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October 26, 1966

From: James C. Roumas

You will note from this release that the President stated that "Mass poisonings from lead and mercury, for example, have been virtually eliminated".

Very truly yours,

James C. Roumas
Assistant Director
Health and Safety

JCR/jv
Attachment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 16, 1966

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSETEXT OF REMARKS OF THE
PRESIDENT UPON SIGNING THE
FEDERAL METALLIC AND NON-
METALLIC MINES SAFETY ACT

The 89th Congress has sent many landmark bills down here for me to sign. I am told that the record averages better than a major bill for every week Congress has been in session.

This Act closes a serious gap in our national program to eliminate occupational hazards. It extends Federal health and safety standards to more than a quarter of a million American working men who earn a living by the sweat of their brow and the strength of their hands.

These men give us raw materials basic to our economy; iron, copper, and uranium ores; sand, gravel, crushed stone, clay potash, and other minerals.

But the earth does not yield them up easily. The work is hard and it is dangerous. For too many years, this industry has been gravely deficient in safety practices.

The results are told in terms of human lives and suffering. In 1965, 181 workers were killed. Nearly 12,000 others -- nearly five percent of those employed in this industry -- were injured seriously enough to lose time from their jobs.

I do not believe that such tragedy can be written off as an "occupational hazard". I do not believe that a man should have to pay with his life, or his health, for the right to earn a living.

Since 1914, our Public Health Service has been working to protect Americans from health hazards found on the job. Many of these hazards have been greatly reduced. Mass poisonings from lead and mercury, for example, have been virtually eliminated.

But our technology is changing with fantastic speed. And this change is bringing with it new and hidden threats to health and safety. At least 300 new chemicals are introduced into industry and agriculture each year. Often they are in use before their side-effects have been fully evaluated.

There is evidence that many chronic diseases often have a direct relationship to the victim's occupation. These include cancer, lung ailments, allergies -- and even heart disease. They also include mental and hearing disorders from certain kinds of noise.

A great and advanced nation cannot allow such hazards to go unchecked. And I promise you that we will not allow them to go unchecked.

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The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare is now conducting an intensified study of the entire problem of occupational health. This study will determine what the government can do:

- First, to isolate and eliminate the hazards to occupational health that now exist; and
- Second, to test new products and processes so that steps can be taken to prevent health hazards before they occur.

As fast as we find the answers to these questions, we are going to apply them with every means at our disposal.

Today, I am very gratified to be taking a major step toward that goal.

The enactment of this bill will afford far greater protection to one important segment of American labor which has been denied sorely needed protection.

Beyond saving the lives and limbs of many men who labor under the earth, this Act will enable many wives to rest a little easier when their husbands leave for work each day.

And it will enable many children to grow to adulthood with their fathers living and earning a livelihood for the entire family.

I am proud to sign this Act.
