



"Working to make Indiana businesses clean and safe, and wages fair and competitive."

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **2006: Fatality Free Year in Indiana's Underground Coal Mines**

**Indianapolis, IN March 29, 2007** – The Indiana Coal Council, in collaboration with Vincennes University and the Bureau of Mines in the Indiana Department of Labor (IDOL), is proud to recognize Indiana's underground coal mining industry and miners for a fatality free year in 2006. In a ceremony Friday afternoon at Vincennes University, Indiana's Commissioner of Labor, Lori A. Torres, on behalf of Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., honored miners and their management for the second year in a row for this extraordinary accomplishment.

"We are proud of Indiana's coal mining safety record. The success is due to the dedication of management and the skill of our outstanding Hoosier miners who make safety a priority everyday," said J. Nathan "Nat" Noland of the Indiana Coal Council.

The celebration was held at Vincennes University, Indiana's home for mine safety and technology training. Vincennes University also has an associate degree program, which began in the Fall of 2006 and was created to address the growing needs of Indiana's underground mining industry. Vincennes University President, Dr. Richard Helton reacted to the ceremony: "I am pleased that we are able to celebrate another fatality free year in mining in Indiana. The Vincennes University Miner Safety Training Program and those who are a part of this process will continue to be proactive in the promotion of safety for appropriate personnel in the mining industry. The safety of those in the mining industry is first and foremost, and continued efforts will be made to ensure a safe and secure environment for all miners."

"Given the events in West Virginia and Kentucky over the last year, it brings home just how important miner safety is" said Commissioner Torres. "Mine safety is and will be a priority for the Department of Labor and we are proud that Indiana mines are putting forth continued effort in such a responsible way. We are also thankful for the close relationship among the mining community, which includes not only the mining industry and the miners themselves, but also Vincennes University, the Indiana Coal Council and the Federal Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA). Working together, we can all make a difference, and this safety record is clear proof of that."

Though Indiana is still fatality free, the U.S. has had an upswing in mining injuries and illnesses in the last two years. According to MSHA there were 47 fatalities in the U.S. in 2006. So far in 2007, there have been 5 coal mine fatalities (last updated 3/23/2007). The Indiana Department of Labor has made the Bureau of Mines a larger focus of its efforts in Safety and Health of Hoosier workers. In 2006 the miner training program at Vincennes University was started and a surprise safety drill was conducted in June 2006 to test the readiness of Indiana's Mine Rescue Units. It is the hope of the agency that all of these proactive initiatives have kept miners aware of potential dangers and gives them the tools to prevent, recognize, and avoid coal mine dangers.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact Quin Cheatham at 317.232.2683

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