

Mining Accident News No.0918

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Thursday 11 June 2009

WA: Relief over successful mine rescue

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Mine workers have expressed relief over the rescue of a colleague trapped one kilometre underground in the West Australian Goldfields.

Rescue crews have freed a 38-year-old man who had been trapped in the mine for 16 hours.

An earth tremor caused a rock fall last night at BHP Billiton's Perseverance Nickel mine at Leinster, 370 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie.

The man made it to a safety refuge chamber where rescuers found him and brought him to the surface.

Doctors cleared him of any serious injury.

Peter Mears works at the site and says it is a tight knit community.

Everybody's there for safety if you know what I mean," he said.

"It's a hostile environment no matter where you are in the mining industry and everybody tries to look out for their mates."

Mine inspectors are at the site and BHP hopes to open the areas not affected by the collapse in about 24 hours.



Peter Mears says the miners colleagues are relieved he has been rescued and is safe and well. (ABC)

Inquiry

The rockfall and subsequent rescue have prompted BHP-Billiton to launch an investigation of its engineering practices.

Wayne Isaacs, who is the President of BHP subsidiary Nickel West says the company will also investigate the source of the tremor.

"Our seismic monitoring activity has been able to pinpoint that to within 30 metres of the fall," he said.

Mr Isaacs accepts the company has a bad record and says it is working with the state government to improve it.

"We definitely feel that the current spate of safety incidents is clearly unacceptable," he said.

The rescued worker is resting in a Perth hotel and will be re-united with his family later today.

The Australian Mining Workers Union has called for a senate inquiry into safety practices at WA mine sites.

The union's WA Secretary Steve McCartney says BHP-Billiton should have been better prepared for this kind of incident.

"Something so small, you would think there'd be some preparatory work done that this sort of stuff would not put people in jeopardy," he said.

"It's the year 2009, the company should have something in place to stop this from happening."

This week in mining accident history

Date
Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)

19 June 1914

Hillcrest Mine, Hillcrest, Alberta, Canada
Underground coal mine

Source: *Wikipedia & www.coalking.ca*

Incident

The Hill Crest Mine Disaster

Methane and coal dust explosion

The worst coal mining disaster in Canada occurred in Hillcrest, Alberta, on Friday June 19, 1914. At the time it was the world's third worst mine disaster. The accident had a profound effect on the town of Hillcrest Mines, which in 1914 had a population of about 1,000. A total of 189 men died, about half the mines workforce. 130 women were widowed and 400 children left fatherless.



A group of miners going on shift

Many of the victims were buried in a mass grave at the Hillcrest Cemetery. Condolences came from across the country, including a brief

message from King George V.

The workers were members of the United Mine Workers of America and among the other mining communities in the Crownsnest Pass -- Burmis, Leitch Collieries, Maple Leaf and Bellevue -- Hillcrest was considered to be the safest, best run operation of them all. There were 377 men on the Hillcrest Mine payroll and the average wage was a respectable \$125.00 a month. The Hillcrest catastrophe occurred just before the maelstrom of World War I, and perhaps as a consequence, was forgotten by the Canadian public.



Crowd gathering at the mine after explosion

Operations at Hillcrest Mine continued until 1939.

A monument to the Hillcrest mine disaster and the lives lost has been placed at the Hillcrest cemetery. In 1990, Canadian folk-singer James Keelaghan recorded *Hillcrest Mine*, one of his best-known songs.

WA: Mine incident could have ended in tragedy, Minister

Extract from The West Australian, Perth, WA, Aus

Mines Minister Norman Moore today admitted that an incident on a Goldfields mine that left a 38-year man trapped underground for 16 hours could have ended in tragedy.

As the miner, whose name has not been released, prepares to re-unite with his wife and four-year-old son, Mr Moore spoke of his relief at news that the man had been rescued.

"We are relieved obviously that the miner trapped has been able to get out safely," Mr Moore said.

"At the moment the mines department have an inspector on site investigating the circumstances surrounding the event.

"The union has been making comments about mine safety for a long time. I'm in the process of putting together a whole new strategy in respect to mine safety to be presented to Cabinet in the near future."

BHP's Nickel West president Wayne Isaacs said the man was one of 70 workers at the site, but just one of two who was loading ore at the time an earthquake caused a rockfall about 2.30pm yesterday.

Mr Isaacs said he had not once worried that the incident could turn into a disaster similar to the Beaconsfield Mine collapse in 2006, when two miners were trapped for two weeks and one man was killed.

"I quickly knew we had everybody accounted for and knew where everybody was physically, and were safe and unharmed," he said.

He said the worker had never been in danger and had access to food, water, several days' worth of compressed oxygen and air and toilet facilities.

He took refuge in an underground shelter while the other worker was outside the vicinity where the quake hit.

