



Mining Accident News No.0934

28 November to 6 December 2009

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Saturday 28 November 2009

Nine dead in China mine accident: report

Extract from Xinhua, China

BEIJING — A gas explosion in a southwestern China coal mine killed nine people, state media said Friday, the latest deadly accident to strike the country's notoriously dangerous mining sector.

Search efforts were underway for a missing miner, Xinhua news agency said, following the

accident late Thursday at the Zhenxing coal mine in Guizhou province.

Last Saturday, 108 miners were killed in a gas explosion at a coal mine in Heilongjiang province in north-eastern China, reigniting concerns about safety standards in the nation's coal mines.



A gas explosion in a China coal mine has killed nine people, state media has said

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

S.Africa: Mineworker dies in mine accident

Extract from jacarandafm.com, South Africa

Harmony Gold says there was a fatal accident at one of its mines.

A mineworker was killed at Harmony Gold's Elandsrand mine near Carletonville on Friday, the company said in a statement.



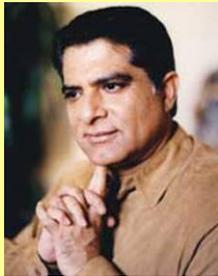
He was killed in a "seismically related" fall of ground accident in the early hours of the morning.

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

Management and the mineral resources department would start their investigation into the death on Friday.

Meanwhile, activity at the mine has ceased. "The department has issued a Section 54, this means that the mine will be temporarily closed. It will only be reopened once the investigation has been finalised and remedial action has been put in place, said spokesperson Marian van der Walt.

Quote of the week



"Anything that is of value in life only multiplies when it is given."

Deepak Chopra,
(Indian philosopher & author, now of USA 1946-)

Canada: Potash Mine Worker Dies in Accident

Extract from CJME News Talk Radio,

A potash worker is dead after a weekend tragedy at the Mosaic Company's K-2 Mine in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, Canada. Human Resources Manager Chandra Pratt tells News Talk Radio that the accident happened early Saturday morning at around 2:00 a.m.

"At that time one of our raw ore storage bins failed and there were two Mosaic employees working in the area." said Pratt.

Pratt said one man was buried in potash ore. Another worker was taken to Regina hospital with injuries Pratt believes are non-life threatening, but she did not have a complete update on the man's condition. So far there's no word on what caused the bin to fail. Pratt said both employees are from the Esterhazy area, and the victim did have a family who has been notified.

"It's a dark day for us and we do extend our deepest sympathy to the family and we'll do whatever we can to help support them"

Pratt said the crews on surface at K-2 have been sent home. RCMP and the Provincial Mine Safety Unit are investigating to pinpoint the cause of the bin failure.

Rescue halted with 16 still trapped in NE China colliery flooding

Extract from Xinhua, China

CHANGCHUN -- Earth filling work in attempt to rescue 16 trapped miners in a flooded coal mine has been suspended in northeastern China's Jilin province, as the site was in danger with a possible new cave-in, rescuers said Sunday.

The flooding took place at about 1:55 p.m. Friday after a cave-in at Zhonghe Coal Mine in Meihekou city, trapping 16 miners underground.

New crevices have emerged, which pointed to probability of a new cave-in at the accident site. This halted rescue work and rescuers are considering new measures to reach the trapped.

On Saturday, rescuers used about 10 excavators to fill the cave-in nearly one kilometre away from the mine entrance, aiming to prevent more water coming out of drift sand.

"The rescue is extremely difficult this time," said Jia Changjiang, a coal mine rescue expert at the scene.

Among the trapped, 15 were local residents of Meihekou city and one native of Dongfeng county of Jilin.

The coal mine was licensed and run by the Zhonghe township with an annual capacity of 60,000 tonnes.



How to rob a snowman

Monday 30 November 2009

China: Mine rescuers make progress

Extract from China Daily

Rescuers have cleared a major barrier in their scramble to free 16 miners trapped in flooding deep underground in Northeastern China.

More than 40 rescuers will resume efforts to reach the miners after crew successfully managed to seal an area where there had been a cave-in.

The work means that additional water is no longer gushing into the flooded mine shaft.

The flooding began last Friday afternoon after a miner dug through a layer of quicksand containing water at the Zhonghe Coal Mine in the city of Meihekou, Jilin province, said local work safety officials.

