



# Mining Accident News No.0924

25 to 31 July 2009

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Sunday 26 July 2009

## South African Minister of Mineral Resources Concerned over Safety in Mines

*Extract from Diamond News, Israel*

South African Minister of Mineral Resources Susan Shabangu visited the site where nine mineworkers recently lost their lives, bringing the safety of miners under the spotlight.

The nine mineworkers were killed at the Impala Platinum mine in Rustenburg, after being trapped underground following a rockfall. Minister Shabangu visited the underground platinum mine to inspect the conditions and circumstances under which the mineworkers perished.

To date, 104 miners have died in South Africa's underground mines this year - 86 were illegal miners. Last year 168 miners died and 220 miners died in 2007.

Minister Shabangu stated: "By virtue of having an accident, it is quite clear that there are challenges. You can't say that the safety standards are up to scratch. We have to revisit our own legislation. We have to revisit the accident that has occurred to find out exactly what the situation is and where we went wrong. I must also indicate that some of these issues and laws are not static and they have to be responsive and proactive."

The minister added she would wait for investigations into the collapse of the mining shaft to be completed before deciding on what action needs to be taken.

Mining activity has been put to a halt at Impala Platinum to allow the department's inspectors to conduct their investigations.

Minister Shabangu noted: "We intend to go into that particular area where the accident has occurred to investigate what the cause of the accident was and how it happened, but also to look at the safety standards and whether the company had complied."

In October 2007, former President Thabo Mbeki ordered a countrywide health and safety audit of mines to determine the level of compliance with health and safety legislation.

The subsequent Mine Safety Audit Report revealed that the South African mining industry achieved an overall score of 66% compliance with the relevant requirements of the Mine Health and Safety Act.

When it came to occupational health and safety, the mining industry reportedly scored a disappointing 59% for compliance, while scoring only 56% for health risk management.

Five mining sectors were audited including gold, platinum, coal, diamond and other smaller mining activities. The diamond sector scored a low 47% compliance with health risk management regulations. The gold industry also

**NOTE:** Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Editor: Mark Freeman

scored a mediocre 53% compliance when it came to health risk management.

## **USA: Former mine inspector admits to ethics charge**

*Extract from Louisville Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, USA*

FRANKFORT, Ky. — A former state mine safety analyst admitted Friday to breaking the code of ethics for state employees by falsifying mine reports and failing to perform other job duties.

Betty Sue Whitaker, 50, of Perry County, had been under investigation by the Executive Branch Ethics Commission since May 21. On Friday the commission filed the ethics charge and then unanimously accepted a settlement of the charge with Whitaker.

As part of the settlement the commission reprimanded Whitaker and fined her \$1,500.

Whitaker had worked as a safety analyst in the Hazard district of the state office of Mine Safety and Licensing since July 1999.

The commission's investigation began after The Courier-Journal reported that an investigation by the state Office of Mine Safety and Licensing found Whitaker had falsified more than two dozen inspection reports — pretending to evaluate workers at mines that she had visited briefly or not at all.

She resigned her state job March 2.

The commission's charge against Whitaker stated that by falsifying reports and not fulfilling other job duties while being paid by the state she violated provisions of the ethics code that forbid using a job "in derogation of the public interest at large."

Whitaker could not be reached for comment Friday.

Monday 27 July 2009

## **QLD: Man hurt in Xstrata mine mishap**

*Extract from ABC Online, Aus*

Mining company Xstrata says it has begun an investigation into a zinc mine accident in Mount Isa in north-west Queensland this morning.

The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) says a man has been taken to hospital after a cement truck ran into a loader at the George Fisher zinc mine.

The spokesman says emergency crews were called to the mine just after 5:00am AEST.

The extent of his injuries is not known at this stage.

The company says the Department of Mines and Energy has been notified.

Xstrata also says it is providing support to the contractor's family and colleagues.

Police Inspector Trevor Kidd says officers are also on the scene but there are few details available at this stage.

"It's very fresh so we're still making enquiries," he said.

"As I said, this is just part of the standard protocols - we have an industrial incident, police attend, we just go from there.

"These things can take some time just to determine the exact circumstances."

Xstrata temporarily closed the mine in May this year after the death of an employee in a workplace accident.

## **Eight killed after coal mine gantry collapse in southwest China**

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

CHENGDU, - Eight people died and another eight were injured when a coal mine gantry collapsed in southwest China's Sichuan Province, local authorities said on Monday.