The lit safety chamber is large enough for eight men and is similar to underground staffrooms, so the men could move around easily.

Mr Isaacs said the worker was an experienced operator who had worked at the Leinster site for three years.

He walked free from BHP Billiton's Perseverance mine, 370km north of Kalgoorlie, about 7am today.

The fly-in, fly-out worker was uninjured and was assessed by a doctor at Leinster.

Throughout the ordeal the man had been in contact with his wife by telephone and BHP

Billiton said he had sheltered in the purpose-built refuge station about 100m from the cave-in.

"His wife was very, very pleased she had the ability to talk to him," Mr Isaacs said.

He said a small rescue team worked through the night using end loaders and remote sensing equipment to remove 400 tonnes of debris.

"We moved the material early this morning and got to a position where we had it stabilised," he said.

Mr Isaacs said the rescued man was in good spirits and helped the removal from the inside.

"He was very calm and aware ... and knew the right thing to do and that people had to take their time to do it safely," he said.

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union state secretary Steve McCartney has criticised BHP Billiton over the incident.

"BHP is fast gaining a reputation for putting profit before the lives and livelihoods of WA workers," he said.

"Workers continue to be at risk at BHP mines yet this company fails to act."

Mr Isaacs said the union's spray was "completely inaccurate".

"Safety is foremost and obviously our safety systems are well planned," he said.

"We were able to utilise these and not only was the person rescued quite safe, (but) he was also relatively comfortable."

A Department of Mines and Petroleum spokeswoman said an inspector from the department's resources and safety division was at the site.

The nickel mine at Leinster produces 35,000 to 40,000 tonnes of nickel in concentrate a year, according to BHP Billiton figures.

The mine is part of a system of nickel mines, concentrators, smelters and a refinery spread across southern WA.

BHP Billiton's Nickel West operations employ about 3600 people.

It is the third largest producer of nickel concentrate in the world, supplying about 16 per cent of global nickel demand.

It exported \$4.49 billion worth of nickel in the 2006/07 financial year.

Africa: Eight illegal miners die in rock fall

Extract from Lusaka Times, Zambia

Eight suspected illegal miners have died after being trapped by rock falls in a tunnel at Nkana Central shaft slag dump belonging to Chambeshi metals.

The eight bodies were discovered after a survivor of the accident, who was seriously injured, informed a passerby, who then reported the incident to the mine police.

The deceased are suspected to have gone to mine cobalt and copper remains from the underground metal mine.

Chambeshi Metals Plc Manager for Safety Occupational, Health and Environment, Daniel Chihili who was at the scene supervised the digging out of the eight bodies.

Mr. Chihili cautioned the general public to refrain from illegal mining pointing out that it could lead to untimely deaths.

A Nokia Cell Phone was recovered on one of the dead bodies, which was badly disfigured.

Friday 12 June 2009

Body of 11th coalminer found after east Ukrainian mine accident

Extract from The Financial, Tbilisi, Georgia

According to RIA Novosti, another body has been recovered from a coal mine in eastern Ukraine where 11 miners are now confirmed to have died as result of an accident on Monday, a local official said on June 12.

Two miners are still missing at the Skochinsky mine in the Donetsk region. More than 30 got out of the mine and were hospitalized with various injuries following what is thought to have been a gas explosion 1,250 meters below the surface.

"Rescuers have lifted to the surface the body of a miner that was found yesterday and have found one more person with no signs of life," a spokesman for the regional mining industry inspectorate said.

Ukrainian mines are considered extremely dangerous due to the use of obsolete equipment and numerous safety violations.

Qld: Unimin Lime fined over poor mining safety

The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation says that mine operator Unimin Lime has been fined over mining safety breaches.

On 20 May 2009 the mine operator pleaded guilty to breaches of obligations under the *Mining and Quarrying Safety and Health Act 1999* in the Brisbane Industrial Magistrates Court.

The prosecution followed an accident at the Riverton limestone mine 35km south-east of Texas, in South East Queensland on 26 September 2007 when a worker received serious injuries when the forklift truck he was operating rolled over on uneven ground.

The Unimin Lime was fined \$17,500 and was ordered to pay \$13,017.80 in investigation costs and \$1,500 for professional costs.

The department's Mine Inspectorate said since the incident the company has spent

some \$200,000 improving its safety and health systems.

Quote of the week

The wise man does at once what the fool does finally.

**Niccolo Machiavelli,
Renaissance philosopher, (1469 – 1527)**

Monday 15 June 2009

Committee: Fatal mine accident notes can stay secret

Investigation - Murray Energy sought info from Crandall Canyon probe.