"The rescue is extremely difficult this time," said Jia Changjiang, a coal mine expert, who was directing the rescue work going on below the surface.

As of yesterday afternoon, rescuers had been unable to make contact with the trapped miners.

Water, mud, gravel and coal had blocked the 200-m shaft inside the mine.

"Water is everywhere in the shaft, making the situation worse and worse," Jia said after investigating the mine underground.

He said miners were trapped in two places, with nine in one location and seven in the other area.

On the surface, the accident caused a crater 12 m deep and 20 m wide that was nearly a kilometre from the mine entrance.

The rescue is extremely difficult this time. Water is everywhere in the shaft, making the situation worse and worse. It is still not impossible to save the trapped miners.

JIA CHANGJIANG
Coal mine expert

Several excavators were used yesterday afternoon to plug the huge hole with lumber and sand, preventing more groundwater from filling the underground area threatening the trapped miners.

Song Wei, who is in charge of rescue work on the surface, said yesterday morning that 4,500 cu m of sand and earth would also be used to block the hole.

Workers have also continued to pump water out of the mine shaft during the rescue operations.

When the pumping is complete, rescuers will be able to remove the mud, sand and coal that is in the shaft, Song said.

"It is still not impossible to save the trapped miners," Jia said.



A miner (left) stands at the entrance of the Zhonghe Coal Mine in Meihekou, Jilin province, last Friday.
Ding Luyang

Fifteen of those trapped underground are said to be local residents from Meihekou while one is from Dongfeng county in Jilin province.

Their relatives have reportedly been arriving at the coal mine for more information on the situation.

The mine was licensed and run privately with an annual capacity of 60,000 tons, according to local authorities.

A gas explosion last weekend at another coal mine in Northeast China left 108 people dead.

The disaster at the Xinxing Coal Mine under the State-owned Heilongjiang Longmei Mining Holding Group's subsidiary in Hegang, Heilongjiang province, is said to be the country's worst in two years.

QLD: Miners' union wants coroner's recommendations enforced

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

The miners' union says it's concerned that Anglo Coal is not enforcing a coroner's recommendations into a fatal accident two years ago.

Jason Blee was killed at the Moranbah North mine in Queensland's central highlands region after being crushed by a shuttlecar in 2007.

After eight weeks of hearings, coroner Annette Hennessy handed down 18 recommendations including that underground coal mines review pedestrian and machinery access.

Construction union (CFMEU) spokesman Tim Whyte says a similar accident at Anglo's Bundoora mine earlier this month could have been prevented if the company had enforced the recommendations.

"The recommendations that came from the coroner touched on the reinforcement of no-go zones and the onus back on any operator of plant, whether it be underground or open cut, that prior to moving their machine, they must ensure themselves that there is no one around," he said.

"This doesn't seem to be the case at this point."

The ABC has contacted Anglo Coal for a comment.



China: Journalists, officials accused of mine disaster cover-up

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Ten Chinese journalists and 48 officials will be prosecuted for allegedly covering up a deadly mining accident.

Thirty-four miners and one rescuer died in the Lijiawa Mine last year, but the explosion which killed them three weeks before the Olympic Games was covered up.

It is alleged that mine bosses moved bodies, destroyed evidence and paid off family members to keep the accident quiet.

Ten journalists are also said to have been paid off.

The story did not get out for 85 days.

According to the China Daily Newspaper, the journalists and 48 officials now face prosecution.

Barely a month goes by in China without a deadly mine accident and journalists are routinely offered bribes not to report them.

This week in mining accident history

6 December 1907

Monongah Mine, West Virginia, USA

Underground Coal Mine

Methane & coal dust explosion

362 killed

Source: www.boisestate.edu



Monongah Mining Disaster

[The entrance of the Monongah mine following the disaster.](#)

The worst mining disaster in American History occurred in the community of Monongah, West

Virginia on December 6, 1907. Around 10 o'clock in the morning after a full force of 380 men and boys had begun their shift, mines number 6 and 8 of the Consolidated Coal Company shook from the impact of an underground explosion. A total of 362 men and boys lost their lives leaving 250 widows and over 1000 children without support.

