



# Mining Accident News No.0931

12 to 23 October 2009

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Monday 12 October 2009

## QLD: Fatigue puts safety in jeopardy

*Extract from Mackay Daily Mercury*

MACKAY Oct 7, - Lots of drivers on the Peak Downs Highway late on a Saturday afternoon thought mining engineer Wade Kathage was a drink-driver putting lives at risk.

But he wasn't drunk. He was dangerously fatigued after a long working week.

Fellow drivers were so concerned about his manner of driving that they made emergency

calls to police and used two-way radios to warn other motorists.

Three calls were made to police as Kathage drove over 90km from Nebo to Mackay.

At the time he was working as a mining engineer at three mines, doing 80 hours a week and driving 1000km to 2000km a week.

"Cemeteries are full of people who have been put there by fatigued drivers," Magistrate Athol Kennedy said yesterday when Kathage faced the Mackay Magistrate's Court.

"There are a lot of crosses on that road.

"Fatigue affects us all. It has a similar effect as alcohol. There are a lot of people attached to the mines who die on the roads.

"I hear some of the mining companies are doing something about it.

"But individuals like you also have to do something about it," Mr Kennedy said.

Kathage, 45, is based in Newcastle and lives five days a week in Mackay, working at the mines.

He pleaded guilty yesterday to driving without due consideration for other road users on the Peak Downs Highway on May 23.

Police received the first call at 4.46pm when Kathage was between South Walker Creek and Nebo.

Witnesses said he was swerving onto the wrong side of the highway and on-coming traffic had to avoid him.

There was another call at 4.53pm from another driver as Kathage was going down the Eton Range.

A third call was made at 5.55pm, when Kathage was near Walkerston, and that caller told police the vehicle had left the highway and had gone onto the gravel shoulder before coming back onto the road.

**NOTE:** Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of Industry & Investment NSW.

When police intercepted him about 6pm at the City Gates several drivers stopped to complain about his driving.

A breath test showed he had a reading of zero.

He told police he did not recall driving badly and did not think he was inconsiderate to other drivers.

Solicitor Phillip Moore, of S R Wallace and Wallace, said Kathage had since done a defensive driving course and had reduced his working hours to about 60 hours a week at two mines.

“When he heard the evidence against him he was surprised. He does recall both left-hand-side tyres running off the road,” Mr Moore said.

“He recalls veering out to see if it was safe to pass cars and swerving back.

“He accepts he felt a bit groggy because of all the hours he worked.

“He asks you to accept it was one blemish in an otherwise good driving history.

“Fatigue is an occupational hazard, which he acknowledges, and he's taking steps to ensure the public will be protected.”

Kathage was fined \$1200. No action was taken against his driver's licence.

## This week in mining accident history

**14 October 1913**

**Senghenydd Colliery, near Caerphilly, Glamorgan, South Wales, UK**

**Underground Coal Mine**

**Firedamp (methane) explosion**

**439 killed**

Source: Wikipedia & [www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)

The **Senghenydd Colliery Disaster**, also known as the **Senghenydd Explosion**, occurred in Senghenydd, near Caerphilly, Glamorgan, South Wales on 14 October 1913,

killing 439 miners. It is the worst Mining accident in the United Kingdom, and one of the most serious in terms of loss of life globally since.

The Universal Colliery was a deep-mine opened in the 1890s. In the early days of coal mining, mine explosions were common. Mines of this era (1900s) lacked the extensive ventilation and filtration systems that protect modern miners from such explosions.

The demand for Welsh steam coal before World War I was enormous, especially from the Royal Navy and its huge fleet of steam battleships, dreadnoughts and cruisers, and also foreign Navies allied to Britain and the British Empire. Coal output from British coal mines was at its peak in 1914, and there were a correspondingly large number of terrible accidents.

The worst of these was at the Universal Colliery in Senghenydd and occurred as a result of a coal dust explosion that travelled through most of the underground workings.



The pit rescue team at the Senghenydd Colliery disaster in 1913. Courtesy of [www.oldphotos.com](http://www.oldphotos.com)

It was probably started by a firedamp (methane) explosion, itself possibly ignited by electric sparking from equipment, such as electric bell signaling gear. The initial firedamp explosion disturbed coal dust present on the floor, raising a cloud that then ignited in its turn. The shock wave ahead of the explosion raised yet more coal dust, so that the conflagration was effectively self-fueling. Those miners not killed immediately by the fire and explosion would have died quickly from afterdamp, the noxious gases formed by combustion. These include

lethal quantities of carbon monoxide, which kills very quickly by combining preferentially with haemoglobin in the blood. The victims are suffocated by lack of oxygen.

