

# OREGON INDEPENDENT AGGREGATE ASSOCIATION

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## June 2026 Newsletter

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### Safety Bulletin for Small Quarry Operators — Lessons from the Recent MSHA Fatality Alert

MSHA's revised Fatality Alert from May 21, 2026 describes a tragic incident in which a worker was fatally injured after heating the flights on an auger while explosive components were still present on the equipment. When heat was applied, residual explosive material detonated, resulting in fatal injuries. For small quarry operations, where crews are lean and equipment often moves quickly from blasting tasks to maintenance work, this scenario is especially relevant. It highlights a critical hazard that is easy to overlook: explosives can remain on augers, drill steels, and loading tools long after blasting activities are complete, and those residues can become extremely dangerous when exposed to heat.

In many small quarries, heating the flights on an auger is a routine maintenance practice used to correct wear, straighten bent sections, or loosen components. Because the task is familiar, workers may assume the auger is safe to work on once blasting is finished. However, explosive residues can lodge in crevices, adhere to metal surfaces, or remain trapped in-flight edges. Even small amounts of ANFO, emulsions, or booster material can react violently when heated. The risk is often invisible, and experienced workers may not realize that heating metal creates the exact conditions; heat, friction, and impact, that can trigger detonation.

This fatality was not a random accident. It was a breakdown in process, communication, and hazard recognition. Small quarry crews often overlap roles, with the same individuals handling drilling, loading, blasting, and equipment repair. When responsibilities blur, assumptions replace formal handoffs. A worker may believe an auger is clean simply because blasting is finished, or because residue appears minimal. But explosives do not respond to assumptions; they respond to chemistry. Heating auger flights without

confirming the equipment is completely free of explosive material creates a deadly situation, even if the residue is small or difficult to see.

To prevent similar incidents, small quarry operators should adopt a more formal approach to post-blast equipment handling. Any auger used in blasting should undergo a documented clearance process before maintenance begins. This process should include a thorough inspection, physical cleaning, and explicit confirmation from the blaster-in-charge that the equipment is safe. Heating, welding, grinding, or torching should never occur until this clearance is complete. Crews should also receive training on how explosive residues behave, since many workers underestimate how sensitive these materials can be once exposed to heat. Communication between blasting and maintenance roles must be deliberate and structured, even when the same person performs both tasks. Near-misses involving explosives should be documented and reviewed, because they often reveal gaps in procedure long before they lead to serious injuries.

Small quarry operations rely heavily on experience, teamwork, and practical problem-solving. Those strengths are valuable, but when explosives are involved, practical habits must be supported by strict procedures. Heating the flights on an auger that still contains explosive components is a deadly combination, and one that can be prevented through clear communication, formal clearance steps, and disciplined maintenance practices. May 21, 2026, fatality serves as a painful reminder that explosives remain dangerous long after the blast, and that maintenance tasks can unintentionally create ignition conditions if proper precautions are not taken.

[May 21, 2026 - Fatality Alert Revised](#)

## **OIAA Annual Scholarship Opportunity**

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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!**

## MSHA Part 46 Training:

### Albany:

- 📍 **Location:** Linn County Fair & Expo
- 🕒 **Date & Time:** Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2027 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### Roseburg:

- 📍 **Location:** Douglas County Fairgrounds
- 🕒 **Date & Time:** Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto: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](mailto:melissa.bronson@kniferiver.com) or [erwinh@rfpco.com](mailto: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](http://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.