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# Mining Accident News No.0919

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Wednesday 17 June 2009

## Qld: Mine deaths 'unacceptable'

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

The Queensland Mines Inspectorate (QMI) says the number of people killed in mining accidents over the past year is unacceptable.

This financial year has been one of the worst for fatalities on Queensland mine sites.

Four people have died in work accidents, which are the worst figure since 1996-97, when 10 people were killed.

The annual report by QMI says the results show the industry is failing to give health and safety sufficient priority and that the deaths are unacceptable.

The report says site executives must ensure all workers, including contractors, put health and safety first and that safety documents are taken seriously.

It says more needs to be done to ensure safety procedures are relevant to work situations and highlight possible hazards.

## China to step up safety checks on major state-owned coal mines

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

BEIJING: China will step up safety checks of major state-owned coal mines after a series of accidents in the better-equipped collieries this year, the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety said Wednesday.

The administration will launch a five- to seven-day campaign at the end of June, sending five inspection groups to 10 provinces including Hebei and Shanxi.

The teams will focus on potential gas explosion and floods.

On May 30, illegal mining practices led to the death of 25 miners in the Tonghua Coal Mine, which is affiliated with the state-owned Songzao Mining Bureau of Chongqing.

## Indonesian mine blast toll rises

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

A coal mine explosion on Indonesia's Sumatra island killed 17 miners and has

trapped 23 others underground, officials said.

The explosion on Tuesday may have been caused by a build-up of methane gas in the mine in the Parambahan area of West Sumatra province, a local government official said.

The miners have been trapped underground for more than 30 hours.

"The chance of survival is slim because most of the victims we have found up till the early morning were dead," said local police chief Jasman, who like many Indonesians uses one name.

Rustam Pakaya, the head of the health ministry's disaster centre, said in a telephone text message that nine people survived the accident, of whom eight were being treated at a local hospital.

Indonesia has rich mineral resources with many coal and other mines, but tends to use open-pit mining rather than underground mining.

**This week in mining accident history**

<b>Date</b> <b>Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)</b>
<b>23 June 1894</b> <b>Albion Colliery, Cilfyndd, Glamorgan, UK</b> <b>Underground coal mine</b> Source: <i>Rhondda Cynon TAF Library Service</i>
<b>Incident</b>
<b>Methane explosion, 290 deaths</b> Sinking of the Albion Colliery began in 1884 on the site of Ynyscaedudwg Farm. It was owned by the Albion Steam Coal Company and opened in August 1887. Production at the colliery quickly flourished and it's average weekly output soon reached 12,000 tons. This was the largest tonnage for a single shaft coal-winding colliery in the whole of South Wales. By 1893, 1,500 men and boys were employed at the Albion. The colliery's early years were relatively free of serious incidents but disaster struck on the afternoon of Saturday June 23rd 1894.

On that fateful afternoon the night shift was at work removing dust and repairing the roadways. At 3.50 p.m. two loud reports were heard above ground in quick succession. These were followed immediately by a charge of dust and smoke from the downcast shaft and then from the upcast shaft. The effects of the explosion were appalling. It caused the deaths of 290 men and boys, the worst mining disaster in South Wales to that date and only to be surpassed by the explosion at the Universal Colliery, Senghenydd in 1913. Few miners were brought out alive and the majority of them subsequently died of their injuries. Victims' bodies were taken to the hayloft of the pit's stables that acted as a temporary morgue and harrowing scenes of relatives looking for their family members by lantern light followed. Many of the bodies were badly mutilated and at least three of them taken from the hayloft had to be returned after being mistakenly identified. Another source of confusion was that nobody knew the number of men below ground when the explosion occurred.



Men walking to work at the Albion Colliery at 6.30am

An inquest was held at Pontypridd the following month. It immediately became apparent that there was a difference of opinion as to the cause and location of the explosion between the inspectors and professional witnesses on the one hand and the colliery owners on the other. Having heard the evidence the jury members concluded that an explosion of gas was accelerated by coal dust but they failed to reach agreement on other issues. The Government appointed a barrister Mr J Roskill to scrutinise the evidence. His report was presented to the Home Secretary in September 1894. Mr Roskill was of the opinion that the explosion was caused by the blasting of timbers which ignited an accumulation of gas and that in turn ignited the coal dust. The likelihood of this happening had increased because of dangerous and sloppy working

practices at the colliery. These included the blasting of timbers during shifts, inadequate watering of the mine to lay dust and new Saturday shift patterns that meant there was no interval for clearing dust between shifts.

