

*News from the*

**U.S. Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

**Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman**



**For Immediate Release  
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## **Enzi Confirms Plan to Hold Mine Safety Hearing**

*Praises MSHA Decision to Join Federal, State Resources  
to Investigate Sago Mine Tragedy*

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, confirmed today that he will hold an oversight hearing into mine safety procedures and enforcement measures related to the Sago mine tragedy that took the lives of 12 miners in West Virginia last week.

Enzi said he is now working with the HELP Committee’s Ranking Member, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) to schedule a hearing in early March. In addition, he is expediting the confirmation process for the President’s nominee to head the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), Richard Stickler, whose nomination is pending before the HELP Committee. Stickler’s nomination will be considered during a January 31 hearing, which will also include the nomination of Edwin Foulke to serve as the head of OSHA.

Enzi voiced full support for the “immediate and comprehensive investigation” of the Sago tragedy and praised the decision announced Monday by MSHA officials to investigate the accident jointly with the West Virginia Office of Miner’s Health Safety and Training.

“I’m pleased that MSHA is coordinating this important investigation with the state of West Virginia, which has extensive expertise related to the coal industry and mine safety,” Enzi said. “The scope of

this tragedy requires the very best resources and expertise we can provide to uncover the cause of this accident. By combining state and federal resources, I am hopeful that we can find answers and learn how to prevent similar tragedies.”

In a January 5 letter to Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao Enzi requested “regular and comprehensive briefings on the progress and preliminary findings” of the MSHA investigation. He also said the HELP Committee will want to review information on the extent of MSHA’s inspection and enforcement efforts at the Sago mine, including its inspection, citations and abatement history, the nature of any withdrawal orders issued at Sago, and a further analysis of Sago’s compliance, injury and safety records, including industry-wide comparisons.

Enzi also praised MSHA’s selection of its investigative team to look into the explosion that occurred one week ago in Upshur County, West Virginia. “Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao and MSHA Acting Administrator David G. Dye have put together a highly qualified investigative team of mine safety professionals and experts from around the country,” Enzi said. “The experience and training of the individuals that make up this team is unparalleled and a step in the right direction to determine the causes of this tragedy so that we can do our best to ensure that it is never repeated.”

According to MSHA, the independent team of mine safety professionals “will evaluate all aspects of the accident and response, including potential causes, compliance with federal health and safety standards, and how emergency information was relayed about the trapped miners' condition.”

The team will examine the accident site, interview mine personnel and others with relevant information, review records and plans, and inspect any mining equipment that was involved in the accident. Findings and conclusions will be summarized in a formal report that will identify root causes of the accident and document how the incident unfolded, according to MSHA.

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