

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Director  
The Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Vought and Secretary Kennedy:

As you prepare the administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Budget Request, we write to express our support for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and request that you include no less than \$366,800,000 for NIOSH.

Congress established NIOSH in the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 and placed it within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In the Fiscal Year 2026 President's budget request, the administration proposed reducing the overall budget of NIOSH from \$362,800,000 (Fiscal Year 2025) to \$73,200,000. Recognizing the vital role that NIOSH plays in protecting the health and safety of America's workers, the House and Senate passed \$366,800,000 for NIOSH.

Listed below are NIOSH programs that serve American workers, and through those workers, American families. These programs improve workplace safety in agriculture, mining, and forestry, and ensure respiratory protection for America's firefighters and industrial workers who help keep the country afloat.

## **Mining Program**

The NIOSH Mining Program is located in Spokane, Washington and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> The program keeps America's miners safe and healthy by reducing occupational illnesses, traumatic injuries and fatalities, risk of mine disasters, and by improving post-disaster survivability. The NIOSH Mining Program collaborates with national and international partners, including industry. These collaborations enable NIOSH to leverage its resources more efficiently to develop solutions to mining health and safety problems.

Furthermore, it conducts innovative research in areas such as coal and mineral dust exposure, black lung disease, noise-induced hearing loss, ground control, machinery-related injuries. The program also develops vital training tools that include virtual reality-based rescue simulations and heat stress modules, and software, such as the Air Quantity Estimator to help mines manage airflow and reduce diesel particulate matter.

The NIOSH Mining Program operates unique facilities in Pennsylvania, Washington, and West Virginia. These facilities include the Mine Roof Simulator, which validates nearly all new roof support systems before coal mine use. Additionally, the Experimental and Safety Research Coal Mines tests coal dust and methane behavior, communications, and underground refuge options. Another critical program is the coal workers' health surveillance program dedicated to early detection, prevention, and tracking of coal workers with Black Lung.

---

<sup>1</sup> These include: The Pittsburgh Mining Research Division; The Spokane Mining Research Division; the Respiratory Health Division's coal workers surveillance program (Black lung surveillance program); the NPPTL's mining long-term field evaluation program.

## **National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL)**

In 2001, at Congressional direction, NIOSH created the National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL) (*see S. Rept. 106-293*). NPPTL is based out of Morgantown, West Virginia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The NPPTL Respirator Approval Program (RAP) plays a critical role in ensuring worker safety and health by evaluating and approving respiratory protective equipment used by over 50 million American workers. The rigor and credibility of the approval process give employers and workers confidence that NIOSH Approved® respirators meet the highest performance standards.

RAP serves three critical functions. First, respirator manufacturers, including 3M, Bullard, MSA, Moldex, CleanSpace, PIP, and others, depend on NIOSH approval to remain competitive and bring new products into the marketplace. The “NIOSH Approved®” mark is recognized internationally. This recognition not only advances workplace safety but also opens global markets to American respirator manufacturers.

Second, RAP enhances national security and safety by testing and approving respirators that protect critical workers including military servicemembers, firefighters, and all emergency responders. For example, RAP evaluates and approves escape respirators used by the coal workers in underground mines, and the U.S. Navy in maritime operations. Additionally, the nation’s fire services benefit from the joint NIOSH and National Fire Protection Association self-contained breathing apparatus approvals, which protect our firefighters.

Third, RAP personnel investigate counterfeit and fraudulently marked respirators and respirator components. During the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, for example, over 11 million counterfeit “respirators” without NIOSH approval were confiscated by the Department of Homeland Security after referral from NIOSH. In 2023, 7,000 e-commerce listings were reviewed, and 458 listings of fraudulent masks were identified through online marketplace monitoring, resulting in both the removal of those product listings and saving the health, time and money of US employers and workers.

## **Commercial Fishing Safety Program**

The Commercial Fishing Safety Research and Training Program is a partnership program between the U.S. Coast Guard and NIOSH. The program’s research goals are to improve commercial fishing vessel safety, equipment, and technology. The training portion provides grants to training programs in specific regions, with the goal of improving the quality and availability of safety training for commercial fishermen.

These training programs include the Alaska Marine Safety and Education Association (AMSEA), which is the “only trainer for required Emergency Drill Conductors in Alaska, and the largest provider of commercial fishing safety training in the nation.”<sup>2</sup> Commercial fishing is among the most dangerous industries in the U.S. Prior to the safety programs’ inception in 1985, Alaska lost 250 vessels and 75 fishermen every year. Due in large part to this program, fatalities have been lowered by over 80%. Without grant funding, AMSEA would be unable to conduct these trainings, thereby putting the lives of Alaskan fishermen at risk.

## **Health Hazard Evaluation Program (HHE)**

Cincinnati-based HHE “helps [workers] and employers learn whether health hazards are present at their workplace and recommends ways to reduce hazards and prevent work-related illnesses.”<sup>3</sup> HHE provides a free service by investigating a variety of potential health hazards that could make employees sick, such as physical exposures, such as hazardous particulates, biological exposures, and chemical exposures to substances, such as

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amsea.org/post/urgent-action-needed-protect-amsea-s-life-saving-training-from-funding-cuts>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/divisions-offices/field-studies-engineering.html>

solvents and fumes, vapors and gases. For example, in the wake of the Maui County, Hawaii, wildfires on August 8, 2023, HHE assisted the emergency response by evaluating potential exposures to firefighters and other first responders. Over the years, this program has provided services to employers in all 50 states.

**Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP)**

The FFFIPP investigates the cause of line-of-duty deaths (LODD) and makes recommendations, which are sent to the nation’s fire services, about how to avoid similar incidents in the future. This program has conducted 770 investigations since 1998. FFFIPP reviews about 40% of all LODDs. The FFFIPP is a public health program. It does not enforce standards or place any blame.

In fact, the FFFIPP is now part of a new NIOSH Center for Firefighter Safety, Health, and Well-being.<sup>4</sup> The new Center puts into one accessible place all of NIOSH’s research and services for the fire services.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons stated above, we request that the President’s Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request includes at least \$366,800,000 for NIOSH and its programs. Thank you for your consideration, and we welcome the opportunity to address any further questions you or your staff may have.

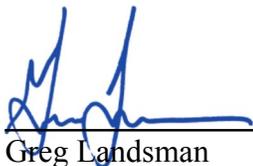
Sincerely,



Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



Michael Baumgartner  
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman  
Member of Congress

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/centers/firefighter-safety-and-health.html>