The mines were connected above ground by a steel bridge over the West Fork River and underground by a labyrinth of tunnels. An enormous cave-in obstructed the main entrance of number 6 and above ground, the main opening was blocked by the wreckage from two strings of ore cars and two electric dynamo motors.



In the late 1800s children worked in the mines and were called breaker boys or slate pickers, they worked for \$1 to \$3 a week.

The underground structure was twisted into a mass of rock, wood and metal. The explosion disrupted the ventilation systems causing an effluence of deadly gases to be trapped within the mines. Those on the surface concluded that the men and boys who survived the explosion and cave-in would soon succumb to the gases. The poisonous fumes permeated the mines causing rescuers to work in relays as they had no protective devices, such as gas masks and could only work in the deadly atmosphere for fifteen minutes before resurfacing. Some of the would-be rescuers were seriously injured by inhaling the vapours and had to be taken away for medical treatment.

Fires in mines number 6 and 8 created an additional hazard of smoke, and flames which increased the problems involved in the rescue

attempt. The fire started on December 8th in the main entry of mine number 6 around midnight and the second fire started in mine number 8 shortly after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, delaying rescue work.

Crowds gathered at the entrances of the two mines waiting for news about their friends and family trapped in the mines. The news was disheartening. Many of the bodies brought up were mangled and burned. A temporary morgue had to be set up in a partially completed bank building to accommodate the victims. Bodies were identified by their personal effects and some were never identified.

The explosion was thought to have been caused by the ignition of "black damp" otherwise known as methane. This in turn ignited the highly flammable coal dust, which is found in all West Virginia bituminous coal mines. What ignited the "black damp" is unknown although two theories emerged, carelessness with an open lamp or a dynamite blast gone wrong.

Thirteen days after the accident, an official Federal government report on mining accidents and deaths was released. On December 19th The New York Times reported that the government document said the number of accidents due to mining explosions had steadily increased and the cause of these accidents were often caused by of "lack of proper and enforceable mine regulations." Another contributing factor was the absence of information on the explosives used in mining and the proper conditions under which they should be used. In comparison to the increase in mining accidents in the United States, European mining accidents had steadily decreased and this was considered the result of government intervention in these countries.

By 1908 the coal mine operators were starting to recognize that an unsafe mine was costly and unproductive. In 1909 the Engineering & Mining Journal stated that accident showed lack of efficiency and production in a mine and lack of productivity would result in lack of profitability

and therefore the installation of safety measures would increase the profitability. Concurrently, the Progressive Movement, seeking economic, political and moral reforms turned their interest toward the coal mining industry.

The Progressive Movement desired governmental regulations to improve working conditions in the mines. Mine operators hoped to stave off this government regulatory control by the implementation of their own safety practices. With the loss of more than 1000 workers in mining disasters, such as Monongah, between the years 1907-1909 Congress was pressured in 1910, to establish the US Bureau of Mines, an agency of the Department of Interior. The Bureau's responsibilities were to further research in mine safety problems and conduct mine inspections, but had little power to correct infractions. The Bureau functioned temporarily to satisfy both the Progressive Movement and the mine operators. For the Progressive Movement it exemplified a governmental involvement toward improving mining condition and for the mine operator it represented only a token amount of governmental control. This resulted in the establishing of some safety procedures by the mine owners, but these were minor and had little effect on the safety of the workers.

The mining disaster at Monongah increased the awareness of mine owners and the Federal government in the safety problems and lack of operational knowledge found in the mines. However, substantial changes in the system were not forthcoming. The Progressive Movement met with enough opposition to keep reforms to a minimum. The changes in safety procedures were time consuming and expensive. The mine owners made a token compliance and the Bureau of Mines had no power to enforce the regulations. For the men and boys that lost their lives at Monongah, the resulting changes were too little and came too late.

More pictures and information at:

<http://www.msha.gov/disaster/monongah/monon1.asp>

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Canada: Mine safety comes into question

Extract from Regina Leader-Post

An investigation continues into the death of a 28-year-old man who died Saturday at Mosaic's Esterhazy mine when a storage bin broke and buried him in potash ore.

The bin was holding about 500 tonnes of potash ore when it fell on the married man -- the father of two children -- and a second miner, who was rushed to the Regina General Hospital with injuries following the incident, which occurred around 2 a.m.

