



# Mining Accident News No.0929

14 to 27 September 2009

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Tuesday 15 September 2009

## S.Africa: AngloGold suspends blasting at Great Nologwa after fatality

*Extract from miningweekly.com*

JOHANNESBURG – Drilling and blasting at AngloGold Ashanti's Great Nologwa mine, in the

Free State province, has been suspended, following the death of a worker on Monday.

Spokesperson Joanne Jones said that a worker had been fatally injured in a fall-of-ground incident, which occurred just after midday on Monday.

A second worker had suffered minor injuries.

Tramming and cleaning operations at the mine were continuing.

The incident brought the death toll in South Africa's mines for 2009 to 119, to date. 168 mineworkers had lost their lives in South Africa's mining industry in 2008.

## Death toll rises to 54 in central China colliery blast; 25 remain trapped

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

ZHENGZHOU, - The death toll from a coal mine gas explosion in central China's Henan Province rose to 54 Tuesday morning, rescue headquarters said.

Chances of survival for 25 miners trapped underground a week after the accident are slim.

Rescue work is continuing, but is being hampered by heavy damage to narrow, ill-equipped mine shafts.

The blast occurred about 1 a.m. last Tuesday in the Pingdingshan Coal Group's Xinhua No. 4 pit in the Xinhua District of Pingdingshan City.

A total of 93 people were working underground at the time of the blast, of whom 14 managed to escape.

Qi Tongyan, deputy head of Xinhua District, and Pingdingshan coal industry administration official Zhang Xizhi, were dismissed from their posts 10 hours after the blast.

Friday 18 September 2009

## S.Africa: Worker dies in fall-of-ground accident at First Uranium's Ezulwini

*Extract from miningweekly.com*

JOHANNESBURG – JSE and TSX-listed First Uranium on Friday reported a fatality at its Ezulwini mine, in South Africa.

First Uranium spokesperson Bob Tait said that there was an unexpected fall of ground in the area where underground crews were installing permanent supports in a stope on the 45 level of the Middle Elsburg Reef horizon, which is the uranium and gold ore body at the Ezulwini mine.

First Uranium CEO Gordon Miller said that the company viewed the incident in an "extremely serious light" and was reviewing the situation with representatives of South Africa's Department Mineral Resources and organised labour.

"We don't expect any material impact on planned production, as there was maintenance scheduled for the mine in the next few days that would preclude active mining and hoisting at that time anyway," noted Tait.

### Quote of the week



"Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer. Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen."

Leonardo da Vinci (Italian 1452-1519)

## NSW: New scheme mooted to fight mine fatigue

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

**Long working hours that contribute to accidents and fatalities in mines could soon**

**be a thing of the past, with plans to introduce a new fatigue management system.**

The New South Wales Mine Safety Advisory Council found Hunter and Illawarra miners worked on average more than 48 hours per week, but the figure rose to 55 hours in the state's far west.

Night shift workers are also more prone to fatigue.

Council chairman Norman Jennings says the guidelines will soon go to the Mineral Resources Minister Ian Macdonald for approval.

"When the Minister launched the work of the council he asked us as a matter of urgency to look at the fatigue issue and it's taken this length of time to come to agreement on it, but it was more important that we get agreement from the three principal stakeholders - the employers the trade unions and the regulator," he said.

## This week in mining accident history (1)

**18 September 1959**

**Auchengeich Pit, Lanarkshire, Scotland, UK  
Underground Coal Mine**

**Fan and belt fire, smoke in return**

**47 died, overcome by smoke containing CO and asphyxiated**

Source: Wikipedia & www.healeyhero.co.uk

In September 1959, 47 men lost their lives in a coal mine near the town of Auchengeich when a faulty fan purifying the air in the colliery went on fire due to an electrical fault. The men were in bogies travelling to the coal face to start work, and due to the intense smoke they were abandoned just a few hundred yards from safety. The mine was eventually flooded to put out the fire; there was only one survivor from the crews. The mining accident was one of the worst within the UK in the 20th century, widowing 41 women and leaving 76 children without a father.



