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Contact: Christopher Holmes  
(202) 208-7941  
[cholmes@osmre.gov](mailto:cholmes@osmre.gov)

## **OSMRE Funds National Academy of Sciences Study of Potential Health Risks Related to Surface Coal Mining in Central Appalachia** *\$1 million study responds to state request*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At the request of the State of West Virginia, [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSMRE) will fund an independent examination of existing research concerning the potential correlation between increased human health risks and living near surface coal mine sites in Central Appalachia. The \$1 million study will be conducted by the [National Academy of Sciences \(NAS\)](#) over a two-year period.

“This kind of project represents the best of the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act](#), which was [signed into law 39 years ago today](#)” said [OSMRE Director Joe Pizarchik](#). “West Virginia asked us in the Federal government for help. We wanted to do the best we could for the people, so we brought the National Academy of Sciences on board because they are one of the world’s most reputable scientific organizations. Good things happen when we work together.”

The State of West Virginia originally made a formal written request for the Obama Administration’s help in 2015. Under the agreement between OSMRE and the NAS, the Academy will independently choose a committee of 12 subject matter experts to examine a growing amount of academic research that relates to possible correlations between increased health risks as a result of living near surface coal mine operations.

The committee will identify gaps in the research and consider options for additional examination to address concerns about potential public health effects. The committee will not consider the occupational health aspects of workers at coal mines. While OSMRE will oversee the Cooperative Agreement with NAS, it will not have a role in the research, the development of the final report, or identification of any findings that may result from the study.

The experts will have backgrounds in areas such as (but not limited to) mining engineering, exposure science, epidemiology, public health, environmental medicine, statistics, and regulatory decision making. Experts will come from academia, state government agencies, industry and other non-governmental organizations. None of the experts participating in the NAS committee will be active members of the coal industry or any governmental agency that regulates coal mining.

The committee of experts will hold four town-hall styled hearings to gather information



from the public about the potential effects on human health associated with coal mining. The NAS committee will announce public meeting dates. OSMRE will share additional information as it becomes available.

The NAS study builds on on-going Administration efforts to assist communities impacted by surface coal mining, especially those in Appalachia. The [Power Plus](#) plan, which the [President proposed in his FY16 and FY17 budget requests](#), calls for investing in worker training and job creation, strengthening the health and retirement security of mineworkers and their families, and accelerating the clean-up of abandoned mine lands to remove impediments to economic development.

*The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and tribes. OSMRE's objectives are to ensure that coal mining activities are conducted in a manner that protects citizens and the environment during mining, to ensure that the land is restored to beneficial use after mining, and to mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines. For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau's Twitter feed [@OSMRE](#).*

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