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# State of Utah

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### ABANDONED MINES – STAY OUT, STAY ALIVE!

Salt Lake City, Utah -- The unfortunate death of a 28-year-old Wyoming man in an abandoned Nevada mine underscores the dangers of exploring abandoned mine workings. The dangers present in that Nevada mine exist throughout the western United States. The Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program estimates that there are over 17,000 abandoned mines in Utah, many of which represent a tragedy waiting to happen.

“All of us are heartsick at the news,” said Luci Malin, administrator of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining’s Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program. “We extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Devin Westenskow. When we hear of such a tragedy we hope citizens will remember that abandoned mines are hazardous.”

Abandoned mines can be intriguing and seem to offer adventure. But they also offer a laundry list of potential life threatening injuries. “Most abandoned mines are over 50 years old and some are older than 100 years,” said Malin. “That means 100 years of deterioration. Rotten timbers are unstable, supports may give way and walls and roofs can collapse. My advice to anyone who finds an abandoned mine is do not enter.”

Other abandoned mine hazards include a lack of oxygen, poisonous gases, falling debris, water filled shafts, potential falls into deep shafts, and startled animals that may live inside. Absolute darkness makes these dangers even more hazardous.

As warmer weather approaches and people head outside to enjoy Utah’s back country they are more likely to stumble across an abandoned mine. “We hope that if you find an abandoned mine you will steer clear,” said Malin. “Abandoned mines aren’t playgrounds nor are they safe for recreationists to explore. Please heed our safety campaign motto: ‘Stay Out and Stay Alive! Abandoned Mines Are Dangerous.’”

For more information on abandoned mines visit our website at [www.ogm.utah.gov](http://www.ogm.utah.gov).

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