Although the report recommended prosecuting the Albion Coal Company and various individuals, in the event proceedings were taken only against Phillip Jones, the manager and William Anstes, the chargeman, and fines of £10 and £2 imposed.

The colliery was reopened within two weeks of the explosion and it wasn't long before the miners lost in the disaster were replaced. The workforce grew to 1,735 by 1896, increasing to 2,589 by 1908. The following years saw a constant decline in the numbers of men employed at the pit and in 1928, the Albion Steam Coal Company went into liquidation. The Powell Dyffryn Steam Coal Company purchased its assets and it remained their property until the formation of the National Coal Board in 1947 at which time the workforce was just under 1000. By the time the colliery closed in 1966 the numbers had almost halved.

Thursday 18 June 2009

## 15 trapped in SW China coal mine flooding

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

GUIYANG, - The number of miners trapped in a flooded southwest China coal mine has risen to 15, said work safety authorities Thursday.

The flooding occurred at around 4 p.m. Wednesday at the Xinqiao coal mine in Qinglong County, Guizhou Province, when 30 people were working underground, said an official with the Guizhou Provincial Work Safety Administration.

Fifteen escaped unharmed.

Rescuers said the volume of floodwater was estimated at 1,000 to 3,000 cubic meters.

Rescue work is continuing, and cause of the accident is being investigated.

The mine has a designed capacity of 150,000 tonnes.

## Coal Mine Owner under Investigation in SW China for Delayed Report of Flood

*Extract from CRIENGLISH.com, Beijing, China*

Lu Wanli, owner of a coal mine in southwestern Guizhou Province where 15 workers were trapped by floods, was under investigation Thursday for failing to report the accident timely, said local authorities.

According to Lu, after the accident, he thought that he could rescue the trapped miners on his own.

The flood occurred at about 4 p.m. Wednesday at the Xinqiao coal mine, which is 95 kilometers from the county seat.

The police received a call from local residents at 3:25 a.m. Thursday saying that "more than ten miners were trapped underground." The mine didn't report the accident until two hours later.

Lu is cooperating with rescuers to save the miners. It isn't yet known what penalties he'll face.

"The law stipulates that those who delay reporting accidents shall be punished in line with the consequences" of their failure to report, said Jin Jiatao, a lawyer in Guiyang, Guizhou's capital.

"The punishment could be a fine, detention, or worse," he said.

## QLD chosen to manage new mine safety demonstration project

MINES and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson has announced that Queensland has scored an international coup by being selected to manage a major new mine safety demonstration project in China.

Robertson says that the state department's Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station (Simtars) has been appointed by the Commonwealth to manage the joint

Australia-China project at the Xuandong coal mine, 150km from Beijing.

The mine will showcase Australian mine safety technology, training and education in risk management; and adopt leading practices and technologies to minimise mine injuries and fatalities. The first team of Australian mine safety experts have already travelled there to undertake a safety audit - the first step towards Xuandong mine achieving world's best safety practice.

The Minister says that the lessons learned at Xuandong will set new standards for mine safety at other coal mines in China and around the world.

Robertson claims that winning the project was an international coup for Simtars, a world leader in cutting-edge mine safety and health technology, and the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

## **USA: Feds blame lack of rules for fatal mining accident**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Federal investigators say a lack of policies and procedures for operating underground locomotives contributed to a fatal accident at a Consol Energy operation in West Virginia last October.

A Mine Safety and Health Administration report issued Thursday says the McElroy Mine didn't require locomotive operators to tell each other where they were stopping. Nor were miners barred from working between locomotives and rail cars unless they knew the location of any trailing locomotive.

Fifty-eight-year-old Victor Goudy was pinned between a locomotive and a rail car that were struck by a second locomotive in October 2008.

Canonsburg, Pa.-based Consol did not immediately respond to a request for

comment. Consol operates mines in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Utah.

