

1997 MINING HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) bureaus of Mining and Reclamation, District Mining Operations and Deep Mine Safety are responsible for the administration of the safety and environmental regulatory programs relating to the surface and underground mining activities of coal and industrial minerals. These responsibilities include the licensing, permitting, bonding, inspection, compliance, pollution prevention advocacy, enforcement activities and blaster certifications.

The Bureau of Mining and Reclamation is responsible for developing new policies, procedures and regulations for surface and underground coal and industrial mineral mines. The Bureau of District Mining Operations is responsible for implementing these policies, procedures and regulations through its six District Mining offices in Pottsville, Knox, Ebensburg, Hawk Run, Greensburg and McMurray.

The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety is responsible for regulating the health and safety programs designed for underground miners. These responsibilities include underground safety inspections, underground electrical inspections, equipment approvals, accident investigations, certification of miners and mine officials, emergency response, training and engineering services. The bureau has four divisions and four mine rescue stations and maintains offices in Uniontown, Pottsville, Ebensburg and Tremont.

ANTHRACITE HIGHLIGHTS

Total anthracite coal production was 8,477,758 tons, down 23 percent from 1996. Refuse bank production fell by 31 percent. Although DEP issued 11 new coal refuse reprocessing permits as compared to six in 1996, total operating refuse reprocessing sites fell by 17, a 19 percent decrease over 1996, for a total of 71 sites. Total employees also decreased by 109 for a total of 531. These decreases may be a result of downsizing of existing refuse operations and loss of market due to closings of two electric cogeneration facilities.

Underground production increased by 15 percent for a total of 456,567 tons. Four new underground mining permits were issued in 1997 as compared to three in 1996. Operating deep mines totaled 57, up one from 1996. Total employees decreased by one to 296.

Surface production decreased by three percent for a total of 2,659,176 tons. Six new surface mining permits were issued in 1997 as compared to five in 1996. Operating anthracite surface mines totaled 75, up five from 1996. Total employees increased by 152 to 741. DEP estimates that approximately 90 percent of all operating anthracite surface mines are involved in some kind of re-mining activity.

No fatalities occurred in any anthracite mines in 1997.

The overall number of permitted anthracite mining facilities requiring inspections increased by one for a total of 390 sites. Total inspections performed decreased by 3 percent for a total of 4,370 inspections. Violations cited during these inspections decreased by 19 percent to 99. The anthracite industry's increased compliance is due in part to the industry's favorable reaction to DEP's compliance assistance efforts.

BITUMINOUS HIGHLIGHTS

Bituminous coal production in 1997 was the highest it has been in thirteen years, an increase for the fourth consecutive year. Total production was 73,491,175 tons, up seven percent from 1996 due to an increase in surface and underground mining production.

The production increase in underground mines is attributable to many factors. When the Clean Air Act amendments increased the demand for low-sulfur coal, the Pittsburgh seam, known for its quality and thickness, became a preferred source. Additionally, increased safety and productivity using high extraction mining techniques, like longwall mining, became more popular for mining the Pittsburgh seam in southwestern Pennsylvania.

In addition, DEP issued seven new permits for underground mines as compared to three in 1996. The number of operating mines increased by eight to 54. Underground mines employed 5,334 people, 755 more than in 1996. Further, the presence of highly-trained miners and the absence of labor strikes contributed to existing mines more fully developing and operating at greater efficiency.

Underground mining operations produced 55,344,042 tons, a seven percent increase over 1996. By comparison, surface production was 16,463,474 tons, an increase of two percent over 1996.

Ninety-five new surface mining permits were issued in 1997 as compared to 90 in 1996. Operating surface mines decreased by 37 for a total of 437. Total employees decreased by 231 to 2,100. DEP estimates that approximately 60 percent of all operating bituminous surface mines involve some remining activities.

No miners lost their lives in bituminous surface mines in 1997. Unfortunately, four fatalities did occur in underground mines.

The overall number of permitted bituminous mining facilities requiring inspections decreased by 38 for a total of 2,057 sites. Total inspections decreased by five percent for a total of 21,706. Violations cited also decreased by 14 percent for a total of 877. As with the anthracite industry, one reason for the increased compliance is the bituminous industry's favorable reaction to DEP's compliance assistance efforts.

