

## **Abstract**

After being nearly-eradicated by the 1969 Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, coal worker's pneumoconiosis is resurging at unprecedented rates—and predominantly in Central Appalachia's former company-owned coal towns. Seeking to address social determinants of health less reported on in existing black lung research, this article explores how systems present-day coal operators use to dodge accountability for worker's health and undermine public policy protections mirror behaviors exhibited by company town operators 100 years ago. Using the epidemic's epicenter, Harlan, Kentucky, as a case study, this article ultimately argues that the 1969 Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act failed to eradicate black lung because the policy, albeit largely successful, does not fully deter 'outlaw operating'—a modern practice rooted in the region's longstanding history of coal operators who deny accountability for workers' health.