

Mining Accident News No.0917

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Friday 5 June 2009

China landslide 'buries dozens'

Extract from BBC News Online, UK

A landslide in south-western China has buried nearly 60 people, state media have reported.

Three survivors have been pulled out from under the rocks and two dead bodies found, Xinhua news agency said.

Fifty mine workers and nine residents were initially thought buried by the landslide, in an iron-ore mining area of the Chongqing region.

China's mining industry has a poor safety record, with thousands of deaths reported every year.

The landslide happened in a mountainous area of Wulong county at around 1500 (0700 GMT), Xinhua said.

The news agency said millions of cubic metres of rock flooded a valley, burying an iron ore plant and six houses in Tiekuang township, and cutting power and communication lines.

An official for the Chongqing government said rescue workers, doctors and digging equipment had arrived on the scene.

The three injured survivors were taken to hospital in a serious condition, Xinhua said.

It is not clear what caused the accident, but an official with the Chongqing work safety supervision bureau told Associated Press news agency that the landslide did not appear to have been caused by the work at the mine.

CHINA'S WORST MINE DISASTERS

Feb 1950: Yiluo mine, Henan province - 174 dead

May 1960: Laobaidong mine, Shanxi province - 684 dead

Sept 2000: Muchonggou mine, Guizhou province - 162 dead

Nov 2004: Chenjiashan mine, Shaanxi province - 166 dead

Feb 2005: Sunjiawan mine, Liaoning province - 210 dead

Nov 2005: Dongfeng mine, Heilongjiang - 171 dead

Aug 2007: Xintai City, Shandong province - 181 dead

Dec 2007: Rui Zhiyuan mine, Shanxi province - 105 dead

Sept 2008: Tashan mine, Shanxi province - 254 dead

Coal mine gas leak kills 7 in northwest China

Extract from Xinhua, China

URUMQI - Seven people have been confirmed dead in a coal mine gas leak Friday in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, a source with the mine said.

The accident at the Dahuangshan mine in Changji Hui autonomous prefecture, about 100 kilometers from the regional capital Urumqi, occurred at around 7 p.m. Friday, the source said.

The coal mine is owned by the sixth agriculture division of the Xinjiang Construction Corps, a paramilitary organization based in Xinjiang.

A Xinhua reporter is on the way to the site.

Saturday 6 June 2009

South Africa: 122 miners suspended after disaster

Extract from Independent Online, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa

Harmony Gold has suspended 77 staff and 45 contractors after more than 70 suspected illegal miners died in an underground disaster at one of its Welkom mines last month.

The employees were suspected of helping the illegal miners to get underground through Harmony's disused Eland shaft, where a total of 82 bodies were recovered this week following a suspected inferno underground.

Harmony Gold spokesperson Marian van der Walt said most of the suspended employees had either provided the illegal miners with supplies underground or accepted bribes to help them get underground in the first place.

The tragedy has also put question marks on the state of security in the country's mines, particularly the disused ones.

The SA Chamber of Mines, which has admitted that it is aware of the problem, was unable to estimate just how big it is. The Department of Minerals and Energy couldn't say either.

There have been more than 100 reported illegal mining incidents in the past two years, and authorities estimate that about 1500 illegal miners have been arrested in the past year.

Harmony confirmed that 294 illegal miners, known as zama zamas, have been arrested at its disused mines in the past year.

Tim Hughes, programme head at the SA Institute for International Affairs, said proper legislation was needed to regulate small-

scale, informal and commercial mines to avoid further disasters.

"One of the problems with the way this tragedy is being depicted is that these people are seen as criminals," he said. "To call them criminal miners is really to lose the point, because these people are criminalised by syndicates or circumstances."

Hughes said one of the factors exacerbating informal or illicit mining was the fact that when production costs were high, mining companies concentrated on high-value operations, thereby neglecting the other shafts, which are used by the informal miners.

He also said the increase in the scale of illicit mining could have been driven by the soaring bullion price.

"What South Africa needs to deal with this situation - which is prevalent in many African countries - is proper legislation that recognises small-scale mining, whether formal or informal, and define where responsibility and jurisdiction of mining companies lie," he said.

Declan Vogt, manager of mining competency area at the CSIR, said that in the case of illegal mining where blasting was used to extract gold from the ground, the key risks were fire and rockfalls.

"Wood is used extensively for support, and if it starts burning, it can use up all the available oxygen. There are also direct risks from burning," he said.

Free State police spokesman Superintendent Sam Makhele said the process of identifying the victims would continue for the next few days at the state mortuary in Welkom.

He said 34 bodies had been identified by noon on Friday.

Harmony's Van der Walt said: "Our responsibility ends with the health and

safety of our employees, and we have done everything possible, but with criminal mining we cannot do it alone."

Lesiba Seshoka, spokesperson for the National Union of Mineworkers, said the Department of Minerals and Energy should have closed the Harmony mine until investigations into the cause of the illegal miners' deaths had been completed.

"We believe that these people used normal entrance from Harmony to gain access into the shaft, and that the mine had done nothing about it because some of its executives were going to benefit from the proceeds from those illegal miners," he claimed.

