

RECEIVED AUG 09 2021

**U.S. Department of Labor**

Mine Safety and Health Administration  
201 12th Street South, Suite 401  
Arlington, Virginia 22202-5452



AUG 02 2021

Wes Addington  
Executive Director  
Rebecca Shelton  
Director of Policy & Organizing  
317 Main Street  
Whitesburg, KY 41858

Dear Mr. Addington and Ms. Shelton,

Thank you for your letter of July 8, 2021, regarding your petition for rulemaking on behalf of the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center and Jeromy Coots, an experienced underground coal miner. Your petition requests that the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) revise its regulations by making the following changes: (1) establish a separate standard for respirable crystalline silica (quartz), independent of the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable coal dust; and (2) substantially reduce the PEL for respirable silica in accordance with scientific recommendations.

As shown in the Department of Labor's Spring 2021 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions (available at [Reginfo.Gov](http://Reginfo.Gov)), MSHA intends to issue a proposed rule on respirable crystalline silica. At present, MSHA is developing a regulatory proposal that would address miners' exposures to respirable silica and reduce their risk of developing lung diseases such as progressive massive fibrosis and rapidly progressive pneumoconiosis.

While MSHA is developing the proposal, the Agency continues to comprehensively inspect the mine environment and enforce existing standards so that mine operators protect miners from exposure to respirable dust and silica. In addition, MSHA educates and trains the mining community on the effective use of available dust control technology and other best practices to reduce miners' exposure to respirable dust and silica.

We greatly appreciate your interest in this important matter and in miners' health. We look forward to working with you to improve the health and safety of our nation's miners.

Sincerely,

Jeannette J. Galanis  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor  
For Mine Safety and Health Administration

1908