It is believed that the explosion ripped through the underground tunnels just after 8am - two hours into the morning shift. They say the explosion was heard 11 miles away in Cardiff. Rescuers battled for days to recover the wounded and the dead. The first funeral was held three days later, but it was not until the middle of November that all 300 bodies were recovered. The 439 dead included 63 teenagers and 162 young men in their twenties.



Glamorgan police officers, on duty at the temporary mortuary at Senghenydd, following the coal mining disaster of October 1913. PC 745 Robert Mourton (shown right) had only joined the police in May of that year.

The inquest on the bodies of those who perished in the Universal Colliery disaster took place at the Gwern-y-Milwr Hotel, Senghenydd between 5-14 January 1914. The coroner was David Rees.

The managers and owners of the "Universal" pit were prosecuted as a result of this second tragedy (the first being 24 May 1901, 78 men buried alive after three explosions shattered the top of the shaft) that proved so costly in human life. Recommendations aimed at improving safety had been made following the 1901 disaster, but were never implemented. Conditions at the pit had in fact worsened as the increase in production after 1901 had led to rising numbers of workers operating in confined spaces.

In an insult to the families of the deceased, the manager of "Universal" was fined only £24, with all charges against the owners dropped. On appeal, the owners were fined a derisory £10 with costs of £5 5s.

The mine closed in 1928 and the derelict workings were cleared in 1963. A memorial was not erected in memory of its victims until 1981.

Thursday 15 October 2009

## China mine blast kills 14

*Extract from The Sydney Morning Herald, Aus*

Eleven workers were killed in an explosion at a coal mine in north China's Ningxia region that also left three people missing, the country's work safety watchdog said on Thursday.

The incident occurred late on Wednesday at the Dafeng mine in the town of Shizuishan, the State Work Safety Administration said in a statement on its website. Seven others were injured in the blast, it said.

Workers were using dynamite to blast through rock when the accident occurred, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Only one person escaped unharmed, according to the report.

An investigation was under way, the agency said, adding that the mine was owned by Shenhua Group, one of China's mining giants.

Regional and local officials contacted by AFP said they were unaware of the current situation at the mine.

China has a notoriously poor record for workplace accidents.

Its coal mines are among the most dangerous in the world, with safety standards often ignored in the quest for profits and the drive to meet surging demand for coal - the source of about 70 per cent of China's energy.

Official figures show that more than 3,200 workers died in collieries last year, but independent labour groups say the actual figure could be much higher, as many accidents are

covered up in order to avoid costly mine shutdowns.

## Trapped Coal Miners Found Dead in Colombia

*Extract from Latin American Herald Tribune*

BOGOTA – Six men trapped by an explosion at a coal mine in the Colombian province of Norte de Santander were found dead Wednesday, an official said.

Alfonso Tarazona, head of the Norte de Santander Emergency Management Office, told reporters in Cucuta, the provincial capital, that the bodies were recovered some 18 hours after Tuesday's blast at the La Orquidea mine.

He said the recovery effort was difficult because of the depth of the shaft and the high concentration of methane gas inside the mine, which is located in the municipality of El Zulia, near Cucuta and the Venezuelan border.

One of the dead was a mining engineer, Tarazona said.

Nine men working in the shaft at the time of the explosion were rescued alive Tuesday and are being treated at area hospitals.

Local authorities and personnel from the Colombian Geology and Mining Institute opened an investigation into the cause of the blast.

Friday 16 October 2009

## S.Africa: DJ Mineworker Killed At Gold Fields' Driefontein Mine - Union

*Extract from TradingMarkets.com*

JOHANNESBURG, -- A mineworker has been killed in an accident early Friday at gold producer Gold Fields Ltd.'s (GFI) Driefontein mine in South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers said.

The locomotive guard died in the mine's number two shaft, killed by hoppers while he was working, the union said.

More than 120 workers have been killed in mining incidents this year and the NUM said thousands more have "been sent home to die due to occupational diseases and injuries."

### Quote of the week

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future."

Paul Boese,  
(Dutch botanist 1668-1738)

Saturday 17 October 2009

## China: Eight confirmed dead in colliery gas outburst

*Extract from www.chinaview.cn*

CHANGSHA, - Eight miners were confirmed dead in a coal mine gas outburst in central China's Hunan Province, after their bodies have been retrieved, local authorities said Saturday.

