

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3877

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 30, 2007

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions

AN ACT

To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish an initiative to promote the research, development, and demonstration of miner tracking and communications systems and to promote the establishment of standards and other measurement services regarding underground communications to protect miners in the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Mine Communications
5 Technology Innovation Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The failure of miner tracking and commu-
9 nications devices or lack thereof in mines severely
10 hamper rescue efforts in the event of emergencies.

11 (2) Mines, particularly underground mines,
12 have properties that present unique technical chal-
13 lenges for the integration of currently available
14 tracking and communications systems. These prop-
15 erties include the lack of a clear path or open air
16 which is required for radio signals and WiFi. Addi-
17 tionally, because coal is an absorptive material, less
18 than 10 percent of the radio spectrum that is used
19 above ground can be used underground. A fraction
20 of that (only about 1 percent) radio spectrum is ac-
21 tually allocated for commercial communications pur-
22 poses. As a consequence, the availability of miner
23 communication equipment is severely limited.

24 (3) Research and experience have shown that
25 communications and tracking systems may not work

1 equally well in every mine or in every emergency sit-
2 uation, and therefore several different systems may
3 be necessary for development and integration.

4 (4) Because of the serious challenges of the
5 mine environment and the limited market provided
6 by the mining industry, much needed technology has
7 not yet been developed by the private sector or is not
8 commercially available in the United States.

9 (5) Furthermore, due to the regulatory struc-
10 ture of the industry and the lengthy approval proc-
11 ess for mine tracking and communications systems,
12 research must be accelerated so that next generation
13 technology can be quickly and efficiently integrated
14 into mines to protect the safety of miners.

15 (6) The National Institute of Standards and
16 Technology is well positioned to help accelerate the
17 development of mining tracking and communications
18 technology. The National Institute of Standards and
19 Technology has a long history of working in conjunc-
20 tion with industry to invest in longer-term, high-risk
21 research which yields national benefits far beyond
22 private payoff. Further, the National Institute of
23 Standards and Technology builds partnerships with
24 industry to leverage existing research and develop-
25 ment to drive next generation technology.

1 (7) The National Institute of Standards and
2 Technology is well-positioned to accelerate develop-
3 ment of consensus mining communications standards
4 given the extensive work that the organization has
5 done in the field of emergency communications to
6 develop standards and technologies for interoperable
7 wireless telecommunications and information sys-
8 tems.

9 (8) In developing such standards, the National
10 Institute of Standards and Technology should work
11 in cooperation with the National Institute for Occu-
12 pational Safety and Health and the Mine Safety and
13 Health Administration, and other relevant public
14 and private stakeholders, to build on existing tech-
15 nology and knowledge regarding mine communica-
16 tions systems.

17 **SEC. 3. MINE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRACKING RE-**
18 **SEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AU-**
19 **THORIZATION.**

20 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Director of the National
21 Institute of Standards and Technology shall provide for
22 the establishment of a program of research, development,
23 and demonstration that includes the establishment of best
24 practices, adaptation of existing technology, and efforts to

1 accelerate the development of next generation technology
2 and tracking systems for mine communications.

3 (b) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the
4 Director shall coordinate with relevant Federal agencies
5 and industry to evaluate areas of research and develop-
6 ment and best practices that will be most promising in
7 protecting miner safety.

8 (c) OPTIONAL FOCUS.—In establishing this program,
9 the Director may focus on the following communications
10 and tracking system characteristics:

11 (1) Systems that are likely to work in emer-
12 gency situations.

13 (2) Systems that work in coal mines, with spe-
14 cial attention paid to deep underground coal mines.

15 (3) Systems that provide coverage throughout
16 all areas of the mine.

17 (4) Hybrid systems that use both wireless and
18 infrastructure based systems.

19 (5) Functionality for 2-way and voice commu-
20 nications.

21 (6) Systems that serve emergency and routine
22 communications needs.

23 (7) The ability to work with existing legacy sys-
24 tems and to be quickly integrated.

1 fiscal years 2009 and 2010, to be derived from amounts
2 authorized under section 3001 of the America COM-
3 PETES Act.

Passed the House of Representatives October 29,
2007.

Attest: LORRAINE C. MILLER,
Clerk.