Extract from The Salt Lake Tribune, USA

Utah Labor Commissioner Sherrie Hayashi will not be required to release handwritten notes and other materials she collected as the state's representative on a federal Mine Safety and Health Committee team investigating the 2007 Crandall Canyon mine disaster.

The State Records Committee ruled Thursday that the Utah Labor Commission can deny access to Hayashi's documents because the U.S. Attorney's Office is still conducting a criminal investigation into the disaster. Six miners were killed in a mine collapse Aug. 6, 2007. Ten days later, a second implosion of the mine's walls killed three rescuers and injured six.

Kevin Anderson, a Salt Lake City attorney representing the mine's co-owner, Murray Energy Corp., had asked the Records Committee to overturn a Labor Commission decision denying his request for Hayashi's copies of "80 or so" transcripts of interviews MSHA's disaster-investigation team conducted with people knowledgeable about the mine's operations. He also asked for about 100 pages of handwritten notes Hayashi took during the interviews and another 100 pages of written materials she

collected before MSHA released its report in July of 2008.

MSHA fined Murray Energy's subsidiary, Genwal Resources Inc., \$1.34 million for violations that contributed directly to the disaster. A month later, it recommended the U.S. Attorney conduct a criminal probe. Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., earlier had made a formal criminal referral as well, singling out the mine's chief supervisor, Layne Adair, and perhaps others for allegedly misleading MSHA about the severity of previous ground movements in the mine.

Adair was one of the witnesses interviewed by the MSHA investigators.

But Labor Commission attorney Alan Hennebold noted Thursday that Hayashi never received transcripts of the witness interviews, prompting Anderson to say "it never occurred to us that her participation in the investigation was such a joke." He suggested that "if she had picked up the phone and asked for the transcripts, [MSHA] would have provided them."

In a statement to the committee, Hayashi also said she did not go underground with other MSHA investigators or see drafts of their report. She said she received a copy of the final version and a detailed explanation of the findings just one day before the report was given to the victims' families.

"It's interesting to me that the reason Commissioner Hayashi was asked to participate in the investigation was at the insistence of [Gov. Jon Huntsman, Jr.], complaining about the state's inability to gain access to information MSHA had," Anderson said.

He said the mining company and Adair had requested the transcripts from MSHA through the federal Freedom of Information Act, but had been denied because of the criminal probe. Adair is pursuing the documents further through litigation in Washington, D.C. *The Salt Lake Tribune*

also has a pending request before MSHA for the witness interviews.

The Records Committee accepted the state and federal argument that MSHA's initial probe had evolved into the U.S. Attorney's investigation and, to protect its integrity, it was reasonable to keep those papers secret.

Anderson said he was uncertain whether to appeal the ruling to 3rd District Court.

Prosecution's Position

Carlie Christensen, first assistant U.S. attorney for Utah, said releasing documents now could help people facing criminal charges persuade witnesses to change their stories. It "creates the potential for senior management officials to intimidate lower-echelon employees into altering their previous statements or not speaking further with federal investigators," she wrote. "This concern is especially acute given that several people who spoke with federal investigators did so on the condition of confidentiality of their identities."

WA: Mining safety inquiry call following miner's 16 hour ordeal

THE AUSTRALIAN Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) has called for the inquiry in the wake of a rock fall at BHP Billiton's Perseverance Nickel Mine in Leinster.

The calls come after a miner was rescued after being trapped underground for 16 hours on the Goldfields.

The AMWU says the State Government has failed to improve mine safety and a Senate inquiry is needed.

Greens Senator Scott Ludlam says agrees claiming that someone needs to answer to the seven deaths in mines in Western Australia this year.

However Liberal Senator Chris Back says the Federal Government should stay out of it

as mine safety is under state jurisdiction in Western Australia

Tuesday 16 June 2009

Indonesia coal mine explosion traps 30 - official

Extract from Reuters

JAKARTA, - An Indonesian government official said on Tuesday that 24 (30 as at 17 June) miners had been trapped underground following an explosion in a coal mine in Sumatra island. An industry source said the coal mine was locally owned and produced only about 1,500 tonnes of coal a month.

Syafriwal, head of the government mining division in Sawahlunto city in West Sumatra, denied earlier reports that the accident was due to a landslide near a coal mine operated by state coal miner PT Bukit Asam (PTBA.JK).

"It's not a landslide, but an explosion at an underground mine," the official said.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

R

roasting The treatment of ore by heat and air in order to remove sulphur and arsenic, and, in early mining, to make ore more friable. The simplest form of roasting took place in kilns similar to lime kilns. Patent roasting furnaces included the 'Edwards' and 'Merton' roasters and the 'Huntington-Heberlien' and 'Dwight-Lloyd' blast roasters or sinters.



View of west and south sides of Merton furnace, Boscawell United Mine, (tin & copper) Cornwall, UK

- Ed.