



U.S. Congressman

Nick Rahall*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 21, 1991CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226-7761**DUST SAMPLING TECHNOLOGY
TO BE SCRUTINIED BY RAHALL PANEL***Tamper-Resistant Cassette Apparently Developed In 1979*

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources has scheduled a hearing on coal mine dust sampling and mitigation technology for Thursday, June 27th, the panel's chairman, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) said today.

The hearing will focus on the technological aspects of coal mine dust monitoring and techniques aimed at mitigating the generation of dust in the mines. Rahall said that in particular his Subcommittee is interested in receiving information on the so-called tamper-resistant sampling cassettes the Labor Department has announced it will require industry to use, the status of research being conducted by the Bureau of Mines on dust sampling and control, and the extent of consultation between the Bureau of Mines and the Mine Safety and Health Administration on these matters.

"I am concerned that with all of the emotionalism surrounding this issue the Labor Department will go off half-cocked and require industry to spend a great deal of money to comply with some new technology that was not fully evaluated, may not get the job done and do little in the way of protecting coal miners," Rahall said.

One of the primary missions of the Bureau of Mines is to develop technology to improve the health and safety of the Nation's miners. In April, Rahall called upon the agency to initiate an expedited research effort aimed at devising an alternative to the current filter cassette dust sampling technique. "In other words," Rahall had said, "we need to build a better mouse-trap."

Rahall has also learned that a prototype tamper-resistant cassette was designed by the federal government in 1979. "The obvious question is that if the government developed such a device 12 years ago, why was it not put into use in the Nation's coal mines," he said. "This will certainly be a topic of discussion at the hearing."

Representatives of the Department of Labor, Bureau of Mines, National Coal Association and the United Mine Workers of America will appear before the Rahall Subcommittee to present testimony. The hearing will commence at 9:45 a.m. in 1324 Longworth House Office Building.

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