat, use a moisture-wicking base layer, an insulating mid-layer, and a lightweight, weather-resistant outer layer. This system traps heat while maintaining flexibility.
- **Cold-Weather Gloves:** Select gloves rated for low temperatures that still allow dexterity. Some modern designs use insulated yet thin materials, preventing the clumsy feel of old-style winter gloves.
- **Proper Footwear:** Insulated, waterproof boots are essential, but avoid oversized boots that affect balance or cause tripping hazards. Make sure traction is suitable for icy conditions.
- **Head and Face Protection:** Balaclavas, thermal liners, and helmet-compatible hoods can keep workers warm without interfering with hard hats or hearing protection.

# Suiting Up Safely

## Maintaining Safety Standards

All cold-weather gear should be compatible with standard PPE requirements. Flame-resistant (FR) outerwear is critical in certain environments, while high-visibility jackets and vests must remain visible even with extra layers. Workers should also test their mobility in full gear before starting shifts to ensure they can bend, reach, and move freely.

## Training and Awareness

Supervisors should reinforce cold-weather safety by reviewing gear guidelines and encouraging workers to speak up if clothing interferes with their tasks. Toolbox talks in fall and winter are a good time to remind crews that comfort should never outweigh safety.



## Bottom Line

Cold weather doesn't eliminate workplace hazards—it adds new ones. By selecting the right PPE and layering smartly, miners and workers in all industries can stay warm while maintaining full mobility. The goal is simple: gear that protects without restricting, ensuring that safety remains the top priority, no matter the season.

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## Standing Together Beyond September: Mental Health in Mining



In September, the nation paused to recognize Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time dedicated to breaking the silence, raising awareness, and offering resources for those who may be struggling. While the spotlight may shift as the calendar turns to October, the conversation about suicide and mental health does not end when the month is over—especially in industries like mining, where the challenges of long shifts, isolation, and the weight of responsibility can take a heavy toll.

Mining is more than a job—it is a way of life that requires resilience, grit, and teamwork. But even the strongest miners can carry invisible burdens. Stress from production demands, economic uncertainty, or personal struggles at home can wear down even the most seasoned professionals. Too often, these pressures are faced in silence, hidden behind the hard hats and the toughness that define this industry. That silence can become dangerous.

As we move into October, Hard Hat Headlines encourages miners, supervisors, and safety professionals to extend the commitment we made in September. Mental health should remain at the forefront of our safety culture. Just as we look out for hazards on the job site, we must also look out for hazards that can't be seen—loneliness, fatigue, anxiety, and depression.

The mining community has always been a family. That means checking in with one another, asking the hard questions, and being willing to listen without judgment. A simple conversation could save a life. Resources such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline are available 24/7, but often the first lifeline comes from a coworker, a friend, or a fellow miner who notices when something isn't right. In the same way we emphasize lockout/tagout, ground control, and fall protection, we must also emphasize mental health protection. Safety doesn't stop at physical hazards; it includes the well-being of every miner, every day. Let's carry forward the spirit of September's awareness into every month of the year—because one life lost is one too many.

Hard Hat Headlines stands with miners and their families in making mental health a permanent part of the safety conversation. Together, we can keep the mining industry strong—not only in production, but in people.

• *You are* •  
**ENOUGH**



# 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.



For additional information visit:



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



## In Focus: Chronic Kidney Disease

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) is a long-term condition where the kidneys gradually lose their ability to filter waste and excess fluids from the blood. Often developing silently, CKD can progress for years without noticeable symptoms. Risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, and family history. Early detection helps slow progression.



## CKD in a Snap: Stages Matter

Chronic Kidney Disease progresses through five stages, based on kidney function measured by glomerular filtration rate (GFR). Stage 1 shows normal function with damage; Stage 2 mild loss; Stage 3 moderate decline; Stage 4 severe impairment; and Stage 5 kidney failure, often requiring dialysis or transplant.