"This is a form of gold piracy taking place in the mines where greedy bosses rake in millions from vulnerable poor miners who have lost their jobs."

Two miners trapped, four owners flee after mine collapse in S China

Extract from Xinhua, China

GUANGZHOU, - Rescuers on Saturday are searching for two miners trapped in a porcelain clay mine in southwest China's Guangdong Province, after the mine shaft collapsed on Friday, while police is hunting four mine owners who are at large.

Rescuers said that they can still test life signs under the mine, and located that they are nine meters underground.

The two miners were identified as a 45-year-old man and a 47-year-old woman, both surnamed Zhong.

The mine owned by four private businessmen in Yongguang Village, Zijin County, was found to be illegal. The four ran away after the accident happened at 9:00 p.m. Friday.

Quote of the week

By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be boss and work twelve hours a day.

Robert Frost, English writer

Monday 8 June 2009

Two dead, 10 missing in Ukraine coal mine accident

Extract from The Press Association & AFP

DONETSK, Ukraine — Two miners were killed and 10 reported missing Monday in a coal mining accident in eastern Ukraine, a government official said, as relatives kept a tearful vigil at the mine.

"Two bodies were found," a spokesman for the ministry, Igor Krol of the country's emergency situations ministry told AFP.

Out of 51 miners working in the mine at the time of the accident, 38 had able to escape to the surface, he said.



A rescue team arrives at the site of the Skochinsky coal mine

"One injured person was brought back to the surface by rescue workers and the fate of 10 miners remains unknown," Marina Nikitina, a spokeswoman for the State Committee on Workers' Safety, said earlier.

She indicated there seemed to have been an eruption of methane gas three times above the accepted safety norm.

Some of the other escapees had been hospitalised and all work at the mine had been suspended, she added.

Earlier reports had spoken of 53 miners and 12 missing, and rescue workers at the entrance to the mine told AFP they had found a third body but the authorities have not yet confirmed this.

"Work is underway to ventilate the shafts and reduce the presence of methane," the mine's director Valeri Miminovtchili told reporters.

"I hope we will have managed to clear the wreckage and ventilate the mine in 24 to 36 hours," he added.

The explosion happened early Monday at the Skochinsky mine in Donetsk, a city in eastern Ukraine, after a discharge of gas 1,300 metres (4,265 feet) underground, according to Nikitina.

Work using explosives had been underway in the mine's shafts just hours before the disaster, Interfax news agency reported.

A government inquiry has already been set up to look into what caused the accident, led by Coal Minister Viktor Poltavets, who is expected at the scene, according to a mine official.

Relatives of the missing miners sat outside the entrance waiting for news of their loved ones, some of them reduced to tears.

Some had rushed to the scene dressed as they were at the time the news reached them: in slippers and dressing gown. One young girl even turned up in barefoot.

"My husband, Sasha, is down there. It's only been a week since he was hired at Skochinsky," said Lina, a 24-year-old who was at the scene with her mother-in-law.

"We were so happy, it is a solid mine where people are well paid," she added.

"We don't know what to think, they should tell us something at least. I can't even cry because I don't want to upset her," she added quietly, glancing across at her mother-in-law.



Relatives of one of the missing miners wait for news outside the Skochinsky coal mine

"Everything will be okay, don't you worry," she told her.

Ukraine's coal mines are considered among the most dangerous in the world, with many poorly financed and employing outdated Soviet-era equipment.

The country's coal industry, concentrated in the east of the country, has been rocked with repeated deadly tragedies in recent years.

Most of the mining disasters have been blamed on explosions caused by build-ups of methane gas.

Monday's accident came exactly one year after a blast at the Karl Marx mine in Yenakiyev, 60 kilometres (40 miles) east of Donetsk, killed 12 miners and sparked a massive effort to save 24 more trapped deep underground.

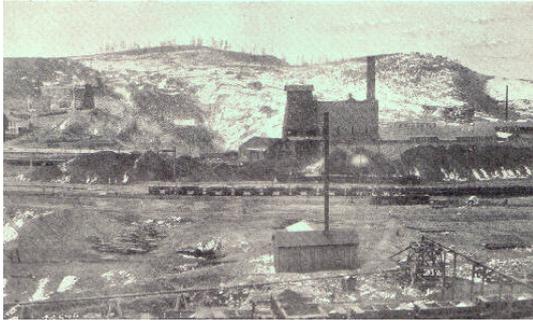
In November 2007 a gas explosion at the Zasiadko mine killed 101 miners in the worst-ever accident of its kind in this former Soviet republic.

The state-run Skochinsky mine itself is considered one of the most hazardous work environments in Ukraine due to the high levels of methane in the shafts, which stretch underground for several hundred kilometres.

The mine opened in 1975 and employs between 3,000 and 4,000 people. In the mine's worst accident, 63 miners died and

51 were injured after a gas leak in April 2004.