To date, the names of the two men have not been released.

"I can confirm that a bottom of the bin and the ore within the bin did fall on top of two workers at the mine," said Glennis Bihun, the province's executive director of Occupational Health and Safety.

She noted that raw ore bins are shaped like round grain bins, but have a cone-shaped bottom and are made from heavier steel. Instead of free standing on legs like a grain bin, the raw ore bin support structure is usually part of a building.

"A vibrating feeder draws ore from the bin feeding a belt conveyor similar to what an auger does from a grain bin," she said.

Three inspectors from the mine safety unit, which falls within the province's Occupational Health and Safety branch -- arrived at the mine Saturday morning and remained on the scene until mid-afternoon Sunday, Bihun said Monday.

"They have gathered some preliminary information to commence our investigation and will proceed with doing so in the days ahead," she said.

When asked about the safety record at the Esterhazy mine, Bihun said she couldn't provide details about an individual mine, but noted the

injury rate for all Saskatchewan mines is less than one per cent -- about a quarter of what it is for all other industries in the province.

"Government and the mining industry, the unions, the workers have worked very hard over quite a number of years to reduce the injuries and fatalities in this sector," she said. "By having achieved an injury rate of less than one per cent, it certainly demonstrates significant progress in that regard. However, clearly there is still more to be done."

The last mining fatality in the province was at Lanigan's Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan mine in September 2008.

Grief counsellors are available to help those affected by the fatality, said Chandra Pratt, the human resources manager for Mosaic Potash Esterhazy.

"We'll be continuing to have them come to the site, if necessary, to speak to the impacted employees," she said.

The 40-year-old injured miner is "pretty banged up" and has a broken nose, but he's expected to make a full recovery, Pratt said Monday afternoon.

The Mosaic mine in east-central Saskatchewan consists of two primary mine shafts, designated K-1 and K-2. About 30 workers at the K-2 mine were sent home following the incident.

"They are back at work although we're not operating," Pratt said. "They'll be deployed to other areas until the investigation is fully complete and all corrective measures are taken to ensure the site is safe."

Esterhazy, a town of about 2,500 people located a little over 200 km east of Regina, is known as "The Potash Capital of the World."

About 950 people are employed at Mosaic's Esterhazy underground mines. Esterhazy's K-1 mine officially began production in June 1962. The slightly smaller K-2 mine began operations in 1967.

WA: Mining company found guilty over death

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines has been found guilty of failing to provide a safe working environment in connection to the death of a contractor at its Super Pit operations.

KCGM has been on trial over the death of 25-year-old contractor, Mathew Harris, at the site in February, 2006.



An aerial view of Kalgoorlie's superpit (Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines)

The court heard Mr Harris died from head injuries after he crashed his utility into a parked truck.

In the Kalgoorlie Magistrates Court, KCGM was found guilty of one count of failing to provide and maintain systems of work.

The company will be sentenced later this month.

Wednesday 2 December 2009

WA: KCGM reviews safety after mining death

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines says safety procedures at the Super Pit may be reviewed after a magistrate found the company had contributed to the death of a worker at the mine.

KCGM was yesterday convicted over the death of 25-year-old contractor, Mathew Harris, in 2006.

Mr Harris died of head injuries when his utility crashed into a parked truck carrying protruding

drill rods, one of which smashed through his windscreen.

The company was found guilty of failing to provide a safe working environment and is due to be sentenced later this month.

In a statement, the company's General Manager, Russell Cole, says the company will examine the Magistrate's findings before considering whether to review safety procedures.

Thursday 3 December 2009

NSW: Safety guidelines target mine fatigue

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

The New South Wales Mine Safety Advisory Council is ready to roll out new guidelines at Hunter coal mines aimed at preventing fatigue-related deaths and injuries.

Mineral Resources Minister Peter Primrose has approved the plan.

He says fatigue and long working hours are a significant issue for an industry that has recorded seven deaths and more than 200 serious in the past five years.

Council chairman Norman Jennings says the guidelines will not be enforced, so the onus is on mine operators to implement them.

"What it doesn't do is limit hours of work - these are negotiated between the employer and workforce," he said.

"But certain types of work, many night shifts, long hours particularly, unplanned work are all precursors to the risk of fatigue.