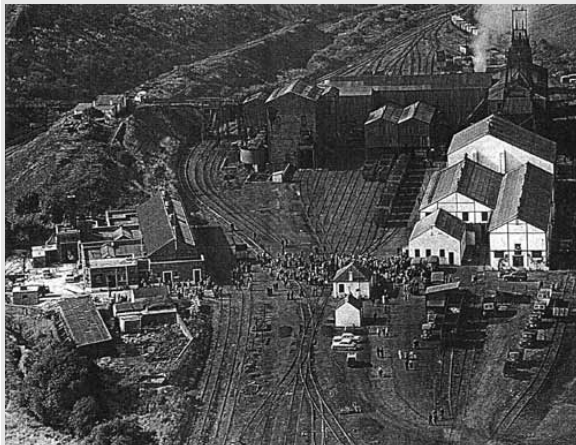
**Auchengeich Memorial**

*"In memory of the 47 men who lost their lives in the Auchengeich Colliery Disaster 18th Sept 1959"*

*(Extract from a Scottish Memories June 1995, Caroline Chambers nee Somerville)*

It was midnight and a cool autumn wind rustled through the silent crowd of 1200 people gathered at the pit-head, many of them women with their children wrapped in shawls cuddled close to them.

It was the night of 18th September, 1959, and the coal mine was at Auchengeich, Lanarkshire, where an inferno raged deep below.



**The Scene at Auchengeich Pit**

Ronald Parker, Scottish Chairman of the National Coal Board, stepped forward and addressed the crowd, telling them that it had been decided to flood the mine to put out the fire even although 48 men were still missing.

Cries of despair and anger rent the air and under the glare of floodlights the Scottish Miners union leader Abe Moffat appealed to the crowd to go home.

Three men shouted, "Why do you tell us this now? They should never have been down there. It was the fan, the fan . . . ."

They were moved on by police.

But they were right. It was the fan, more precisely a faulty booster fan-belt operating electrical equipment 1400 feet underground which had burst into flames and had spread fire along a gallery. Around 7am on that fateful day - on which occurred Scotlands worst mining disaster of the 20th century - the early morning shift had just clocked on and were being carried in a small train of bogies towards the coalface.

The sole survivor of that brief train trip was 50-year-old Big Tam Green, a 6 ft. 4" giant from Marnoch Drive, Glenboig, who later told how he and his mates ran into thick, black, choking smoke.

"I'm the luckiest man in the world. I am alive. I have come out of that nightmare down there. I cannot believe that all this has happened in such a short time... that I have lost all my working mates, my friends."

"It seems to me no time at all since it was seven o'clock this morning and we were all chuckling over a joke as we waited for the cage."

"As I got aboard the bogie, I smelled fumes - but only slightly. I don't think I gave them much attention at the time."

"The bogies started to rumble downwards. Suddenly the smoke and fumes were intense. It was almost impossible to breathe. We signalled frantically for the haulage man to take us back up the track. The bogie started moving upwards... the smoke was following. I tried not to breathe."

"I realised that the situation was desperate. Men were choking all around me but the haulage still kept moving upwards."

**The Inquiry**

The inquiry into the causes and circumstances attending the underground fire which occurred at Auchengeich Colliery, Lanarkshire, on 18th, September 1959 was conducted by T.A. Rogers, C.B.E., H.M. Chief Inspector of Mines and Quarries at the Justiciary Court, Glasgow on the 4th January 1960 and sat for ten days until the 15th January. The final report was presented to

The Right Honourable Richard Wood, M.P., Minister of Fuel and Power in May 1960.

The inquiry heard evidence from eighty five witnesses and all interested parties were represented. The following conclusions were reached:-

“1) The fire originated in the balata transmission belt of the electrically driven fan in the return airway from the No. 2 Pit workings. The fire was caused by frictional heat generated between the rotating motor pulley and the belt, which had left the fan pulley and jammed near it. Flame from the belt ignited the oil vaporised from the fan shaft bearings and oily deposits in and around the fan. The flame then spread downwind to ignite roadway timbers.