This week in mining accident history

Date Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)
<p>4 June 1901</p> <p>Chapin Mine, Michigan Underground metal mine</p> <p>Source: <i>The Marion Daily Star, Marion, OH 4 Jun 1901</i></p>
Incident
<p>Iron Mountain, Michigan Chapin Mine Explosion June 4, 1901</p> <p>Quantity of Powder Lets Go in the Ludington Shaft of the Chapin Mine Near Iron Mountain, Michigan, with Terrible Results</p> <p>Iron Mountain, Mich. June 4 - - By the explosion of a quantity of powder and the suffocating fumes that followed, eight men were killed early today in the seventh level of the Ludington shaft of the Chapin mine. Suddenly there was rumble and smoke began pouring from the mouth of the shaft. Rescuers hurried into the mine as soon as the smoke had cleared sufficiently and found the eight miners all of whom had been working in that section of the shaft lifeless.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Shaft No.7, Chapin Mine, circa 1898</p> <p>The cause of the explosion has not been determined. Nearly thirty children are rendered fatherless by the accident. Only one man was disfigured, as if by an explosion, and he was slightly; the others were completely covered by black powder soot. The men were using a powder thawing machine, and it is thought they neglected to supply it with powder. It is believed that the machine became red hot, set fire to the dynamite and the men were stricken down by the</p>

deadly fumes before they could escape. The town is in mourning and work at the mine is at a standstill.

The victims are: Antonia Fannema, John Amone, Bishop Passtri [or Passiri], John Milano, Louis Tassi, John Bertelli, Rinildo Ausnino and a Pole, name unknown.

USA: Worker killed in accident at NV mine

Extract San Diego Union Tribune, San Diego, CA, USA

RENO, Nev. — Newmont Mining Corp. says a veteran employee was killed in an accident at a northern Nevada gold mine.

The company says 57-year-old Steve Halverson of Spring Creek died Saturday when a flatbed pickup truck backed over him at the North Lantern Pit in Eureka County, about 25 miles northwest of Carlin.

Halverson was pronounced dead at the scene.

Newmont's Nevada operation's executive Tom Kerr says Halverson was a drill operator and had worked for the Denver-based mining company for 22 years.

Officials say mining operations in the area where the accident happened have been suspended while state and federal safety officers investigate.

Wednesday 10 June 2009

WA: Miner trapped underground

Extract from WA today, Perth, WA, Aus

A BHP Billiton employee is trapped in an underground refuge chamber at WA's north-eastern goldfields after a rock fall.

A BHP media spokesperson confirmed there had been an incident at Nickel West's Leinster Operation's Perseverance Underground Mine this afternoon.

She said the worker who was underground was safe and uninjured.

USA: Mining accident leaves one man dead

Extract from The Courier-Journal, KY, USA

Foreman killed in Harlan mine accident

A 58-year-old mine foreman with 40 years mining experience died Wednesday, June 10, in a mining accident in Harlan County, according to a news release from the state Energy and Environment Cabinet.

Wilson R. Meade, of Smith, was working 3,900 feet underground when he was struck by a flat car loaded with concrete blocks, causing his fatal injuries, the news release stated.

The accident occurred at 7:15 p.m. at D&C Mining Corp.'s Mine No. 1 in Cranks, in Harlan County. Meade was taken to the Harlan Appalachian Regional Hospital where he was pronounced dead, the news release stated.

Meade, a section foreman at the mine, was crushed against conveyor equipment when a trailer loaded with concrete blocks being used for construction rolled down a slope and hit him, according to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA's) preliminary report.

Another employee was using a scoop to pull the trailer's load of blocks, and the chain to the trailer came loose, MSHA said.

Officials from the Kentucky Office of Mine Safety and Licensing are investigating. The mine will remain closed until further notice.

This is the second mining-related fatality in Kentucky in 2009, according to the news release.

Thursday 11 June 2009

WA: Trapped Goldfields miner rescued

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

A miner trapped by a rock fall at a BHP Billiton mine in Western Australia's Goldfields has been rescued.

The miner, trapped 1,000 metres underground, has been brought to the surface.

The miner became trapped after an earth tremor caused a rock fall at BHP Billiton's Perseverance Mine in Leinster, 370 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie.

He was able to reach an eight-man safety rescue chamber, which had clean air, water, bathroom facilities and a phone line.

The man stayed in contact with the surface and it is understood he is not seriously injured.

Rescue teams had been working to clear a way to the chamber and the president of Nickel West, Wayne Isaacs, said they worked faster than expected.

The collapsed section of the mine will remain closed but other sections not affected will progressively reopen throughout the next 24 hours.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

R

rise A vertical shaft dug upwards from a lower passage.



- Ed.

19th Annual NSW DPI Mechanical Engineering Safety Seminar
WatervieW Convention Centre, Sydney Olympic Park
Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 August 2009

For further information telephone 02 4931 8888, email to minesafety.seminars@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit our website at www.nsw.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/resources/seminars-and-conferences

19th Annual NSW DPI Electrical Engineering Safety Seminar
WatervieW Convention Centre, Sydney Olympic Park
Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 November 2009

For further information telephone 02 4931 8888, email to minesafety.seminars@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit our website at www.nsw.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/resources/seminars-and-conferences