



Chris McCrory Cronkite News

With estimated 100K abandoned shafts to find and seal off, Arizona's only 2 inspectors hope their efforts can help prevent more accidents

Jerry Tyra started working underground in 1960, drilling ore samples to help mine companies figure out whether to develop a mine site. ■ Since 2007, the 75-year-old has been doing a different kind of exploration: scouring the state for the thousands of abandoned mines some of his former employers may have left scattered throughout the Arizona desert. When he finds one, Tyra uses wire and metal posts to fence it off, placing warning signs on the wire. ■ "I get my map programs out, and I just pick a township," he said, standing near the edge

Jerry Tyra fits the classic image of an Old West sheriff: silver hair, a straw cowboy hat and a cigarette often between his lips. But as one of Arizona's only two abandoned-mine supervisors, Tyra is protecting people from a menace created during the Old West: ore mines, such as this one, abandoned in the state.

NICOLE NERI/CRONKITE NEWS

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2019 Arizona abandoned mines

Clipped By:
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Sep 14, 2024