Rescuers recovered two bodies in the shaft on Friday afternoon, and the remaining six by 1:30 a.m. Saturday, according to the coal industry bureau of Hunan.

The accident occurred at Friday noon when the eight miners were working underground in state-owned Jiahe Coal Mine in Chenzhou City, it said.

The Jiahe Coal Mine is owned by the Xiangmei Group, one of Hunan's mining giants.

## WA: Argyle worker injured

*Extract from ABC News, Aus*

A worker has been seriously injured at the Argyle Diamond mine in Kununurra.

A spokeswoman says the man injured his foot while working with a high pressure hose at the mine site this afternoon.

The man is likely to be flown to Darwin Hospital for further treatment.



Monday 19 October 2009

## **NSW: Mining industry safety to be improved, mandatory ongoing training**

Industry and Investment NSW has released a discussion paper on a system which would see mine safety in NSW further improved.

The system would help holders of coal mine Certificates of Competence refresh and develop their OHS expertise.

The group says the need for ongoing training and continuing professional development is essential at all times to make certain competent people work in the coal mining industry to ensure safety as well as drive improved mine safety performance.

Certificate holders may lose their competency if they do not refresh and update their skills, knowledge and experience.

People carrying out specific functions such as mining or engineering supervisors and managers in the coal mining industry are required to hold a Certificate of Competence, as set out in the Coal Mine Health and Safety Regulation 2006.

The discussion paper has been released to stakeholders in the mining industry to assess suitability of the proposed system, which could become a condition placed on all Certificates of Competence.

Public Submissions can be made until November 6, 2009. It is hoped the proposed system could be implemented next year.

A copy of the discussion paper can be viewed and downloaded from:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/consultation/coal-competence-board](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/consultation/coal-competence-board).

## **QLD: Union urges mine safety boost**

*Extract from ABC News, Aus*

The miners' union is calling for changes to be made to the Coal Health and Safety Act to make

it compulsory for all shifts to have qualified search and rescue staff.

Steve Smyth from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union says while there are requirements for underground mines, there are no mandatory standards for open-cut mining.

He says workers and the union are concerned communities like Moranbah could be left without enough emergency resources.

"I believe there's a real potential there that where they're responding to a coal mine we could be leaving the community and the people living in those communities at risk," he said.

"Because the ambulance, wherever it may be, it could be at a mine 20, 25 kilometres from Moranbah for example, there could be an incident and the people could be at risk."

Gavin Taylor from the Queensland Mines Inspectorate says the issue has never been formally raised with it.

"We've never looked at that I must be honest, because it's never really been raised with us in an official complaint," he said.

"If it was then we would look into it but that's one of those kind of things that comes in general conversation without any facts behind it.

"Whether it's true or not, I don't know, because we've never investigated but certainly if someone made that complaint, we'd be duty-bound to investigate."

Tuesday 20 October 2009

## **USA: MSHA cites 'flagrant violation' in Pa. mine death**

*Extract from The Charleston Gazette, USA*

**ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced it has proposed \$504,900 in civil penalties against UAE Coalcorp Associates, which operates the Harmony Mine in Northumberland County, Pa. Five violations were cited as the result of a fatal roof fall**

**accident in June 2008 and assessed under the flagrant violation provision of MSHA's civil penalty regulation.**

"Safety is priority one, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration will accept no less," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "Miners perform valuable work under difficult conditions. The minimum we should do is guarantee them the protections they are afforded by the law."

On June 16, 2008, Robert Carey, a 45-year-old roof bolter and assistant foreman with nine years of experience, was fatally injured when the mine roof collapsed during retreat mining activity. The violations allege that the accident occurred while he directed a continuous mining machine operator to take excessively wide cuts, actions that were in violation of the approved roof control plan. Prior to the accident, Carey travelled under unsupported roof with the continuous miner operator and continuous miner helper to set timber posts at the face. Carey also was responsible for conducting workplace examinations.

The victim was located along a coal rib near the operator's compartment of a continuous mining machine when the roof fall occurred. The area of the roof fall was approximately 30 feet wide and 20 feet long, and ranged from 4 inches to 4 feet thick.

"The mine operator was aware of adverse roof conditions in the area but nevertheless allowed mining to continue," said Dr. Gregory R. Wagner, MSHA's deputy assistant secretary for policy.

MSHA issued an unwarrantable failure citation and four unwarrantable failure orders after the accident investigation was completed. The mine operator was cited for allowing miners to travel and work under unsupported roof, failing to provide turn posts to protect the continuous mining machine operator, directing the continuous mining machine operator to take cuts that violated the roof control plan and failure to report hazardous conditions.