"This guideline provides a sort of cascade, if you like, of measures to address things that might occur at certain workplaces."

The guide can be downloaded at: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/world-leading-ohs

Friday 4 December 2009

Thirteen given verdict for deadly N China iron mine landslide

Extract from www.chinaview.cn

TAIYUAN, -- Thirteen people were sentenced in north China's Shanxi Province for the fatal landslide which left 43 deaths and two missing last year.

The verdicts were given by the people's court of Loufan County on Thursday.

Yan Quewa, former head and Party chief of the Jianshan iron mine, was given jail terms of four years for his responsibility in the major accident.

For the same reason, Wang Jianzhong, former vice head of the mine, was sentenced to jail terms of three and a half years; Zang Long, former chief engineer, Ren Jianguo, former head of the quality department of the mine, and Wang Hailin, former head of the planning department, were sentenced to jail terms of three years; Zhao Guocheng who had been in charge of the mining groups was sentenced to jail terms of three years with a three-year reprieve.

Fan Jianliang, former deputy director of the people's congress of Loufan, Wang Zhufeng, former Party chief of the Miyuzhen village, Mu Jisong, former deputy director of the emergency rescue office of the Shanxi provincial administration of work safety and Chen Jinzhu, former vice head of the Jianshan police station, were all sentenced to jail terms of two years with a two-year reprieve for dereliction of duty.

Duan Jinwen, former vice head of the Majiazhuang police station, was sentenced to jail terms of 14 months with a 14-month reprieve for the same reason.

Chen Changyou, former vice head of the Bizigou mine and Li Guojun, former head of the letters and complaints bureau of Loufan, were exempted of criminal charges.

A pre-dawn landslide toppled a waste dump from a local iron mine on Aug.1, 2008, burying Sigou Village in Loufan County in the suburbs of the provincial capital Taiyuan and resulting in an economic loss of 30.8 million yuan (about 4.5 million U.S. dollars).

USA: MSHA, Ky. split on mine official

One hired him, one punished him

Extract from courier-journal.com, Kentucky, USA

HAZARD, Ky. — The U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration hired an inspector last year who had been accused by Kentucky officials of failing to perform his duties while he was a coal-company supervisor in an electrical accident that injured a fellow employee.

MSHA also had investigated the Feb. 9, 2007, accident at the Perry County Coal Corp.'s No. E 4-1 mine and issued a citation asserting that unnamed workers there engaged in illegal activity — performing maintenance on high-voltage equipment without first disconnecting the power source.

Not only was doing so “highly dangerous,” according to the citation, but MSHA also concluded that it was “a common practice” at the mine and that “management” was aware of it. The agency proposed a \$220,000 fine against Perry County Coal, which the company is contesting.

However, it is unclear what conclusions MSHA had reached about Harlan Fields Jr.'s involvement in the accident when it hired him as a safety inspector on April 13, 2008.

In response to an inquiry from The Courier-Journal about Fields' hiring — including what a background check disclosed — agency spokeswoman Amy Louviere would say only that he was “cleared for employment.”

Louviere said the agency's investigation determined that just one Perry County Coal employee, Alger McIntyre, “knowingly violated

mandatory health and safety standards” in connection with the accident.

McIntyre, who also was a supervisor at the mine, paid a \$500 civil penalty to MSHA.

MSHA declined to immediately release a copy of its investigative report on the accident or to answer several other questions about Fields. Louviere said both requests are being processed under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Fields, whose brother, Charlie, is an MSHA inspector in Barbourville, Ky., declined to be interviewed about the accident or his employment with the agency.

Marvin Hoskins, Fields' supervisor in MSHA's Hazard field office, also declined to be interviewed.

Although Fields was cited by a state inspector on the day of the accident for failing to perform his duties, the case lay dormant until last June, 14 months after MSHA hired Fields.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

S

sluice-head A box fitted at the head of a water race to gauge or measure the quantity of water diverted from a river or stream. Came into use as by-laws were developed to control water use, and as companies built commercial races. Aust. A supply of 1 ft³ /s (0.028 m³ /s) of water, regardless of the head, pressure, or size of orifice.

- Ed.



Honey, our lawyer wishes us,
but in no way guarantees,
a Merry Christmas.