INDUSTRIAL MINERALS HIGHLIGHTS

Total production from industrial mineral mines was 120,883,881 tons, up seven percent from 1996. Underground production increased 21 percent for a total of 7,003,893 tons. Surface production increased six percent for a total of 113,879,988 tons. These increases might be attributed to healthy national and state economies that resulted in more construction projects that use industrial minerals, such as highway construction.

The number of operating underground mines remained at thirteen during 1997. No new underground mining permits were issued. The number of employees, however, dramatically increased by 134 to 389, a 53 percent increase.

In 1997, DEP issued 106 new surface mining permits, compared to 117 in 1996. The number of operating surface mines increased by 46 to a total of 803 mines. Total employees increased by 282 to 4,974.

No fatalities occurred in any industrial mineral mine in 1997.

The overall number of permitted industrial mineral mining operations requiring inspections increased by 69 for a total of 1,817 sites. Total inspections performed at these sites increased by five percent for a total of 4,270. Violations cited during these inspections increased by 17 percent to 112. The increase may be partially attributed to the 69 newly permitted sites.

MINING LEGISLATION AND INITIATIVES

Act 182 of 1996, the legislation that provided for the use of diesel-powered equipment in underground bituminous mines, became effective in February 1997. The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety, charged with implementing the act, developed an entirely new permitting and inspection program and subsequently approved two applications for the use of diesel equipment. The bureau also conducted three seminars and numerous meetings to assist labor and industry in understanding the new provisions and requirements of the act.

Two underground mining regulation packages relating to the 1994 amendments to the Bituminous Mine Subsidence and Land Conservation Act were presented in 1997. BMSLCA deals with underground mine operator responsibilities relating to subsidence damage repair and water supply replacement. The first regulatory package deleted regulations that had their legal authority removed by the legislature in the repeal of certain sections of the act. The other, an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking and later a

proposed rulemaking, was intended to incorporate the new requirements provided under the amendment into Pennsylvania's existing underground coal mining regulations.

In 1997 DEP, with help from the public, revised regulations, policies and technical guidances as part of Governor Tom Ridge's Regulatory Basics Initiative (RBI). The purpose of RBI is to assure that state requirements are no more stringent than federal standards unless there is a compelling reason for Pennsylvania to be more stringent than federal standards; to minimize costs to the regulated community; to encourage performance or outcome based requirements; and to ensure information is prepared in clear and concise language. In addition, existing regulations and technical guidance are evaluated to facilitate compliance, including the adequacy of related educational, technical and financial assistance programs.

The Bureau of Mining and Reclamation's RBI efforts resulted in amendments to five separate groups of regulations included in 25 Pa. Code Chapters 77, 86, 87, 88, 89 and 90.

One set of amendments related to general permitting for industrial mineral mining while the other four dealt specifically with coal mining and involved bonding and civil penalties; general permitting and performance standards, Small Operator's Assistance Program (SOAP); and areas unsuitable for mining. In addition to the standard public participation practices of the department, the coal mining regulations were reviewed and commented on by the Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board (MRAB).

As part of RBI, the department also reviewed over 130 technical guidances and policies dealing with mining. Of these, 25 underwent significant revision and 56 were rescinded or determined to not be technical guidance. In a related effort, all of the DEP's technical guidances have been placed on the department's website at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose Information by Subject/Mining and Mineral Resources) to increase public accessibility.

During 1997 DEP developed several concepts, collectively called *Reclaim PA*, including legislative, policy and management initiatives designed to enhance mine operator, volunteer and DEP abandoned mine reclamation efforts. *Reclaim PA* has the following four objectives.

- To encourage private and public participation in abandoned mine reclamation efforts
- To improve reclamation efficiency through better communication between reclamation partners
- To increase reclamation by reducing remaining risks
- To maximize reclamation funding by expanding existing sources and exploring new sources

Remining is a major focus of *Reclaim PA*. Several of the initiatives touch on ways to make it easier for mine operators to mine and reclaim previously mined land at no cost to taxpayers. DEP is taking steps to provide financial incentives to operators who do remining, reduce the legal risks connected with remining and cut down on paperwork needed for operators to begin remining.

