

Office of the Governor

October 11, 2011

Mr. Jack Bedessem
Vice President
Wyoming Oil and Gas Industry Safety Alliance
Laramie, Wyoming 82070

Dear Jack and members of the Safety Alliance:

Thank you for the invitation to address you at the Safety Summit and Exposition. I apologize that I cannot attend in person. I am escorting a group of World War II veterans to Washington, D.C. The "Honor Flight" is an opportunity for World War II veterans to travel to Washington, D.C. I am honored to join the men (and a few women) who left Wyoming communities, sugar beet fields, the oil patches, coal mines, and ranches to protect those things we value most. Their bravery and conviction are inspiring and I am looking forward to walking with them at the National World War II Memorial, the Iwo Jima Memorial, and other locations of honor.

I believe that the soldiers from Wyoming—then and now—are among the hardest anywhere. For all the beauty and opportunity in Wyoming, it is a rugged place which makes us a tough stock. The weather isn't always perfect and it can take a while to get from place to place. Our economy doesn't produce many easy jobs. Life in Wyoming can be hard, it can sometimes be dangerous. But it is always rewarding.

Thank you to the Wyoming Oil and Gas Industry Safety Alliance, the Wyoming Contractors Association, and the Petroleum Association of Wyoming for your hard work in planning this event and the two before it. It is a testament to your collective commitment to safety to have two or three hundred of Wyoming's finest workers in attendance. This summit is important in highlighting safety in the workplace. More importantly, your summit addresses how safety is best achieved: through culture and leadership. When I first saw the theme of your conference, "Enhancing a Culture through Leadership" I was reminded of those veterans who looked out for one another, who taught one another, who created a team, who were on a mission.

There is a saying—there is safety in numbers. In Wyoming there aren't many "numbers." We're thankful for our population. We don't mind being outnumbered by antelope. The numbers that we cannot accept are the workplace injury and fatality rates. These are a threat to each one of us, to our families, our companies, our communities, and our State. I, like you, want the men and women who work in Wyoming to return home. And I want them to return home safely.

In enhancing a culture of safety through leadership, each of us has a responsibility. Those doing

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the hard labor must be ever aware of the worksite and lead by example. Supervisors must enforce safety rules and understand that allowing shortcuts comes at a cost. Industry, whether oil and gas, mining, transportation, construction, or any other must instill a culture of safety through training and best practices.

There are many ways to approach the problem: laws can be passed, rules can be written, fines can be levied. I remain unconvinced that these are the best ways to enhance a culture of leadership and safety. I say this because we don't yet fully understand the underlying causes.

We know that many workers are killed while driving, but why? Is it the number of shifts they've pulled? Are they new to Wyoming and unused to driving long and what some might characterize as "monotonous" stretches? Are drugs or alcohol involved? We don't fully understand. I am encouraged that WOGISA and the other industries are working hard to develop safety standards and best practices. We need to consider how we will monitor and measure the effectiveness of the solutions that industry brings forward.

I believe that we must understand the nature of the problem and the effectiveness of the solution. I support industries' efforts to improve a culture of safety. I believe we should focus on the prevention and awareness side before we get heavy handed. We must make sure that our safety standards and training efforts keep pace with our changing technologies. Our safety measures must be as modern as our development practices.

My office has been reviewing data on workplace injuries and fatalities. This is a project that carried over from the previous administration and has required a fair amount of perseverance. Data on workplace safety is not consistent across industries. The information available is often years old. I am not confident we have the full picture. We need to assure timely collection and analysis of data from all sources. We need to build trust in all partnerships and industry. The State and industry must see our efforts as collaborative.

I would like to thank the members of WOGISA for your commitment to safety and your willingness to partner with each other and the State. The focus you place on worker safety will help us make sure the men and women in your companies and who live next door to us come home safely.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew H. Mead". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M".

Matthew H. Mead
Governor