



Mining Accident News No.1009

27 to 31 March 2010

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Happy easter
and keep safe



Saturday 27 March 2010

USA: Mine industry slow on safety gear upgrades, MSHA

Extract from the Charleston Gazette, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — America's top coal mine regulator says he will redouble pressure on the industry to meet a 4-year-old congressional mandate to equip the nation's underground mines with high-tech communications and tracking gear.

Mine Safety and Health Administration figures show 34 mines nationwide have functioning systems that meet its requirements. The agency says 491 mines are supposed to have the equipment.

The mandate was imposed after the January 2006 deaths of 12 West Virginia miners who became trapped underground following a methane explosion.

Mining companies were given until June 2009 to submit their plans to MSHA on how they intended to have two-way communications systems and wireless equipment to talk with and locate trapped miners. MSHA initially estimated complying would cost \$278 million.

MSHA data shows the agency has approved plans for 412 mines and 79 are pending.

Now, a disappointed MSHA Director Joe Main says it's time to start pressuring mine operators and manufacturers to speed up installation.

Main compared the approach to pressure tactics used to speed up the delivery and storage of extra oxygen supplies required by the same 2006 legislation.

"We'll leverage out whatever we can," Main said, noting that MSHA took six mine operators to court two weeks ago. MSHA's also cited 64 operations for not submitting plans on time —

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

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mostly mines located in Kentucky and Tennessee.

National Mining Association lobbyist Bruce Watzman says no one's happy with the slow progress, but he bristles at suggestions of foot-dragging by the industry.

"The fact of the matter is that this has proceeded more slowly for a whole host of reasons," Watzman said. "If there is fault, the fault is that I don't think anyone got very clear guidance from the previous leadership of MSHA."

Meanwhile, the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training disputes the inference from MSHA's numbers that the state's mines are behind.

The state also mandated wireless communications and tracking equipment following the Sago explosion and other fatal mining accidents in early 2006. The state requirement was passed before its federal counterpart.

"There is no place in the world that has more communications and tracking," said Randy Harris, an engineering consultant overseeing West Virginia installations. The industry has spent between \$125,000 to \$150,000 to wire each of the state's 197 underground mines.

"We've had several instances already where there's been problems and the communications and tracking system has worked and gotten everybody out," Harris said, noting new gear helped with evacuations during 2009 flooding in southern West Virginia.

MSHA's figures, however, don't reflect West Virginia's progress.

Instead, the figures show 20 mines in southern West Virginia and just three in the MSHA district covering northern West Virginia have systems up and running that meet federal requirements.

Harris says MSHA requires more equipment such as readers for tracking tags on miners that are closer together. MSHA also insists that mines have the gear within 200 feet of the

working face, or where the coal is being mined. West Virginia does not require gear at the face.

Data collected by MSHA's 11 districts nationwide show 46 mines have tracking and communications equipment installed and working, though just 34 meet all its requirements. Another 92 mines have partial systems running and 128 are working on installations.

"I think progress is being made everywhere, but the majority of West Virginia, they had kind of a head start," said Kevin Stricklin, MSHA administrator for Coal Mine Safety and Health.

Overall, Stricklin describes efforts to upgrade safety equipment as piecemeal.

"We have mines, as an example, in western Kentucky that have up to 90 percent of their systems installed."

Main shrugs off industry complaints about MSHA waiting until December 2008 to release plans for how companies were to comply with the mandate.

What's being installed underground are systems built around handheld radios that work through networks designed to survive explosions. Each miner wears a locator tag so he can be found quickly in the event of an accident.

At West Virginia's Sago Mine, communications were severed by the explosion and rescue teams were left to guess where miners were located.

"There's no question we're better off than we were the day before Sago," Main said.

India: Nine killed in mine collapse near Udaipur

Extract from Times of India

JAIPUR: Nine labourers including four women were killed and 13 others injured when part of a soap stone mine collapsed in Parsoli area of Pratapgarh district on Friday. The incident occurred when rocks came sliding upon the workers, twice within an interval of 15 minutes.

A part of the mine collapsed around noon, burying three labourers. The others rushed to their rescue and a second rock came sliding down claiming five more lives. Fourteen injured labourers were rushed to Udaipur's M B Hospital. One of them succumbed to his injuries on way to the hospital. The deceased, residents of nearby villages, were in the age group of 25 and 45 years.

Senior police and administration officers, including IG (Udaipur Range), rushed to the spot and immediately ordered rescue operations. Rescue work was started with help of residents of nearby villages.

According to police, the mine called Jai Polymers Pvt Ltd is located about four kilometers from Parsoli on Sabla Road.