Remining is typically the most efficient way to accomplish reclamation of abandoned mined lands. In 1997, industry reclaimed approximately 3,400 acres through remining. This is more than three times the acreage reclaimed with state and federal funds administered through DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation.

DEP encouraged remining in other ways in 1997. For example, the Remining Operator's Assistance Program (ROAP) provides financial assistance to surface coal mine operators who are willing to reclaim abandoned mine lands. To date, ROAP has provided assistance on 16 projects at a cost of approximately \$130,000. DEP also offers a financial guarantee to qualified mine operators to cover the bonding on their remining area. Of the 350 mining authorizations issued in 1997, 68 were issued using the financial guarantees program. Another program provides mine operators with bond credits in exchange for the reclamation of abandoned mine lands.

DEEP MINE SAFETY PROGRAMS

Over 9,000 miners received assistance through the various training programs administered by the Bureau of Deep Mine Safety in 1997. Training was completed by bureau instructors through agreements with the Pennsylvania State University, California University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Schuylkill County Vocational/Technical School. In particular, miners participated in training including mine rescue, emergency response, first aid/CPR, gas detection, ventilation and blasting awareness.

1997 was the second year in a row that no mine fatalities occurred in underground anthracite and industrial mineral mines. Unfortunately, four miners lost their lives while working in underground bituminous mines. The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety investigated each accident to determine what measures could be taken in the future to prevent similar accidents. Descriptions of each accident and bureau findings are presented in the report text.

DEP continued to seek labor and industry participation in the development of technical guidance on mining issues. Problem-solving work groups provided input on several policies related to mining methods and equipment. The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety also provided administrative support to the Pennsylvania Bituminous Mine Safety Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee on Diesel-Powered Equipment.

Bureau of Deep Mine Safety Director Richard E. Stickler joined DEP in March 1997. Stickler brought with him 30 years of underground coal mining experience. In that time, he managed six mines including four longwall operations where he instituted cooperative safety improvement teams. Soon after Stickler was hired, the bureau's central office functions were moved from Harrisburg to Uniontown, to better serve labor and industry.

ANTHRACITE HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY: 1996 v. 1997

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1997	1996		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	456,567	395,409	61,158	15%
<i>Employees</i>	296	297	-1	0%
<i>Producing mines</i>	57	56	1	2%
<i>New permits issued</i>	4	3	1	33%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	2,659,176	2,740,873	-81,697	-3%
<i>Employees</i>	741	589	152	26%
<i>Producing mines</i>	75	70	5	7%
<i>New permits issued</i>	6	5	1	20%
Refuse				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	5,818,582	8,437,222	-2,618,640	-31%
<i>Employees</i>	531	640	-109	-17%
<i>Producing mines</i>	71	88	-17	-19%
<i>New permits issued</i>	11	6	5	83%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Surface</i>	144	144	0	0%
<i>Underground</i>	92	99	-7	-7%
<i>Refuse</i>	134	125	9	7%
<i>Refuse Disposal</i>	4	4	0	0%
<i>Preparation plants</i>	16	17	-1	-6%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	390	389	1	0%
<i>Total Inspections</i>	4,370	4,497	-127	-3%
<i>Total Violations cited</i>	99	122	-23	-19%
TOTAL PRODUCTION	8,934,325	11,573,504	-2,639,179	-23%

