

# CDC

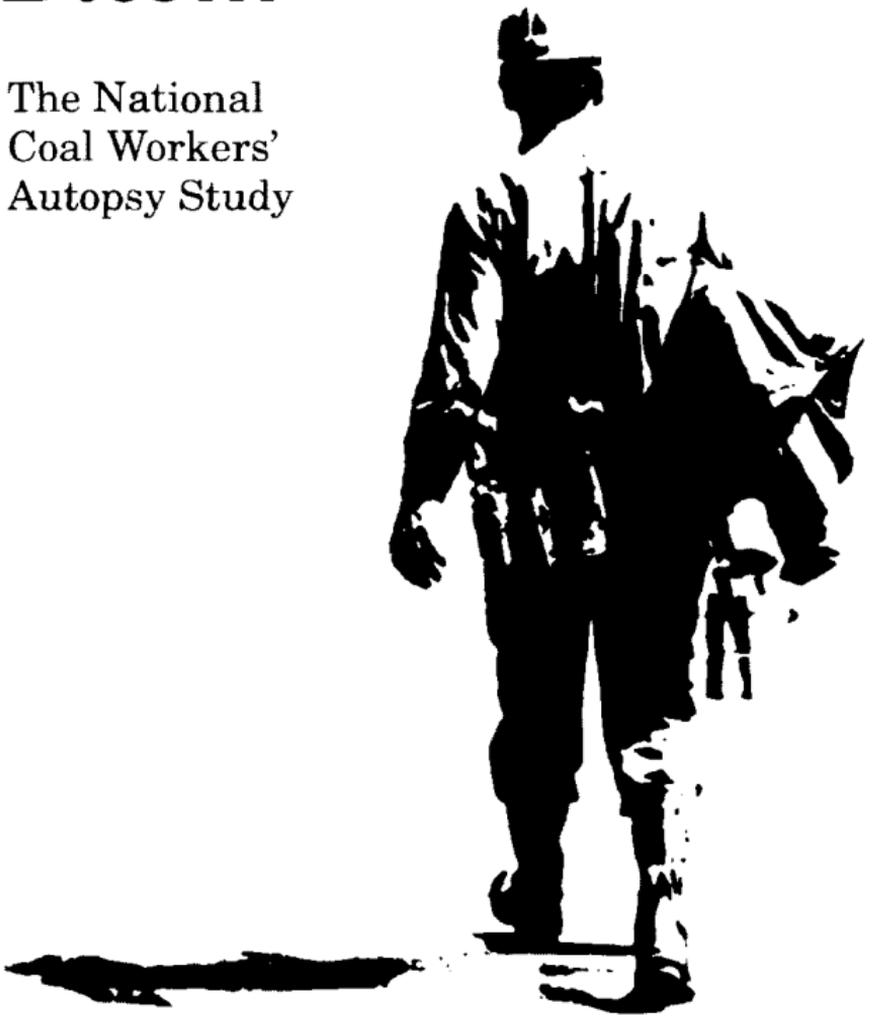
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL  
AND PREVENTION

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## NIOSH

# *When A Coal Miner Dies...*

The National  
Coal Workers'  
Autopsy Study



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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## **WHEN A COAL MINER DIES...**

- The miner's family may arrange for an autopsy
- It costs them nothing
- The results may help support a "black lung" benefit claim

## **THE NATIONAL COAL WORKERS' AUTOPSY STUDY...**

The Study is a service program for survivors of coal miners and is authorized by the *Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969*. It is conducted with the cooperation of the United Mine Workers of America and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), United States Department of Labor.

The Study helps scientists and medical doctors learn more about coal workers' pneumoconiosis (CWP), also called "black lung" disease. The data from the Study are sent to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), located at the Appalachian Laboratory for Occupational Safety and Health (ALOSH) in Morgantown, West Virginia, where they are studied by qualified medical experts. When a miner's dependents agree to participate in the program, they are helping NIOSH in its efforts toward early detection and prevention of CWP.

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## **WHAT IS AN AUTOPSY...**

An autopsy is a detailed examination of internal organs, including the heart and lungs. Thus, if CWP or “black lung” disease is present, it may be determined by an autopsy even if it was not proven during life.

An autopsy need not interfere with funeral arrangements.

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE...**

- Former underground coal miners
- Former surface workers at underground coal mines
- Workers who were either active or retired at time of death

It does not matter how long the miner worked in the mines, and he/she need not have died in a hospital. However, the miner must have had some experience in or at an underground coal mine.

## **ARRANGING FOR AN AUTOPSY...**

The family physician, the hospital, the funeral director, or local public health official can help to arrange for an autopsy. It will be performed by a pathologist—a doctor specially trained to make such examinations.

NIOSH has told many pathologists about the National Coal Workers’ Autopsy Study, and many of them are participating in this voluntary program. If there is no pathologist in your area, or if local pathologists are not participating in the Study, arrangements can be made for proper transportation to a cooperating pathologist to have an autopsy performed.

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## **GIVING CONSENT...**

In order to have an autopsy performed, the miner's spouse or next-of-kin gives permission by signing two short forms.

One is the pathologist's consent form; it grants permission to make the examination.

The other is the consent and questionnaire form for the National Coal Workers' Autopsy Study. In order to complete this form, a member of the miner's family will be asked nine simple questions about the working and smoking history of the deceased.

## **THE COST...**

If the autopsy is requested and a Consent, Release, and History Form is completed and accepted by the pathologist, there is no cost to the miner's family or estate.

## **THE RESULTS...**

After the autopsy, the pathologist can, on request, send results to the miner's doctor, who should explain them to the family.

The pathologist will send the results, along with the questionnaire and several small samples of lung tissue, to NIOSH in Morgantown, West Virginia. Upon receipt of the material, NIOSH will pay the pathologist for performing the autopsy.

The pathologist can send the autopsy results to any organization specified, or an autopsy report may be obtained later from NIOSH *only* if the widow or next-of-kin gives written permission.

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## **NIOSH...**

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), was established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. The Act made NIOSH responsible for conducting research to make the nation's work places healthier and safer. NIOSH conducts the health programs established by the federal *Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969*, placing special emphasis upon early diagnosis and prevention of coal workers' pneumoconiosis or "black lung" disease.

NIOSH recommends federal coal mine health regulations, conducts the x-ray examination program required by the *1969 Act*, tests and approves respirators for use in coal mines, conducts Health Hazard Evaluations, and identifies risk factors for work-related fatalities and injuries. NIOSH conducts the National Coal Workers' Autopsy Study (NCWAS)—the subject of this brochure. NIOSH administers the Study through the Appalachian Laboratory for Occupational Safety and Health (ALOSH), which is the heart of an intensive coal mine health research program.

Coal mine safety regulations are established by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), United States Department of Labor, which also enforces all federal coal mine health and safety regulations.

## **MORE INFORMATION...**

For more information about the National Coal Workers' Autopsy Study write or telephone:

**National Institute for Occupational  
Safety and Health  
National Coal Workers' Autopsy Study  
P.O. Box 4258  
Morgantown, WV 26504  
(304) 285-5724**



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