

OREGON INDEPENDENT AGGREGATE ASSOCIATION

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July 2026 Newsletter

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Safety Isn't Just Compliance—It's Your Competitive Advantage

For many independent aggregate producers, safety can feel like another regulatory hurdle. Between managing production, maintaining equipment, keeping customers supplied, and dealing with staffing challenges, it is easy to view safety programs as paperwork that takes time away from the work that generates revenue.

The reality is just the opposite.

For small aggregate operations, a strong safety culture isn't simply about passing an inspection or avoiding citations, it's one of the smartest investments a company can make.

Small Operations Face Unique Challenges

Unlike large national producers, independent quarries and sand & gravel operations often operate with lean crews. Employees frequently wear multiple hats, moving between plant maintenance, loader operations, trucking, and general labor throughout the day.

That flexibility keeps operations efficient, but it also increases exposure to hazards if workers aren't properly trained for each task.

Equipment repairs performed under production pressure, working around conveyors, operating in changing weather conditions, and managing customer traffic through the yard all require constant attention. One injury can sideline a key employee for weeks—or longer—and significantly impact production.

MSHA Is Looking Beyond Paperwork

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) continues to emphasize workplace examinations, hazard identification, and corrective action during inspections.

Inspectors aren't simply looking to verify that a workplace examination was completed. They want to see that hazards were identified, documented, corrected, and communicated to miners.

For independent operators, that means workplace exams should become part of the daily routine rather than something completed just before an inspection.

A five-minute conversation before the shift about changing conditions, equipment issues, or weather-related hazards can prevent injuries that no amount of paperwork can fix afterward.

Prevention Costs Less Than Downtime

Every operator understands equipment downtime.

A failed bearing, hydraulic leak, or broken conveyor can stop production for hours. Injuries have the same effect, but often with much greater financial consequences.

Medical expenses, workers' compensation claims, overtime, training replacement employees, lost productivity, and potential enforcement actions all add up quickly.

Many small operators discover that investing in guard improvements, lockout/tagout procedures, better housekeeping, and routine maintenance pays for itself many times over.

Building a Safety Culture Doesn't Require a Big Budget

Creating a safer workplace doesn't always require expensive consultants or elaborate programs.

Simple improvements often have the greatest impact:

- Hold brief daily safety meetings.
- Encourage employees to report hazards without fear of criticism.
- Correct housekeeping issues before they become trip hazards.
- Inspect guards and emergency stop systems regularly.
- Review near misses with the entire crew so everyone learns from the experience.
- Recognize employees who identify hazards before they become incidents.

These habits build a culture where safety becomes part of the operation—not an interruption to it.

Safety Helps Retain Good Employees

Finding skilled equipment operators, mechanics, and plant personnel continues to be a challenge throughout the aggregate industry.

Employees want to work where management demonstrates that their well-being matters. Companies with strong safety records often experience better employee retention, improved morale, and fewer disruptions from workplace injuries.

In today's competitive labor market, that reputation can become a significant advantage.

The Bottom Line

Independent aggregate producers have always succeeded by doing more with less. That same mindset applies to safety.

Every prevented injury protects your employees, your equipment, your production schedule, and ultimately your bottom line.

Safety isn't just about complying with MSHA regulations, it's about protecting the people who make your business successful every day.

For small operators, that's not just good compliance.

It's good business.