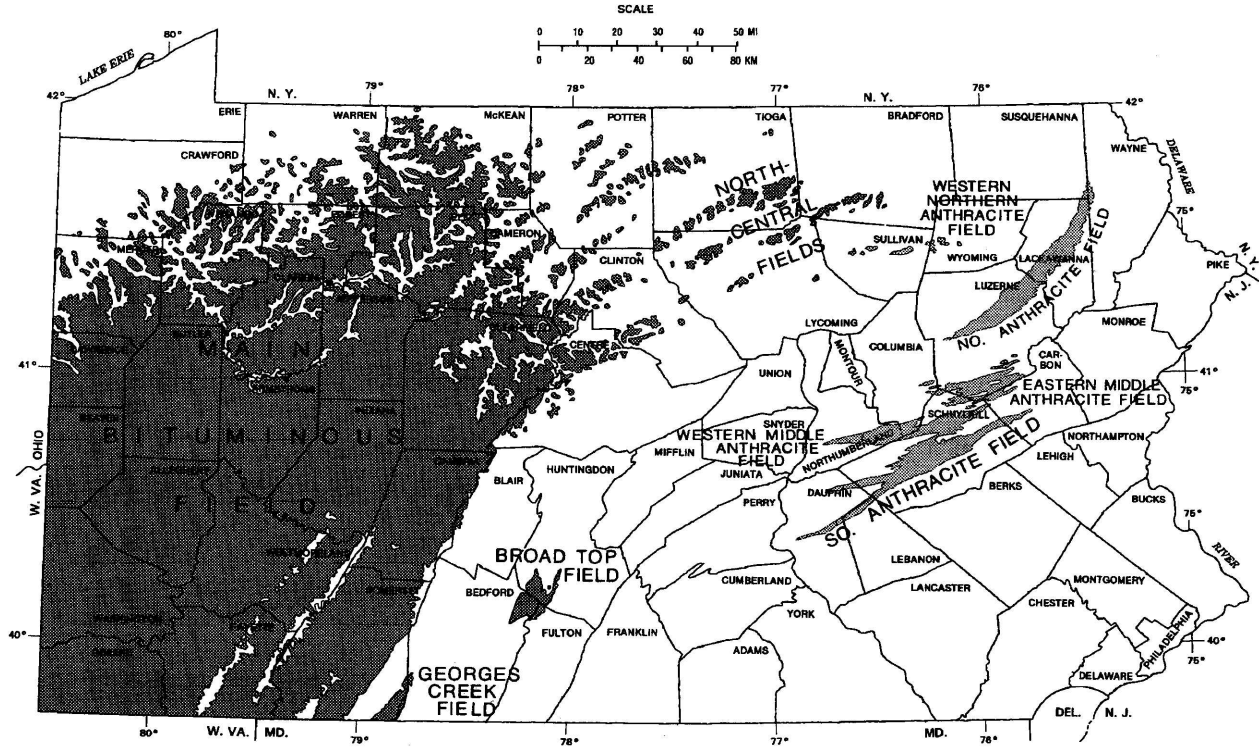
BITUMINOUS HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY: 1996 v. 1997

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1997	1996		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	55,344,042	51,505,194	3,838,848	7%
<i>Employees</i>	5,334	4,579	755	16%
<i>Producing mines</i>	54	46	8	17%
<i>New permits issued</i>	7	3	4	133%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	16,463,474	16,102,044	361,430	2%
<i>Auger production (tons)</i>	200,158	71,823	128,335	179%
<i>Employees</i>	2100	2331	-231	-10%
<i>Producing mines</i>	437	474	-37	-8%
<i>New permits issued</i>	95	90	5	6%
Refuse				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	1,483,501	1,294,849	188,652	15%
<i>Employees</i>	65	57	8	14%
<i>Producing mines</i>	13	14	-1	-7%
<i>New permits issued</i>	5	2	3	150%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Surface</i>	1684	1722	-38	-2%
<i>Underground</i>	152	151	1	1%
<i>Refuse</i>	35	36	-1	-3%
<i>Refuse Disposal</i>	91	91	0	0%
<i>Preparation plants</i>	95	95	0	0%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	2,057	2,095	-38	-2%
<i>Total Inspections</i>	21,706	22,860	-1,154	-5%
<i>Total Violations cited</i>	877	1015	-138	-14%
TOTAL PRODUCTION	73,491,175	68,973,910	4,517,265	7%