### **Quote of the week**

**Character builds slowly, but it can be torn down with incredible swiftness.**

**Faith Baldwin, American author (1893-1978)**

Friday 19 June 2009

## **Four trapped as coal mine floods in N China's Shanxi**

*Extract from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

TAIYUAN, - At least four miners were trapped after a colliery in Shanxi Province in north China was flooded Friday morning, the provincial coal industry regulator said.

Torrential floods gushed into a pit of the Xiguo Xinxing Coal Mine at about 2:20 a.m., trapping four miners working underground, according to the Shanxi Provincial Coal Mining Supervision Administration.

The mine is in a mountainous area more than 200 kilometers southwest of Taiyuan, the provincial capital.

The state-owned colliery, in Puxian County of Linfen City, has a designed annual production capacity of 300,000 tonnes.

Rescuers were trying to pump water from the shaft.

Saturday 20 June 2009

## **Ukraine: Coal miner trapped underground for three days rescued**

*Extract from [Kyiv Post](http://Kyiv Post), Kyiv, Ukraine*

A miner trapped under rubble at a coal mine in Donetsk region for three days has been rescued.

A collapse at the Yenakieve coal mine owned by the Ordzhonikidzevuhillia state enterprise occurred at a depth of 405 meters

on June 17, Emergencies Ministry spokesman Ihor Kril told Interfax-Ukraine.

"Rescuers brought him [the miner] to the surface in a satisfactory condition at around 0430 on Saturday," he said.

## USA: Miner dies in Weeks Island collapse

### Morton Salt facility cited with 13 violations during recent inspection

*Extract from The Daily Advertiser, Lafayette, LA, USA*

WEEKS ISLAND - A New Iberia man was killed Saturday afternoon when a portion of the underground salt dome at Weeks Island collapsed.

Iberia Parish Coroner Dr. James Falterman said the victim was 53-year-old Carlton Pennier. He was found dead at the scene, Falterman said. An investigation into the exact cause of death is ongoing.

No one else was injured in the collapse.

The accident occurred around 1:30 p.m. Saturday at the salt mine, owned and operated by Morton Salt. The company is a subsidiary of Dow Chemical Co.

According to a statement from Morton Salt, the collapse happened "without warning in a limited area of a regularly traveled underground roadway where the miner was working."

Amy Louviere, spokeswoman for the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, said the miner was operating a John Deere tractor to pull a grease wagon at the time of the collapse.

"A witness came on the scene and tried to locate the victim after seeing his hard hat and light lying beneath the tractor and trailer," Louviere said in an e-mail. "The witness was unable to get close due to loose roof and could not get a response from the trapped miner."

Capt. Richard Hazelwood of the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office said an estimated 75 tons of salt fell during the collapse.

Louviere said officials from the MSHA arrived at the scene around 3:30 p.m. Saturday. According to Morton Salt, a company Mine Rescue Team also was activated shortly after the incident.

The facility is in an isolated area off La. 83, near the Iberia/St. Mary parish line. An employee and his vehicle were stationed at the intersection of La. 83 and the privately owned Morton Road, which leads to the facility, on Saturday afternoon.

No one appeared to be allowed onto Morton Road for much of the afternoon. Someone driving a pickup at a high rate of speed stopped and briefly spoke to the man before leaving the site quickly, and the driver of a Suburban also came to the scene and left without driving onto the roadway.

There are no homes or other businesses for several miles around the site.

## USA: Kanawha miner hurt in accident

*Extract from Charleston Gazette, WV, USA*

CABIN CREEK, W.Va. -- A Kanawha County miner was injured Saturday when he was pinned by a piece of equipment.

The miner was transported from the mine by helicopter. It was unclear Saturday evening where he was taken.

The miner was pinned against the wall by a shuttle car in an underground mine around 2pm in the Speed Mine at the Coal Fork portal near Cabin Creek, according to the state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

No further information was available late Saturday evening.

