

TAPE FOR WEEK OF JAN. 11

1:02

(18)

This is Congressman Nick Rahall.

The importance of safe and healthy working conditions for coal miners was again brought to the attention of the American people as a result of the three fatal mine disasters in Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

While investigations into the causes of these accidents are still underway, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the Mine Safety and Health Administration's program of mine inspections.

Late last September, it was brought to my attention that the MSHA Field Office in Logan, West Virginia, was not able to complete the mandated number of inspections due to a shortage of qualified mine inspectors.

At my request, the General Accounting Office will soon be making a major investigation into MSHA's operation and why they have seemingly become lax in their responsibility to protect the nation's coal miners.

I welcome this investigation and anxiously await the results, knowing that miners and their families will benefit from this action.

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People who drink and drive have become an increasing hazard on our nation's highways--as nearly 26,000 citizens are killed annually in drunk driving incidents.

To deal with this pressing problem, I have joined a number of my colleagues in offering legislation to encourage the states to confront their basic responsibilities for law enforcement and rehabilitation in the area of drunk driving. This measure does not create any new federal programs, or authorize the expenditure of additional federal funds. Instead, it requires each state to take positive action against drunk drivers, or risk the loss of federal highway safety funds which they presently receive.

One American life is lost every 21 seconds in alcohol-related crashes. This is a situation which we must deal with, and only through a strong united effort, can we save the lives of innocent people who have suffered as a result of drunk drivers.

This is Congressman Nick Rahall.