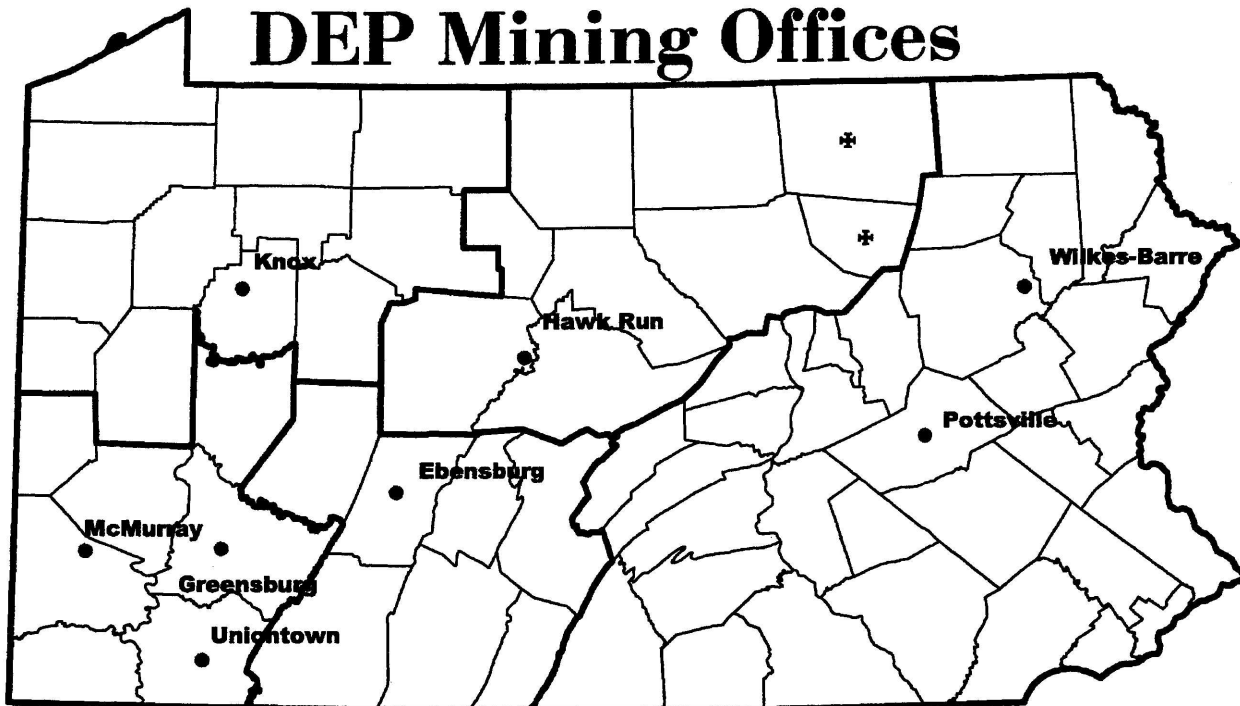
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS HIGHLIGHTS: 1996 v. 1997

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1997	1996		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	7,003,893	5,783,533	1,220,360	21%
<i>Employees</i>	389	255	134	53%
<i>Producing mines</i>	13	13	0	0%
<i>New permits issued</i>	0	1	-1	-100%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	113,879,988	107,579,067	6,300,921	6%
<i>Employees</i>	4,974	4,692	282	6%
<i>Producing mines</i>	803	757	46	6%
<i>New permits issued</i>	106	117	-11	-9%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Large surface</i>	806	805	1	0%
<i>Small surface</i>	1,005	936	69	7%
<i>Underground</i>	6	7	-1	-14%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	1,817	1,748	69	4%
<i>Inspections</i>	4,270	4,065	205	5%
<i>Violations cited</i>	112	96	16	17%
TOTAL PRODUCTION				
	120,883,881	113,362,600	7,521,281	7%

DISTRIBUTION OF PENNSYLVANIA COALS



DEP Mining Offices



Bituminous

Active Surface
 Ebensburg 814-472-1800
 Greensburg 7242-926-6500
 Hawk Run 814-342-8200
 Knox 814-797-1191

Mine Subsidence Insurance
 McMurray 724-941-7100

Active Underground
 McMurray 724-7100

Abandoned Mines
 Ebensburg 814-472-1800

Deep Mine Safety
 Uniontown 724-439-7469

Anthracite

Active
 Pottsville 717-621-3118

Abandoned Mines
 *Wilkes-Barre 717-826-2371
 Including Bradford and Sullivan Counties

Deep Mine Safety
 Pottsville 717-621-3139

Mine Subsidence Insurance
 Wilkes-Barre 800-922-1678
 Including Bradford and Sullivan Counties

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