

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

by

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I think that today it is appropriate to review our activities in relation to the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, Public Law 91-173. The Act provided authority for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to undertake an expanded program to provide health protection for the active coal miner. I will not try to describe or discuss all of our activities. Drs. Morgan and Gelderman, and Messrs. Shoub and Lynch will address themselves to specific areas later in the program. However, I will list one of them.

The Act confers upon HEW the primary responsibility for some 27 actions. In 11 of these areas, this responsibility is either shared by the Bureau of Mines, or the Bureau has related responsibility under the same authority. Of necessity, a strong association has developed between our two agencies. This association has been facilitated by the assignment of a full-time liaison officer from NIOSH to the Bureau.

I believe that the first reference to cooperation between the Bureau of Mines and the Public Health Service (PHS) was in 1910, when the Surgeon General assigned PHS personnel to accompany Bureau personnel while mine visits were being made in the coal-producing areas. As I reviewed the documents, it seemed to me that the greatest problem at that time was providing lodging and subsistence in the special railway cars used by the Bureau of Mines. Through the years there has been a high level of cooperation between our respective agencies. These cooperative activities included the Tri-State Survey of lead and zinc mines in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri before World War I, and a later survey study of the same area in the 1930's, as well as the Silicosis Survey of Western Metal Mines in 1958-60. These studies were directed to the control or a better understanding of silicosis, and helped immeasurably in the assay of dust exposure and in defining the role of such factors as particle size, composition of the dust, and duration of exposure. The year 1935, or thereabouts, saw the recognition of five cardinal factors in the etiology of dust diseases of the lung. These are composition of the dust, concentration of the dust, size of the dust particle, duration of exposure, and individual susceptibility.

One example of HEW responsibility is the Service X-Ray Study. Title II of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act directed the "operator of a coal mine to cooperate with HEW in making available to each miner working in a coal mine, the opportunity to have a chest roentgenogram within 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act; a second chest roentgenogram within

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3 years thereafter; and subsequent chest roentgenograms at such intervals thereafter--not to exceed 5 years--as the Secretary of HEW prescribes." Attention also was given to X-rays of new miners. HEW was made responsible for prescribing the regulations under which these examinations would be made.

At this time, something over 73,000 films have been received in Morgantown, W. Va., representing perhaps 69,000 miners. We are not certain of the percentage of eligible miners that have been examined since the figures we have received for the universe of eligible miners is at variance. Mr. Shoub will present current data later in the day.

As we have gained experience with this program, it has become all too clear that the disease, coalworkers' pneumoconiosis, is not well understood, nor is there skill in the usage of the classification scheme.

The engineering aspects of our program are managed and directed by Mr. Jeremiah Lynch, Director of the Division of Laboratory and Criteria Development, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr. Lynch appears on the program this afternoon.

Last November, we dedicated a new facility on the campus of the West Virginia University Medical Center. The building was designed to house some 200 people and was the culmination of several years of activity on the part of many people in both the executive and legislative branches. The Appalachian Laboratory for Occupational Respiratory Diseases (ALFORD), as well as the Testing and Certification Branch Laboratory, are housed here. The building is attractive and comfortable, and I am sure will enhance our work at Morgantown.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to discuss with our counterparts in the Bureau of Mines some of our accomplishments as well as problems as we seek to fulfill our mission under the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act.

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Coal Mine Health Seminar

A Joint Staff Conference of the Bureau of Mines
and the National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health

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