

SME to Link with NIOSH NORA Mining Sector Council

SME's Board of Directors has asked members Christopher Bise, David Kanagy (SME Executive Director), George Luxbacher (SME 2008 Past President), and Stanley Suboleski to be liaison participants in the NORA Mining Sector Council and NIOSH's Office of Mine Safety and Health (OMSH) has agreed to invite them to be Members. The SME liaison Members will need input from all of the SME membership to function with effect; SME will charge relevant standing committees to provide input on a continuing basis. SME members who are not official members of the Sector Council may still become Corresponding Members and participate in the Council activities by e-mail and teleconference. SME's Board encourages all SME members with interest in the vital subjects of mine safety and health to participate as Corresponding Members.

NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, a constituent part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), has the responsibility for improving health and safety of American miners through research and prevention and, by technology transfer, miners around the world. More than a decade ago, NIOSH, in recognition of the fact that occupational safety and health (OSH) research was a blend of fundamental and applied research whose results should be transferred quickly to practice, created a strategic planning mechanism to guide this research. It was called the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) and was directed to be far-sighted and global; NORA is an action plan for all OSH research and is not confined merely to NIOSH laboratories. A few years ago, the NORA leadership concluded that its activities needed to be broken into industrial sectors and created eight Sector Councils that are charged with creating an "Agenda" or strategic plan for research into OSH improvements in each Sector. Of particular interest to NIOSH is research that can be transferred readily into practice and that can be seen to improve the lot of workers in that Sector.

The NORA Mining Sector Council was authorized in 2007 but is only now becoming active. NIOSH and SME want that it become viable and that it produce a workable and working Agenda. To this end, NIOSH has asked Dr. Thomas Novak, Director Mining Science and Technology, Office of Mine Safety and Health Research, CDC/NIOSH, and Dr. Lee Saperstein, Dean Emeritus, to be co-Chairs of the Mining Sector Council and has also asked SME to provide support and liaison membership. Sector Council Membership will be by invitation from NIOSH but Corresponding Members can be self-nominated. SME will provide opportunities during its 2010 Annual Meeting for distribution of additional information and for members to provide initial input into the Mining Sector Council. The first meeting of the Sector Council will be on Thursday, March 4, 2010, 11 am, at the close of the SME Annual Meeting.

The NIOSH web site, www.cdc.gov/niosh, and its NORA pages, www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora, are a fount of information and should be examined if a member has interest in the operation of the Mining Sector Council. All are encouraged to attend the relevant committee meetings.