*Editors update: As of Monday evening the coal miner remains in critical condition at*

*Charleston Area Medical Center's General Hospital.*

*Officials with the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) are investigating what caused the accident.*

Sunday 21 June 2009

## **S Africa: Gold Fields says 2 die at S Africa mine, 3 rescued**

*Extract from Reuters, USA*

JOHANNESBURG, - Gold Fields (GFIJ.J), the world's fourth-biggest gold producer, said on Sunday two workers were killed after a tunnel in an underground shaft caved in, trapping five miners.

The two were killed following an earth tremor of a magnitude of 3.5 on the Richter scale on Saturday morning.

The five miners were trapped when the ground fell as they were working in shaft number five of Gold Fields's Driefontein operation -- Africa's biggest gold mine.

South Africa, which has the world's deepest gold mines, has a dire safety record, and deaths from earth tremors are common in the mining industry as a whole. The incidents have led to temporary closure of shafts, denting production.

"Both of the remaining people are deceased, and their bodies have been recovered," Willie Jacobsz, a Gold Fields spokesman told Reuters.

"The entire mine has been closed for now, although it would not have been producing on Saturday evening or on Sunday anyway. We will know on Monday how long the mine will remain closed, based on a decision by the authorities."

The country's main mineworker's union gave a conflicting account of the incident at the mine located near Johannesburg.

Lesiba Seshoka, a spokesman for the National Union of Mineworkers, the country's biggest labour union, said 11 workers had been trapped at the shaft, but nine were saved.

"Two of the workers are dead, their bodies were brought to surface this morning, and nine were rescued," he told Reuters.

The Driefontein mine was hit by a tremor on June 13, which led to the death of two miners. Part of it was closed for investigations. It consists of several shafts and produced 928,000 ounces of gold in the firm's 2008 fiscal year.

Last year 168 miners died in South African mines and the government cracked down, urging the mining industry to focus on improving safety measures. It resorted to shutting mines temporarily for investigations whenever there was a fatality.

About 80 workers have died in mines so far this year.

Monday 22 June 2009

## **NSW: Miner hurt in Perilya mishap**

*Extract from ABC Online, Aus*

A 42-year-old contract employee at Broken Hill's Perilya mine has been airlifted to Adelaide after suffering serious injuries while working.

Neville Slater broke the toes on his right foot and injured his leg while operating mobile equipment on the 16th underground level of the mine on Friday afternoon.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service flew Mr Slater to the Flinders Medical Centre where his leg was put in a cast.

The assistant general manager of Perilya's Broken Hill operations, Bruce Byrne, says the incident is disappointing and the first serious injury to take place at the mine in more than nine months.

Mr Byrne says an internal investigation is already underway and he says the Department of Primary Industries has also been notified.

## Turkey: Poisonous mine fumes kill one, injure 3 persons

*Extract from Hürriyet, Turkey*

ZONGULDAK - The operator of an illegal mine was killed and three workers injured from inhaling poisonous fumes Sunday morning in the western Black Sea province of Zonguldak. The coal mine was operating without the necessary permits.

The operator of the mine, Osman Gökta, and workers Aukru Akkaya, Celil Ak and Muhammet Çift, entered the mine on Sunday and were engulfed in poisonous fumes. Gökta died at the scene while Akkaya, Ak and Çift were transferred to the Zonguldak Atatürk State Hospital; their condition is reported to be serious. The workers have been moved to the Uzunmehmet Chest and Respiratory Ailments Specialist Hospital.

Teams from the Turkey Coal Association who visited the mine after the incident reported that the poisoning occurred after an electric cable caught fire and carbon monoxide was released into the mine. It was reported that Gökta, upon smelling the fumes as he entered the mine, warned the workers with him to exit the area.

Gökta's daughter Emine had a nervous breakdown in front of the hospital's morgue where the body of her father was taken.

## Five arrested for deaths of 11 coal miners in N China accident

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

TAIYUAN, - Four construction officials and a driver were arrested for actions that allegedly caused the deaths of 11 miners in

north China's Shanxi Province, local authorities said Monday.

Ten workers died of asphyxia and another died of brain damage on May 16 in Shuozhou City. They had gone underground at the Majjaliang Coal Mine while concentrations of toxic gas were too high, according to the city's prosecutor.

Miners aren't supposed to enter a mine until 30 minutes after blasting, but Cao Zhenqiao, head of the construction team, ordered work to begin ahead of the scheduled time.