The incident occurred at 9:20 a.m. in Yimen coal mine in Huili County of Sichuan when the gantry above the earth fell and buried 16 construction workers, said an official with Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

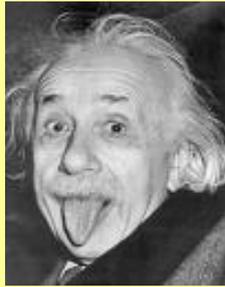
All the injured, including three seriously hurt, were being treated in hospital, the official said.

The three were described as stable after undergoing surgery, the official said.

The site had been cleared up, the official said.

An investigation team from the provincial government had arrived at the coal mine.

### Quote of the week



"A question that sometimes drives me hazy: am I or are the others crazy?"

Albert Einstein (German 1879-1955)

Tuesday 28 July 2009

## QLD: Union backs independent mine safety chief

*Extract from ABC Online, Aus*

The miners' union says the appointment of an independent commissioner for mine safety in Queensland will give workers peace of mind about dobbing in unsafe workplaces.

The Queensland Government announced in early June that it would create the position as part of a recommendation from the state's Ombudsman to improve mine safety.

Stewart Bell has been appointed the state's first mine safety and health commissioner and will investigate claims of unsafe workplaces.

Steve Smyth, from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), says the appointment also means greater protection for whistleblowers.

"We're hoping that this appointment will go a long way to assisting those workers out there in

the workplace who are continually harassed and also this gives people the ability to go to another person, or an independent person to raise these concerns," he said.

Mr Bell previously worked as the executive director of safety and health in the Queensland Mines Inspectorate and has also headed up the Government's Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station.

Mr Smyth says he is confident Mr Bell will do a good job.

"Stewart's been around the industry for a long time, dating back to the '80s with the Moura disaster, then all that time he's been involved either with SIMTARS [Safety in Mines Testing and Research Station] or the department in some form or another," he said.

"We believe he'll do a good job in that role."

## USA: W.Va. mine worker killed in excavator accident

*Extract from Associated Press, USA*

ORGAS, W.Va. - Emergency officials in Boone County say a worker for a coal mine has been killed in an accident.

A Boone County 911 operator says the fatality was reported at 10:05 a.m. Tuesday. State mine safety office spokeswoman Jama Jarrett says initial reports indicate a contractor's excavator rolled into a pond near Catenary Coal's Samples mine.

State and federal investigators are being sent to the remote area.

Catenary is a subsidiary of St. Louis-based Patriot Coal, which has operations in West Virginia and Kentucky.

A Patriot Coal spokeswoman didn't immediately return a telephone message Tuesday.

The fatality is the second in West Virginia this year and the ninth nationally.

## UPDATE 29 July 2009: Kanawha County Man Killed in Mining Accident Name Released

28-year-old Mark Gray of Belle died after the lizard (articulate) truck he was operating backed into a sediment pond, according to Jama Jarrett, spokesperson for the Office of Miner's health, Safety and Training.

## This week in mining accident history

30 July 1915

**Patterson No.2 Mine, Pennsylvania, USA**

**Underground Coal Mine**

**Surface haulage accident resulted in 9 deaths**

Source:

[www.patheoldminer.rootsweb.ancestry.com](http://www.patheoldminer.rootsweb.ancestry.com)

An outside haulage accident occurred at the United Coal Company's Patterson No. 2 Mine, near Elizabeth, Pa., at 2:30 p.m. July 30, 1915, resulting in the death of nine men (seven were railroad employees) and injuries to seventeen.



Curve in the tippel track, where the trip jumped, and the location of the wrecked trip in foreground

(Photo: [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov))

A loaded trip of eighteen cars broke away after coming out of the drift mouth and ran down the 1000 foot incline finally plunging off the tippel, (over 40 feet high) and into a section gang of 27 railway labourers. Two coal company employees were killed on the tippel, and seven of the section men underneath. The incline and tippel had just been partially completed and had

only been in operation three days at the time the accident occurred.

Wednesday 29 July 2009

## 5 killed in coal mine flood in SW China

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

KUNMING, - A colliery flooding left five miners dead Wednesday in southwest China's Yunnan Province.

The flood occurred at 11:30 a.m. in the private Yakou coal mine, Fuyuan County, Qujing City, as eight miners were working underground, said the Qujing coal administration bureau.

Three managed to escape, while another five were trapped. Rescuers retrieved their bodies at 2:50 p.m.

Police have detained the mine owner. An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway.

## Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

### S

**seam** A geological band of coal.



Underground coal seam 10 inches thick, Little Mine, Winter Hill, UK. Mined from late 1880s until 1961.

- Ed.