2) By tragic coincidence, forty eight men riding through the return airway were overtaken by smoke containing carbon monoxide and forty seven of these men were asphyxiated.

3) The fire would not have reached dipterous proportions had inflammable material been excluded from a substantial length of roadway immediately adjacent to and on the return side of the fan.

4) The haze which proceeded the smoke was not recognised, either by officials or by workmen, as a sign of imminent danger. By the time the fire was found the second man-riding train had already left the pit bottom.

5) Fire fighting arrangements were inadequate but the deficiencies did not contribute to the loss of life.

6) The fire would probably have been averted had the fan been under continuous supervision. It might have been averted or its development halted had the fan been inspected at half hourly intervals prescribed as a maximum by Regulation.

7) Closer examination of the belt performance after speeding up the fan might have indicated the advisability of reverting to the previous speed or altering the drive.

8) The unsatisfactory performance of the belt and the damage done to it in the two days before the fire, particularly the night immediately before, received insufficient attention.

9) By calculation, a balata transmission belt made of 33.3 oz. cotton dick put on after the speed-up of the fan had an excess capacity of about 50 per cent and a 31 oz. belt caught fire about 25 per cent. But the first of these belts lasted less than two weeks and the other only two days.

10) The belt which caught fire was not the 33.3 oz. weight ordered by the National Coal Board and failed to satisfy completely some of the tests prescribed by the British Standard 2066.”

Saturday 19 September 2009

## **Death toll in Polish mine accident rises to 13**

*Extract from Javno, Poland*

Polish media say the death toll in a Polish coal mining accident rose to 13 after an injured miner died.



The Polish news agency PAP cited emergency authorities as saying that one of the injured men died of his burns on Saturday, raising the initial death toll of 12 to 13.

Poland on Saturday announced two days of mourning next week as the death toll from a methane gas explosion at a coal mine in the south of the country rose to 13.

Authorities said one badly-burned worker had died of his injuries. Out of 41 hospitalised, seven



were in very serious condition, and 17 were seriously hurt.

President Lech Kaczynski declared a two-day national mourning from Monday, with flags at half-mast and shows and other public amusements cancelled.

A blast ripped through the Wujek-Slask mine in Ruda Slaska-Kochlowice, a city in Poland's southwestern Silesia region, on Friday morning at a depth of 1,050 meters (nearly 3,500 feet) below ground.

Coal mining is a traditional and major source of employment in Poland's Silesia region but accidents are not uncommon.

Meanwhile, survivors said the accident was waiting to happen.

"I had told my higher ups in the past that my personal gauge had shown that the methane level in the mine was much higher than the monitors in the galleries showed," a miner said.

But Ewa Zuwała, an investigator, said on public television there had been no sign thus far that the methane monitors in the mine had been tampered with.

Friday's lethal explosion was the worst in Polish mines since the death of 23 miners in November 2006 in a methane blast at the Halemba mine nearby.

Several mine managers are on trial in connection with the disaster.

Poland's most recent mine accident involved the death of six miners in a methane explosion at the Borynia mine in southern Poland in June 2008.

A special commission has been set up to probe Friday's accident.

Sunday 20 September 2009

## **Gas poisoning kills four in NW China coal mine**

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

LANZHOU, - At least four people were killed by carbon monoxide poisoning in a coal mine in Gansu Province, the local work safety watchdog said Sunday.

The accident took place at about 6 p.m. Saturday as five management officials of the Jinmiaogou Colliery under Kaifu MiningCo. felt ill while working underground in the shaft.

One was saved but the other four, including the head of the mine, were killed by the gas, the Production Safety Supervision Administration of Gansu told Xinhua.

Production of the mine, in an uninhabited region of Subei County in Jiuquan City, has been suspended ahead of the National Day celebrations slated for Oct. 1. However, the head of the mine led four subordinates into the shaft for safety checks after a fire triggered by a 4.8-magnitude earthquake in the area on Friday.

