

## ABOUT ABANDONED MINES

*Abandoned mines are all over Nevada and present a danger to the community. Many people do not know much about these hidden hazards, but being uninformed may result in accidental injuries or death. Please be cautious in the desert: know the dangers in your surroundings. Protect yourself from falling into an abandoned mine.*



### *The Abandoned Mine Lands Program:*

\*The Abandoned Mine Lands Program, managed by the Nevada Division of Minerals and funded by the Nevada mining industry, focuses on securing hazardous abandoned or idle mine openings. Many of the mines are “orphans,” which means that they are located on open public lands (lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the U.S Forest Service) where there is no claimant or property owner. Securing “orphan” mines is the responsibility of the Division of Minerals, and they enlist the aid of groups and organizations such as the Girl Scouts of the USA to assist in securing the hazardous conditions. Abandoned mines can be difficult to see from far away, and many have caused serious injuries or deaths to unsuspecting four-wheelers, dirt-bikers, and explorers.

\*The Abandoned Mine Land Program’s motto is **“Stay Out and Stay Alive”**, which is used in all of their educational materials.



### *Safety in Numbers:*

\*Experts estimate that there are nearly 200,000 abandoned mines in Nevada from historical mining activity, about 50,000 of which may exhibit safety hazards to the public.

\*Abandoned mine hazards include: falls down inclined or vertical openings; rotted, decaying timbers; cave-ins; bad air; old, left behind explosives; poisonous snakes and spiders; disease-carrying rodents; and bats that can occasionally carry rabies.

\*Since 1971, when mine injury incidents were beginning to be recorded, there have been 3 deaths and 7 injuries in Clark County alone. Throughout the entire state of Nevada, there have been a total of 27 injuries and 15 deaths since the beginning of the program.

\*The Division of Minerals ranks each abandoned mine hazard based on the mine’s location (1 to 5 points) and the type of hazard it is (1 to 5 points). For example, a 200 ft. deep shaft in close proximity to towns, public roads, and occupied structures warrants a higher point value than a 10 ft. deep shaft located 10 miles from the nearest highway. The more points, the higher the potential risk the site is to the public.

\*Abandoned mines are secured through various methods. Fences constructed using metal t-posts and barbed wire, posting mine openings with warning signs, and backfilling are some of the methods used according to guidelines established by the Division of Minerals. “Orphan” mine openings are often secured with the help of community volunteers.

### *Finding Abandoned Mines:*

\*If you see an unfenced or vandalized mine, here are some things to remember:

1. **DO NOT** go exploring in the shaft! It sounds like fun to be on the inside of a mine, but *it is very dangerous*.
2. **DO NOT** throw rocks down the shaft or tamper with it in any way. Animals like owls, bats, and tortoises often make their homes in orphaned mines, and they should be left undisturbed.
3. *Leave the area* and tell your friends to stay away from the site. The less people around these unmarked mines, the fewer statistics there will be.



4. Call the Division of Minerals and alert them of the mine **IMMEDIATELY**:

Las Vegas Office  
2030 E. Flamingo Rd.  
Suite 220  
Las Vegas, NV 89119  
(702) 486-4343  
Fax: (702) 486-4345

Carson City Office  
400 W. King St.  
Suite 106  
Carson City, NV 89703  
(775) 684-7040  
Fax: (775) 684-7052

### ***Brief History of Mining in Nevada:***

\*Mining as known in Nevada began in 1849, when gold was discovered in Gold Canyon near the town of Dayton. Prospectors working their way upstream to find the source of the gold discovered silver, and that discovery became known as the Comstock Lode.



\*There are accounts of Mexican, Spanish, and Native Americans mining the areas in Nevada's mountains for precious minerals like obsidian, quartz, agate, opalite, and precious metals gold and silver. Mormon settlers also found lead deposits in 1856 a few miles west of Las Vegas.

\*Mining in Nevada continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nevada is the leading producer of gold in the United States and the fourth largest producer of gold in the world following South Africa, Australia and China. Nevada continues to retain the title of "Silver State" and produces significant quantities of copper, barite, gypsum, molybdenum, limestone, and aggregate.

\*Miners from as far back as early 20<sup>th</sup>-century explorers camped out near the metal and ore deposits, creating camps, towns and cities. Some of the mine openings had large head frames and ore bins. These are recognizable against the horizon and they are considered *historical artifacts*, so ***passersby are encouraged not to touch them***. These miners also left behind some of their belongings, like old beds, cans, and medicine jars. *Please do not mistake them*

*for trash*: they are considered historical objects, too, and **must be left undisturbed!**

### ***Additional Sources Cited:***

\*Nevada Geology Quarterly Newsletter: <http://www.nbmng.unr.edu/dox/nl/nl20.htm>

\*Photos by Eric Shalita

**For More Information, contact the Division of Minerals or log onto their official Website:**

<http://minerals.state.nv.us/>

### **NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*My name is Jessica, and I am a Senior Girl Scout from the Girl Scouts of Frontier Council in Las Vegas, NV. This pamphlet, along with securing three orphaned mines with the help of the Division of Minerals and a group of volunteers, was done to help me earn my Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting, during the summer of 2007. The Gold Award exhibits the Scout's leadership and improves her community.*

*For more information on my Gold Award project or how you can become involved in our Girl Scouting community, visit our Website <http://frontiercouncil.org> or contact Girl Scouts of Frontier Council:*

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