

Mingo/Wyoming Risk Assessment Survey Results

Respondents: 256 total, out of 605 households invited to participate, evenly divided between genders, average age 49, mostly long-term residents. Slightly over half had some tie to the coal industry within their families. Results were separated based on whether they had these ties or not. Answers of Agree and Strongly Agree or Disagree and Strongly Disagree are lumped together.

- “The economic benefits associated with coal and coal waste impoundments outweigh the risks.” Among those without ties to the coal industry, 48% disagreed with this statement and only 10% agreed; even among those with such ties, 38% disagreed and 24% agreed.
- In evaluating risks from: accidents at home, accidents on the job, coal waste impoundments, coal trucks, abandoned mine sites, active mine sites, hazardous chemicals from mining, hazardous chemicals in watershed and water supply, oil and gas exploration and drilling, flooding and flash flooding, other natural hazards (winter storms, tornadoes, etc) and other man-made hazards, the highest perceived risk was from flooding—listed as a natural hazard but widely perceived to be exacerbated by strip mining. The second highest was coal trucks, and then abandoned mine sites. Even among those with industry ties, non-coal- related items were generally perceived as less risky.
- There was a huge discrepancy between those with and without ties to the industry in whether they were aware that they live near a coal waste impoundment (80% versus 52%). However, knowledge of emergency response procedures was only a little higher (12% versus 6%) among those with coal industry ties. Adding in the Don’t Know responses to this question yields 83/89% of respondents who say they don’t know about these plans.
- “People dread living near the impoundments.” Interestingly, those with ties agreed by a slightly higher margin—67% versus 63%.
- Again, “The economic benefits outweigh the risks.” Of those with ties, this time 22% agreed and 40% disagreed; of those without, the numbers are similar, 41% to 20%.
- “I know about the emergency response procedures in my community if the local impoundment were to rupture in the future.” A whopping 89% of those without ties and 83% of those with, either disagreed with this statement or said they didn’t know.
- “I have trust in the coal company.” Only 22% of those with ties and 11% of those without agreed with this one.
- “The coal company should protect property values in communities downstream of the coal waste site.” 86% agreement among those with ties, 94% among those without such ties.
- “The mining industry should explore other (cleaner) technologies to wash coal.” Of those with ties, 61% agreed, but among those without these ties, agreement jumped to 81%.
- “Coal sludge is not hazardous.” A mere 8% of those with ties and 6% of those without agreed with this, while 77% of those with ties and 78% of those without disagreed.
- “Our home purchases distilled and bottled water.” 71% of those with ties and 63% of those without agreed. Perhaps those with the ties are more likely to be able to afford it.