The coal mine, with all necessary production licenses, reported a production capacity of 150,000 tonnes a year.

## **This week in mining accident history (2)**

**20 September 1975**

**Kianga No.1 Mine, Moura, Qld, Australia**

**Underground Coal Mine**

**Gas explosion from spontaneous combustion**

**13 dead**

Source: [www.dme.qld.gov.au](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au)

During the past forty years there have been three mining disasters in the Moura district at a cost of 36 lives.

The first occurred at Kianga Mine on 20 September 1975. Thirteen miners died from an explosion which was found to have been initiated by spontaneous combustion. The mine was sealed and the bodies of the men were never recovered.

The Kianga Memorial Centre on McArthur Street was built in memory of those lost in the explosion.

At about 5.10p.m. on September 20, 1975, an explosion occurred in the underground workings of the Kianga No. 1 mine in central Queensland. Thirteen men who were underground at the time attempting to seal off a heating in the 4 North Section were killed.

As a result of the fatalities an inquiry was held in Rockhampton, conducted by the mining warden with assistance from four persons having practical mining knowledge. The inquiry commenced on November 10, 1975, and closed on November 24, 1975.

During the inquiry evidence showed the mine to be worked by a bord and pillar system. The seam being worked was not extracted to the full height and the coal was liable to spontaneous combustion. Methane had also been found in the workings.

The inquiry found that an explosion was initiated by a spontaneous combustion source which ignited inflammable gas and was propagated involving coal dust. The explosion flame front did not reach the surface.

It was recommended by the inquiry that:—

(a) the knowledge of all members of the coal mining industry in Queensland be upgraded with regard to spontaneous combustion.

(b) changes be made in the Queensland Coal Mining Act to provide for:

- additional protection against the propagation of coal dust explosions,
- monitoring or sampling of ventilation,
- preparatory seals and the recognition and delineation of responsibilities of persons with technical authority superior to a manager.

(c) additional analytical facilities to be provided for the industry.

Other general recommendations relating to safety were also made. Refer to link below for Warden's Inquiry Report:

[http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/zone\\_files/inspectorate\\_pdf/kianga.pdf](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/zone_files/inspectorate_pdf/kianga.pdf)

Tuesday 22 September 2009

## **NSW: Miners trapped one kilometre underground**

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

Two mine staff are stuck almost a kilometre underground at the Perilya South mine at Broken Hill in the far west of New South Wales.



*A storm knocked out power at the Perilya mine.  
(ABC: Emma Sleath)*

The service operators have spent more than 18 hours in the shaft after a storm cut power supplies yesterday evening.

Perilya managing director Paul Arndt says the mine implemented its evacuation procedures as soon as it lost power.

But he says two service operators in a shaft were trapped in an underground cage.

"With the power failure, the brakes come on automatically for that winder and they basically have been placed in a position where they are in the shaft in the cage at just below the 20 level," he said.

Mr Arndt says the men will remain in the cage until it is clear when power will be restored but food and some lights have been lowered to them from two levels above.

"We're running through three different alternatives and we're just going through and

doing our risk assessments, which is a standard process with any procedure that we implement," he said.

"We're likely to set up probably from the 18 level and winch them out in protected man cages or a bosun's chair with the assistance of our mine rescue team."

## **Update: Miners trapped in underground cage for more than 18 hours rescued**

*Extract from Sydney Morning Herald, Aus*

Two miners trapped in a cage up to 900 metres underground for more than 21 hours after a power blackout in far western NSW have been reunited with family, a NSW Government spokeswoman says.

Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union spokesman Greg Braes said severe weather heading east from South Australia cut power to Broken Hill about 6pm yesterday.

Two miners at the Perilya silver, lead and zinc mine, at Broken Hill, were in a cage between 800 and 900 metres down a mine shaft when the power went out.

Following a rescue operation, the miners were brought to the surface about 4.30pm, a spokeswoman for the NSW Department of Primary Industries said.

