

Spring Sabine Mining Company Reclamation. Pirkey power plant is operating in the distance.

## April – A Month for Renewed Focus

By TMRA Secretary, Rebecca McGrew, North American Coal Corp

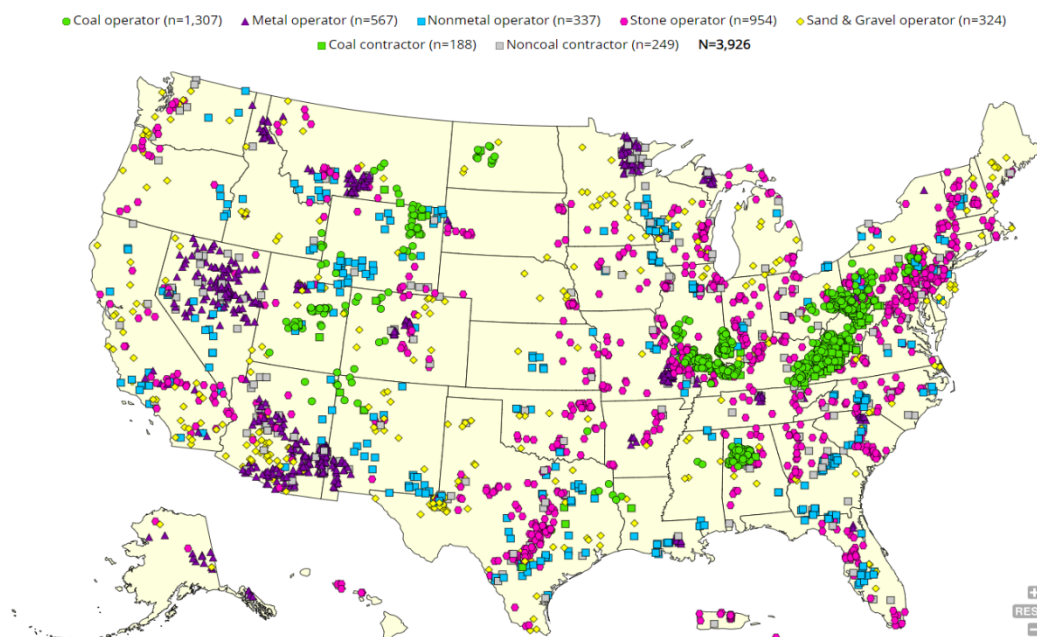
As we roll into the second month of spring, we celebrate life and renewal. Winter melts away, red clover and bluebonnets bloom, and the COVID vaccination roll-out gains momentum. In the spirit of hope and life, it's time to recommit to safety – for ourselves and for our fellow miners.

According to MSHA, April signals the beginning of the spring season and the startup of many mines and projects idled during the winter months. It is also a deadly month for miners.

Since 1867, April has witnessed 65 mine disasters with five or more fatalities. Sadly, 47 rescuers have also died in 12 of the rescue attempts. Notably, there were 55 successful rescues – one taking almost a whole week. In 1879, seven miners who had been trapped by a cave-in for five days and 15 hours at the Sugar Notch No. 10 Colliery in Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, were found alive. They had sustained themselves on mine water and the cooked flesh of a mule they killed that was trapped with them. They cooked the meat in the lids of their cans held over three lamps. Amazingly, the men walked away in good shape when they reached the surface, and five of the men walked home after the rescue.

According to the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the mining sector saw 3,926 non-fatal, lost-time injuries (**Figure 1**) and 27 fatalities in the mining sector in 2019. Three of those fatalities were fellow Texans. In 2020, MSHA reported 29 fatalities for the mining sector, two of which were in Texas.

**Figure 1: Non fatal lost-time injuries, 2019 (Non fatal lost-time injuries, 2019 | NIOSH | CDC)**



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As we look at these results, we see the most common MSHA citations for surface coal mines in 2020 pertained to maintenance and/or operational issues associated with loading and haulage, machinery and firefighting equipment. For surface non-metal operations, issues with moving machine parts, safety defects and electrical conductors were most frequently cited.

In keeping with the renewal that spring brings us, I encourage all of us to take time to refocus on safety and evaluate our safety-awareness. Our families want us home safely – every day.

Finally, and on a lighter note, we cannot let this April pass without highlighting a moment in history when our esteemed director, Ches Blevins, was working diligently in support of the Texas mining industry. We don't know exactly what was on the docket this fine day in April 1980, but there is no doubt that Ches had a debonair sense of style and quite a bit more hair!



*Ches Blevins, pictured sitting at top podium, April 1980.*