



# Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee

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## **BITUMINOUS COAL MINE SAFETY ACT (SB 949)**

### Overview

- Completely re-writes the Commonwealth's bituminous coal mine safety law, which was last updated in 1961.
- Incorporates recommendations from Governor Schweiker's *Commission on Abandoned Mine Voids and Mine Safety*, the joint Department of Environmental Protection/Mine Safety & Health Administration (DEP/MSHA) investigation and the Quecreek Mine Grand Jury.
- Creates a Board of Coal Mine Safety to develop regulations under the act and to review and incorporate, where appropriate, federal mine safety regulatory changes. Board shall consist of 7 members: 3 members appointed by the Governor who represent coal mine operators; 3 members appointed by the Governor who represent working miners, and the Secretary of DEP who shall be the chair. Any action by the Board shall require 5 affirmative votes.
- Directs DEP to establish and administer a mine rescue program, and specifies that DEP shall coordinate and assist in all mine emergencies.
- Directs DEP to create, maintain and make available a mine map repository of existing and historic mine workings.
- Establishes specifications for use of electrical and diesel-powered equipment.
- Brings state mine safety standards in line with federal standards, where appropriate.
- Specifies DEP responsibility to inspect mines and certify mine employees/officials.
- Authorizes DEP to assess administrative penalties up to \$2,500 against a mine official, and up to \$200,000 against a mine operator.
- Specifies unlawful conduct within or about mine workings, and establishes criminal penalties for violations of act.
- Ensures that mine owners and operators are fully responsible for ensuring the safe operation of a mine, and for compliance with all DEP standards, orders and permits.
- Effective in 180 days.