## Getting Tested for Chronic Kidney Disease

Testing for Chronic Kidney Disease begins with a simple blood test to measure creatinine and estimate kidney function, along with a urine test to detect protein. People with diabetes, high blood pressure, or family history should ask their doctor for routine screening, since early detection improves treatment outcomes.

## Talking to Your Doctor About CKD

When visiting your doctor, ask about your risk for Chronic Kidney Disease and whether testing is right for you. Share any history of diabetes, high blood pressure, or kidney problems. Open discussions and regular checkups help ensure early detection, better management, and improved long-term kidney health.



# Hurricane Season Alert for Coastal Mining Operations

As hurricane season unfolds across the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, mining companies and professionals working in coastal regions must stay vigilant. The mining industry in these areas faces unique challenges when severe weather strikes, ranging from operational disruptions to serious safety hazards for workers and surrounding communities.

## Key Concerns for Coastal Mining Areas

- **Flooding of Pits and Impoundments:** Heavy rainfall and storm surge can overwhelm mine pits, slurry impoundments, and stormwater controls, increasing risks of slope failures or uncontrolled discharges.
- **Wind Damage to Equipment and Infrastructure:** High winds can severely damage conveyors, power lines, storage facilities, and mobile equipment left unsecured.
- **Access and Emergency Response:** Road washouts, debris, and power outages can delay emergency response, supply deliveries, and evacuation efforts.
- **Environmental and Regulatory Exposure:** Release of water laden with sediments, chemicals, or fuels due to storm damage can trigger both environmental harm and costly compliance issues.

## Preparedness Actions for Mining Companies

1. **Review and Update Emergency Action Plans (EAPs):** Ensure staff know evacuation routes, communication protocols, and responsibilities during severe weather.
2. **Secure Equipment and Facilities:** Anchor conveyors, cover stockpiles, move mobile equipment to higher ground, and reinforce structures against wind damage.
3. **Monitor Impoundments and Dams:** Conduct pre-storm inspections to verify freeboard, spillway capacity, and structural integrity. Prepare pumping systems and backup power.
4. **Coordinate with Local Emergency Management:** Keep communication lines open with county/state emergency agencies for weather updates and response coordination.
5. **Protect Workers and Communities:** Prioritize safety above production. Suspend operations when storm threats are imminent and evacuate early when needed.

## Stay Informed

- Monitor NOAA's National Hurricane Center for real-time updates.
- Track local emergency advisories for evacuation orders and storm surge warnings.
- Review MSHA's guidance on severe weather preparedness for mine sites.

**Hurricanes can form and intensify rapidly, leaving little time to prepare once warnings are issued. The mining industry—especially in coastal zones—must take proactive steps to protect people, assets, and the environment before the storm hits.**





# Buffalo Creek Disaster

## Tribute to the Buffalo Creek Disaster Victims

On the morning of February 26, 1972, the quiet of Buffalo Creek Hollow was shattered when a massive coal waste dam failed, releasing a wall of water and slurry that tore through the valley. In a matter of minutes, entire communities were destroyed. Families were swept away, homes and schools disappeared, and lives were changed forever.

One hundred twenty-five people lost their lives that day. More than a thousand others were injured, and thousands were left without homes. For those who survived, the flood left deep scars—both in the land and in the hearts of everyone who called Buffalo Creek home.

Yet even in the face of such devastation, the people of Buffalo Creek showed resilience and strength. Neighbors pulled one another from the water, families rebuilt from the ground up, and communities stood together to mourn, remember, and fight for a safer future. Their courage is as much a part of the story as the tragedy itself.

Today, memorials stand where the flood once raged, bearing the names of those who were lost. But remembrance goes beyond stone markers. It lives in the stories shared, in the lessons carried forward, and in the enduring spirit of the people who refused to let this disaster be forgotten.

We honor the men, women, and children who perished that morning. We honor the survivors whose lives were forever altered. And we honor the resilience of a community that, even in its darkest hour, showed the world the true meaning of strength.





## Your Voice in Hard Hat Headlines

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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