



June 19, 2013

Dear Member of the Mine Rescue Community:

I am pleased to announce that on June 6, 2013, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the members of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association (Holmes) overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment and changes to their by-laws to create a mine rescue organization within Holmes – the Holmes Mine Rescue Association. This action reestablishes mine rescue as an important function within the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, which was created in 1916.

As you know, for the last 3 years, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) through my direction has sought, within the mining community, to address the gaps in mine emergency response, particularly those identified in recent tragedies. At three mine rescue summits and several other events held with the mine rescue community on mine emergency response gaps, we have discussed the need for a national mine rescue structure to address many mine emergency response issues. The re-establishment of Holmes as a national organization to support and provide needed guidance for mine rescue is the solution.

This historic vote brings mine rescue back to its roots within the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association. Mine rescue is the riskiest and most challenging rescue work undertaken in this country. Having personally participated in mine emergency response and recovery efforts in the past, I truly appreciate how much mine rescue personnel must do to be ready to respond. Volunteers are called up at a moment's notice to travel miles underground, often in extreme conditions following mine fires and explosions to find and rescue fellow miners. We owe these volunteer mine rescuers from the mining community the best training and support available for these high risk missions.

The re-establishment of Holmes, through its newly-created Holmes Mine Rescue Association, gives the mine rescue community the opportunity and the tools to contribute the support and guidance necessary to sustain a strong mine rescue capability into the future. It is up to the mine rescue community to take this opportunity to join together to build the organizational structure needed to address pending guidance issues and provide overall support for mine rescue. The new organization will provide a seat at the table for all those in the mine rescue community

- mine rescue teams, mine operators and labor in coal and metal nonmetal, MSHA, state agencies, vendors, and others.

The Holmes Mine Rescue Association will provide the opportunity:

- For a sustainable and recognizable organizational structure for mine rescue to improve mine rescue efforts when accidents occur;
- For national leadership for mine emergency response;
- To help develop and provide best practices, procedures, and training;
- To help disseminate guidelines, training, or tools to the mining public; and
- For a vehicle to help support mine rescue training, and National Coal or Metal and Nonmetal Training Contests.

Although both the new Holmes Mine Rescue Association and the Holmes Safety Association are both under the umbrella of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, they will function as separate entities with their own organization structure and leadership.

The Holmes Mine Rescue Association can succeed only with broad participation by mining stakeholders, both individuals and organizations. The next step in setting up the Holmes Mine Rescue Association is the appointment of the Executive Committee and election of the president, vice presidents, and treasurer of the Holmes Mine Rescue Association. The election meeting will be held on October 29, 2013, at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, West Virginia. I encourage you to attend and participate.

I am also pleased to announce Dr. Jeffrey H. Kravitz will serve as General Secretary of the Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association, for a term through October 31, 2013.

Dr. Kravitz will also serve as the Secretary of the Holmes Mine Rescue Association to get the new organization off the ground. He will begin the process of developing a nomination committee to collect nominees to be elected at the October 29 meeting.

MSHA plans to hold several education sessions at a number of the mine rescue events through the summer to educate the community on the importance of the Holmes Mine Rescue Association, the opportunity it presents, the problems it can help solve, and the steps you can take to get involved. One of the first steps is to become a member of Holmes if you are not already. Membership is open to individuals, organizations, or companies. Further details will be available on the MSHA Web site, or you may contact the Secretary on (412) 386-6923, e--mail: mail@HolmesSafety.org, or fax: (703) 235-0011.

The revitalization of Holmes as the premier national mine rescue organization provides an opportunity for all mine rescue stakeholders and interest groups to participate. I urge you to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph A. Main". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joseph A. Main
Assistant Secretary of Labor for
Mine Safety and Health