Sources & Further Reading

- Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). Safety and Health Subject Resources. A comprehensive collection of guidance documents, best practices, and training materials covering hazards commonly encountered in surface mining operations. <https://www.msha.gov/compliance-enforcement/compliance-assistance-safety-and-health-cash-program/safety-and-health-subject-resources>
- Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). Final Rule for Examination of Working Places in Metal and Nonmetal Mines. This fact sheet outlines requirements for workplace examinations, hazard identification, miner notification, documentation, and corrective actions. <https://www.msha.gov/sites/default/files/Regulations/fact-sheet.pdf>
- MSHA. Safety Pro in a Box. A compliance assistance program developed specifically for aggregate operators, offering practical safety training materials and resources for small mining operations. https://arlweb.msha.gov/safetypro_in_a_box/index.asp
- MSHA. Data and Reports. Includes mine safety statistics, injury and fatality reports, inspection data, and annual summaries that help operators identify industry trends and benchmark safety performance. <https://www.msha.gov/data-reports>
- MSHA. Mine Safety and Health Education and Training Programs. Highlights the importance of miner training and notes that small mining operations often have higher fatality rates, underscoring the value of effective safety education. <https://arlweb.msha.gov/mshainfo/factsheets/mshafct3.htm>

OIAA Annual Scholarship Opportunity

The Oregon Independent Aggregate Association (OIAA) is pleased to offer an annual \$2,500 scholarship for students pursuing careers related to the construction, aggregate, and forestry industries. Eligible applicants include current OIAA members, employees of member companies, and their family members enrolled in or planning to attend a university, community college, private college, or trade school. Eligible fields of study include construction management, engineering, geology, forestry, heavy equipment repair, welding, architecture, and land use planning.

Members are encouraged to share this opportunity with employees and families who have eligible students who may benefit. The application emphasizes a personal statement outlining career goals, interest in the industry, and financial need. Scholarship recipients are recognized by OIAA and invited to accept the award in person at a Board Meeting. The application deadline is **September 1, 2026**. Application materials are included at the end of this Newsletter.

Let's get the word out!

A publication of the
Oregon Independent Aggregate Association
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MSHA Part 46 Training:

Albany:

📍 **Location:** Linn County Fair & Expo

🕒 **Date & Time:** Monday, March 15th, 2027 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Roseburg:

📍 **Location:** Douglas County Fairgrounds

🕒 **Date & Time:** Tuesday, March 16th, 2027 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM



Please feel free to share this opportunity with anyone who may be interested in attending—members and non-members alike. The MSHA Part 46 Training form will be sent out in the fall of 2026. Not unlike this year, it can be completed electronically using Adobe Acrobat or printed/fill it out by hand. Questions? Email Melissa at melissa.bronson@kniferiver.com

General Information:



We truly value and encourage active participation from all our members. You're invited to attend our meetings anytime. If you'd like to get more involved, share ideas for improving our association, or learn about upcoming meetings, please feel free to reach out to any of our board members.

Join the Board!

With two of our founding directors retiring, we're opening the door for fresh energy and new voices—and we'd love to have you be part of it. We're actively looking to add members to our Board of Directors, and this is a great time to get involved. If you're curious, interested, or even just thinking about it, reach out to any board member or join us at our next meeting to explore the opportunity. We'd be excited to welcome you to the conversation.

Next Meeting:

📍 **Location:** IMA (KPD) Office – Conference Room, Springfield, OR

🕒 **Date & Time:** TBD

Article Content:

We're always looking for great content to feature in our newsletter. If you have an article, safety tip, or

any information you believe would benefit or interest our members, we'd love to include it. Please submit your materials to: melissa.bronson@kniferiver.com or erwinh@rfpco.com

Newsletter Changes:

We're excited to continue building community within the Oregon Independent Aggregate Association, and one great way to do that is through our Member Spotlight feature. We invite current members to submit a short spotlight showcasing their business—whether that's a quick Q&A, a fun fact about your operation, highlights of unique projects, or non-sensitive photos of your quarry, equipment, or crew. Including a brief blurb about your company helps us share your story while giving you a little extra marketing visibility. If you'd like to be featured in an upcoming edition, we'd love to hear from you.

Visit our website at www.oraggregate.com

Member Spotlight:

YOUR COMPANY HERE!

This month we don't have a Member Spotlight—apparently everyone is too humble to brag. So, here's your friendly reminder: send us a short company bio and a photo. We'd love to introduce you to the rest of the group and, yes, give you a completely shameless plug.