

Workforce

Background

The commercial explosives industry employs more than 15,500 workers throughout the United States and supports just over 60,000 jobs. Commercial explosives have a total economic impact of more than \$19 billion to the U.S. economy. Commercial explosives are used in all 50 states and are essential to our modern way of life.

Reduce ATF Background Check Times

Workers in the commercial explosives industry must undergo an ATF background check through the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Currently ATF explosives background checks take on average three months to process.¹ This lengthy wait occurs even though in 2023 there were over 28 million total NICS background checks with just over 0.33% accounting for individuals in the commercial explosives industry.² IME fully supports employees being properly vetted. However, lengthy processing times can be a deterrent to individuals entering the commercial explosives industry. This creates significant challenges recruiting qualified workers who oftentimes will seek alternative employment due to the delays and uncertainty. In 2023, ATF announced an effort to modernize federal regulations for commercial explosives to better reflect today's business environment.

Ask: Congress should ensure ATF includes the following as they seek to update their regulations.

- Background checks for employees in the commercial explosives industry should be expedited and have the option to be filed online.
- Employee clearance records should be portable from company to company.
- Long-time employees should have access to a timely relief process should an issue be flagged when undergoing background check renewals.
- Subcontractors, temporary workers, and interns who might be handling explosives should be background checked and cleared as Employee Processors under a company's federal explosives license.

Incentivize the Workforce of the Future

Despite increased safety, training and recruitment efforts, workforce shortages are acute at every level of the commercial explosives industry from manufacturing to transport to final use.

Ask: Congress should enact legislation to support a future commercial explosives workforce.

- **Mining Engineers**
 - Support H.R. 2685/S. 912, the *Mining Schools Act of 2023*, legislation which would provide grants to mining schools to recruit and educate future mining engineers.
- **Truck Drivers**
 - Support H.R. 2450, the *Strengthening Supply Chains Through Truck Driver Incentives Act of 2023* and H.R.471, the *SHIP IT Act*, legislation which would provide incentives to attract and retain truck drivers.

¹ <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/current-processing-times>

² https://www.fbi.gov/filerepository/nics_firearm_checks_month_year_by_state.pdf