Prosecutors said work safety supervisor Wang Xisuo did not stop the miners. Winch driver Chen Yajie did not follow procedures, causing the miners to fall out from the cage. Project manager Qu Wu and deputy manager Zhang Jingyu were also responsible for the accident, the prosecutors said.

The Majjaliang Coal Mine was built by the China Coal First Construction Corp.

Another six people were injured in the accident.

Tuesday 23 June 2009

## China extends gas safety campaign to big coal mines

*Extract from Reuters, USA*

SHANGHAI, - China has extended a safety campaign to address the hidden dangers of coalbed methane from small to medium- and large-sized coal mines, the country's top economic planner said on Tuesday.

The fatal gas explosions in Shanxi's Tunlan mine in February and Chongqing's Tonghua mine just last month exposed weaknesses in gas treatment and loopholes in management in medium- and large-sized coal mines, the National Development and Reform Commission said.

Explosions from gas built up in mines are a major safety threat to China's coal industry.

Beijing announced a gas safety campaign in mines with annual production capacity of 300,000 tonnes in April, and now said mines with higher capacity will also be targeted.

Small mines that do not meet safety standards for gas treatment by September 2010 will be shut down.

The campaign aims to prevent gas explosions of high fatality, and increasing the extraction and use of coalbed methane, a largely untapped source of energy.

"By end of 2010, 18 mining areas with annual gas extraction of over 100 million cubic metres should be established," the NDRC said in the statement.

China said it holds 36 trillion cubic metres in reserves of the gas, the world's third-largest after Russia and Canada, but it pumped 5.8 billion cubic metres (bcm) from underground and used only 1.8 bcm.

## Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

### R

- rob** To remove coal from pillars.
- pillar**
- robbing**
1. The systematic removal of the coal pillars or ore between rooms or chambers to regulate the subsidence of the roof. Also called pillar drawing.
  2. The removal of ore pillars in sublevel stoping or slicing.
  3. Formerly, in pillar-and-stall mining, the coal pillars left were too small, and miners were satisfied to gain some coal by robbing the pillars, usually from middle portions, the remaining coal being too dangerous to extract.

## DANGERS OF A COAL MINE.

### KILLED WHILE "ROBBING PILLARS"—EVALUATIONS OF LAW WITH FATAL RESULTS.

SCRANTON, Penn., Jan. 19.—A miner named Peter Malin met with a shocking death to-day at the Elk Hill colliery while engaged in taking out coal pillars, a work commonly known as "robbing the mines." In the ordinary process of mining a large percentage of anthracite is left standing in pillars to support the roof, and when the place is worked out the companies remove these pillars wherever practicable. This removal is attended with great danger to the lives of the workmen, and requires no small degree of skill and courage. Usually the work of "robbing pillars" is begun at the most remote end of the workings and carried forward to the foot of the shaft, the roof falling in as its stout supports are blasted away. A good many lives are lost at this business, but the proportion of coal is so great, especially in some collieries, that the hazard is considered a trifle compared with the benefits. The miners use timber props to protect them from the falling roof as they go on with the taking out of the coal pillars, but when great commotions occur overhead these are useless to resist the crash. This was the case in the Elk Hill colliery, where Malin was crushed to death. He was standing between two props, in the act of shoveling coal, and doubtless considered himself safe, when a large piece of rock fell upon him and he was killed instantly. Two other workmen who stood at a short distance had a narrow escape.

During the year 1881 45 persons were killed in the mines of this district. The supervision was excellent; still in many cases the fatal accidents were due to the carelessness or ignorance of workmen themselves. It is only by the strict enforcement of the law that the perils of mining can be reduced to a minimum. Strange as it may seem, the persons to be benefited by the provisions of the Mine Ventilation act are found violating them even oftener than the companies, although the latter, as a general thing, pay little heed to the law whenever they can conveniently evade it. A case in point was reported last week from Olyphant, where a young man was killed while coming up the shaft from his day's work by a piece of coal falling down and striking him on the head. The law requires that carriages for the hoisting of workmen shall be covered, but it was disregarded in this instance with the fatal result already mentioned.

The New York Times

Published: January 20, 1882

- Ed.