"They have just come to the surface and been reunited with their wives," the spokeswoman said.

"They are well; they have been checked out by doctors."

## **S.Africa: Implats worker killed in Rustenburg fall-of-ground accident**

*Extract from miningweekly.com*

JOHANNESBURG – World number-two platinum producer Impala Platinum (Implats) on Tuesday reported a fatality at its 8 Shaft, at the Rustenburg operations in South Africa.

The company reported that a fall-of-ground incident took place on Monday night, and all tramming and blasting operations have now been suspended at the shaft. Implats management and the Department of Mineral Resources were currently investigating the incident.

The fall-of-ground incident follows shortly after Implats reported the methane explosion at the 14 Shaft, on September 9, which claimed the lives of two workers.

The newest fatality at Implats brought the number of fatalities in the South African mining industry to 122 for this year.

Wednesday 23 September 2009

## **Death toll in Polish mining accident rises to 17**

*Extract from Taiwan News*

Two more miners have died of burns suffered in an underground explosion in southern Poland last week, bringing the death toll from the accident to 17.

Hospital spokesman Miroslaw Rusecki says a 40-year-old man and a 21-year-old man died Wednesday.

The explosion 3,450 feet (1,050 meters) below ground on Friday was caused by a methane leak at the Wujek-Slask mine in Ruda Slaska.

Thursday 24 September 2009

## **Poland: Drunken coal mine spokesperson dismissed**

*Extract from Thenews.pl*

A spokesperson for the State Mining Authority, which is investigating last week's tragic coal mine explosion, has been dismissed for being drunk while in charge of company property.

On Tuesday, Edyta Tomaszewska reported at the police station in the southern city of Katowice that she had been assaulted and a company notebook had been stolen from her. Tomaszewska claimed that the notebook did not

contain any important documents on the Wujek-Slask case – the explosion last Friday at the Silesian colliery in which 17 people died and about 40 were injured. Tomaszewska added that the notebook contained only the names of the members of a special investigation commission, which had been made public anyway.

The now ex-spokesperson is convinced that that the assault was related to the investigation on the explosion in the Wujek-Slask mine because during the attack the perpetrator said: "That's for the mine."

Police are investigating the case. "While testifying at the police station Mrs. Tomaszewska was tested for blood alcohol content and it turned out that she had three per mills of alcohol in a breath sample," said Jacek Pytel of the Katowice police.

After media revealed the information, Tomaszewska was dismissed from the post on the basis of "being drunk while being in possession of company items." She will, however, continue working for the State Mining Authority in another capacity, it has been reported.

The explosion last Friday at the Wujek-Slask coal mine has raised the issue of violating security measures at Polish coal mines.

## USA: Contractor dies in accident at southern Illinois mine

*Extract from KFVS, USA*

FRANKLIN COUNTY, A southern Illinois mine contractor is killed from falling more than 3 stories. The accident happened at Sugar Camp Mine, north of Akin.

According to county coroner Marty Leffler, 38-year-old Robert Comer III was working for a company hired to sink the shaft at the mine.

Comer and co-workers moved a metal grate work deck to remove the concrete pouring tube from the shaft when Comer is said to have un-

harnessed and turned around falling 39 feet down the shaft.

He was air-lifted to Franklin Hospital was pronounced dead just before 11:00 p.m. Wednesday from injuries sustained in the fall.

The **19th Electrical Engineering Safety Seminar** will be held at the Waterview Convention Centre, Sydney Olympic Park, on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 November 2009. The Waterview Convention Centre is situated within the picturesque Bicentennial Park area of Sydney Olympic Park, overlooking Lake Belvedere. A conference dinner will be held on Thursday evening with well-known football star and author, Peter FitzSimons as dinner speaker.

[For more information and registration brochure:](#)

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minesafety](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minesafety)

## Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

### S

**skip** A rail mounted wagon or container used for hauling material at a mine. Either fitted with a door for easy unloading, or able to be tipped.



Early 1900s hand mining with skip

- Ed.