A flagrant violation is defined as "a reckless or repeated failure to make reasonable efforts to eliminate a known violation of a mandatory safety and health standard that substantially and proximately caused, or reasonably could have been expected to cause, death or serious bodily injury." Under the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act, a civil penalty of up to \$220,000 may be assessed for each flagrant violation.

**Canada: Yukon mine accident kills Newfoundland man**

*Extract from CBCNews.ca*

A young man from Newfoundland has died while working on a mine in eastern Yukon.

Paul Wentzell, 20, was working on a tunnel at Yukon Zinc Corp.'s Wolverine zinc-silver property, about 400 kilometres northeast of Whitehorse, when he was struck and killed by an unoccupied vehicle around 9 a.m. PT Monday.

Wentzell was from Daniel's Harbour on the Northern Peninsula but was living in Alberta at the time of the accident.

He was an employee of Procon Mining and Tunnelling Ltd., a contractor that is building a mine at the Wolverine property. The mine is slated to open next year.

Wentzell was flown to hospital in Whitehorse, where he died from his injuries.

RCMP in nearby Ross River are investigating the death with the territorial coroner's office and the Yukon Workers Compensation Health and Safety Board. The coroner's office has ordered an autopsy.

In a statement Tuesday, Yukon Zinc and Procon Mining and Tunnelling — both based in Vancouver — said they have suspended construction at the Wolverine property while they and government authorities review the accident.

"This is a sad day for Yukon Zinc and Procon and on behalf of our management and staff we express our sincerest condolences to the family

and friends of our deceased colleague," Raymond Mah, Yukon Zinc's chief operating officer, said in the statement.

"Both Yukon Zinc and Procon place great emphasis on mine safety and will continue promoting safety programs to ensure that a culture and mindset of 'safety first' is maintained throughout the company."

Wednesday 21 October 2009

## **BHP suspends operations at South African coal mine after fatal accident**

*Extract from [www.miningweekly.com](http://www.miningweekly.com)*

JOHANNESBURG – Diversified miner BHP Billiton on Tuesday reported a fatality at its Khutala Colliery opencast operations, in Mpumalanga.

The company said in a statement that an initial investigation had indicated that the miner was travelling in a light vehicle when a piece of coal fell from a loaded 25-t haul truck travelling in the opposite direction. The piece of coal went through the windscreen of the light vehicle and struck the miner, causing fatal injuries.

Mining at the opencast area had been suspended and investigations were under way.

The death at the Khutala operations brought the number of fatalities in the South African mining industry during 2009, to 127.

Thursday 23 October 2009

## **QLD: Brakes put on unsafe mine trucks**

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

Twenty trucks have been taken off the road after a safety audit of Queensland coal mines.

The mines inspectorate has audited 46 coal mines in the Bowen Basin in the state's central and southern regions, after concerns were raised about the use of highway trucks on mine sites and the standard of maintenance.

The mine safety and health commissioner, Stewart Bell, says two recent fatalities can be linked to substandard brakes.

"What I'm glad about is we've actually found these vehicles before anyone's been hurt and we've taken them off the road until they're repaired," he said.

"The other point I should make is there appears to be a higher incidence of brake problems in vehicles being used by contractors.

"So what I'm saying is the mines themselves tend to maintain their vehicles better than the contractors coming on the mine sites."

Mr Bell says the trucks will be inspected before they can be used again.

"It's very important if you're moving a large piece of machinery around any area, whether it's a highway or a mine site, that the vehicle's properly maintained," he said.

"People can't control these things if the brakes don't work properly.

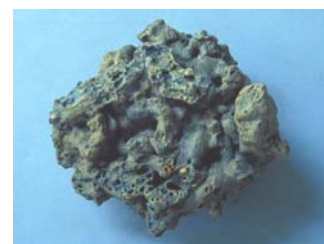
"We've had two fatalities and many serious injuries that can be linked back to poor brakes."

## **Mining dictionary**

### **A guide to common mining terminology**

#### **S**

**slag** A vitrified amalgam of silica, ferrous oxides and other elements, being the gangue component resulting from the smelting of an ore (such as copper or lead). Slag ranges from a dull to glassy dark rock-like substance and is deposited in a number of forms, including cone shapes, lozenge shapes, granular form, poured molten spills, and as solid blocks poured in formwork. It is the most persistent evidence of smelter sites.



- Ed.