

PENALTY UPDATES PAUSED FOR 2026: WHAT MINE OPERATORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NO INCREASE TO SAFETY FINES

Insights
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Penalty Updates Paused For 2026: What Mine Operators Need To Know About No Increase to Safety Fines

Mine operators will get a small reprieve this year as we'll see no increase to workplace safety penalty amounts. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) typically updates its civil penalty amounts annually to account for inflation. But, due to the government shutdown, the federal government didn't publish its annual inflation data and then cancelled the penalty adjustment for 2026 entirely. For employers operating mine sites or managing MSHA-covered facilities, these annual changes matter because they affect the cost of noncompliance and should be built into year-round safety and audit planning. Here's everything you need to know about the inflation update pause and three steps to consider following this news.

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Why This Matters For Your Operation

Penalties for violations of the laws enforced by MSHA typically get more expensive each year. Even modest inflation adjustments can increase the amount tied to regular assessments, aggravated conduct, and other penalty categories. An operation with recurring safety issues may see a larger cumulative financial exposure following these changes, and should update its compliance budget accordingly.

Under MSHA's [current 2025 penalty levels](#), fines for violations start at a minimum of \$168 and range to a maximum of \$332,376 for flagrant violations.

Operators should always keep a close eye on these changes, despite the pause for this year. The annual update usually presents a good opportunity for operators to review their MSHA compliance efforts, training policies, and workplace safety and health programs. Don't skip out this year just because the update is cancelled.

Tracking State Changes

Keeping in mind, operators should be familiar with any state-level mine safety regulations where they are located. States may have stricter rules than MSHA, and may have their own updates to safety penalties tied to factors other than inflation. Consult with your FP counsel to understand the differing rules and penalty amounts that apply to your operation and to craft a compliance plan that checks both state and federal boxes.

Tracking violations: Check out FP's [MSHA Violations Tracker](#) to access the latest in mine enforcement actions based on location and mine type. Reviewing recent violations in jurisdictions close to your operation can offer a picture of enforcement trends in your area.

Steps To Take Now

Operators subject to MSHA requirements should consider the following steps:

1. Review the 2025 penalty schedule and confirm which amounts apply to assessed violations.
2. Refresh training for supervisors, safety personnel, and site managers on citation prevention and response.
3. Preserve documentation showing good-faith abatement efforts, corrective actions, and training. In penalty disputes, records can be important in showing compliance efforts and mitigating exposure.

Conclusion

If you have any questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney in our [Mine Safety and Health team](#). We'll continue to monitor this development and will provide timely updates as they occur. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information directly to your inbox.