



DIVISIONS  
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ADMINISTRATION

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

## *Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Department of Mines, Minerals & Energy Issues Warning About Danger of Abandoned and Active Mine Lands**

**Big Stone Gap, VA-** The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) is issuing a warning about the dangers of venturing onto abandoned or active mine sites. A 21-year-old Virginia man drowned Wednesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> in Montgomery County while swimming in a water-filled quarry. And, an 18-year-old man drowned Monday, July 7<sup>th</sup> at a quarry in Fredericksburg. The Mine Safety & Health Administration reports five drownings in 2014. The federal agency shows all of those were drowning in quarries.

“Everyone is looking for a place to cool off in the summer heat but an old mining site or a quarry is not the place to do that,” said Deputy Director Butch Lambert. “The hazards present on mine sites do not discriminate according to age. The Mine Safety & Health Administration shows over the last 10 years, 236 people have lost their lives on these sites across the nation.”

While drowning has accounted for over half of the fatal accidents recorded nationwide since 1999, the public may encounter numerous other hazards if they venture onto mine property. Hazards in abandoned underground mines include deep vertical shafts, horizontal openings supported by rotting timbers, unstable rock formations, low oxygen or poisonous or explosive mine gases and the presence of unused or misfired explosives. Water-filled quarries may conceal rock ledges, abandoned structures and debris, and the water often is deceptively deep and dangerously cold. Old surface mines contain unstable highwalls and hills of loose materials in stockpiles or refuse heaps that can easily collapse.

Citizens may contact DMME at (276) 523-8206 or (434) 951-6310 to report instances of frequent public visitation on abandoned mine sites. Posters and stickers promoting mine hazard awareness may be downloaded from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration web site at <http://www.msha.gov/SOSA/SOSAhome.asp>. For additional information and outreach resources please contact the DMME at (276) 523-8146 or visit DMME’s web site at [www.dmme.virginia.gov](http://www.dmme.virginia.gov).

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