B K Mittal, SP (Pratapgarh) said that about 22 labourers were working in a 5-km-long tunnel when a part of it collapsed. "Most of them got buried. Eight dead bodies have been pulled out so far. Thirteen other injured have been rushed to MB Hospital in Udaipur," said the officer. "It took the administration about seven hours to pull out all the bodies. We are searching for more bodies that may be buried under the debris," he added.

Mittal said that an FIR was being lodged against the mine owner and action will be taken against him in case of negligence. The officer said that they were investigating whether safety measures were being taken at the mine. Sources said chief minister Ashok Gehlot has also asked the police to launch an inquiry into the incident. A similar incident at a nearby mine, called Golachha, had claimed two lives a fortnight ago, claimed sources. Despite that, the administration did not ensure that other miners observed the stipulated safety measures.

Three trapped after fluorite mine accident in E China county

Extract from People's Daily Online, China

Three people were trapped underground after a fluorite mine's laneway collapsed in east China's

Jiangxi Province Thursday, local authorities said Friday.

The accident occurred at 5 p.m. Thursday at Geban fluorite mine in Shangrao County in Shangrao City of Jiangxi, said an official of the county's government.

As of 8 p.m. Friday, rescuing work was still underway. Provincial authorities had arrived and started an investigation.

Central China mine flooding leaves three dead, eight more missing

Extract from People's Daily Online, China

Authorities in central China's Henan Province confirmed Saturday three miners had been killed and eight others trapped underground a flooded mine.

Rescuers retrieved three bodies Friday afternoon; more than four days after a flooding occurred at 12:40 a.m. Monday in three iron pits run by Shunda Mining Co. Ltd. in Biyang County, trapping 11 miners underground, the county government said.

Rescue efforts were rather slow as large water pumps could not be installed in the mine because of complicated geographical conditions, said the county government.

Location of the trapped miners remains unknown.

Wang Xinke, deputy county government chief in charge of work safety, has been removed from his post shortly after the flooding.

USA: Efforts to remove 150-ton salt bin continue

Extract from Ithaca Journal, USA

LANSING -- Efforts to remove a 150-ton salt bin from atop a 10-wheel truck at the Cargill Inc. salt mine in Lansing entered a new phase Friday as crews attempted to cut through the housing of a conveyer belt system attached to the bin, company officials said.

A truck driver was pinned when the bin collapsed on the truck there about 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Tompkins County sheriff's officials said. Though they couldn't confirm the driver's status, sheriff's officials said he was likely killed in the accident.

Efforts to lift the bin off the truck have been deemed a rescue operation, said officials of the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), which ordered the mine closed during its duration. They're investigating the accident, they added.

The driver was 62 years old, MSHA officials said. Another worker was injured and taken to Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre, Pa., and is in stable condition, sheriff's and company officials said. For privacy reasons, the names of the two men haven't been released, said company spokesman Mark Klein.

The truck was parked under the elevated bin to receive a load of salt when the bin collapsed onto the cab of the truck, Klein said. The driver was an employee of a local trucking company, he added.

The other man was on the platform in the operator's booth, using controls to empty salt into the truck, Klein said. When the bin came down, he and the booth also fell, he added.

The conveyer belt delivers salt from the mine to the bin, Klein explained, and is one of the things holding the bin in place. The bin has been stabilized by cables, he added.

"It's going slower than we hoped, but we want to make sure no else gets hurt," Klein said.

Carbon monoxide thought to have killed five in southwest China tin mine

Extract from People's Daily Online, China

Five workers died probably of carbon monoxide poisoning in a tin mine in southwest China's Yunnan Province, local authorities said Friday.

Five miners of the Ruida Tin Mine in Gejiu City went to look for a missing co-worker after they finished their shift at about 11:20 p.m. Thursday. Four of the five collapsed while looking for their colleague in a disused shaft, said the survivor.

The bodies of the four miners and the missing one were recovered early Friday morning and were found to have probably died of carbon monoxide poisoning, according to the Yunnan Provincial Administration of Work Safety.

The mine, owned by the Yunnan Tin Company Ltd, has a production license.

Work safety officials and police were investigating the exact cause of the accident.

Colombian Mine Explosion Leaves 6 Trapped

Extract from Latin American Herald Tribune

BOGOTA – At least six people were trapped inside a mine in the northwestern Colombian province of Antioquia after an electric transformer exploded, it was reported Saturday.

An official with the Antioquia Provincial Disaster Response Department, or Dapard, told local media that although solid information is still lacking, emergency workers are hopeful "that these people are alive."

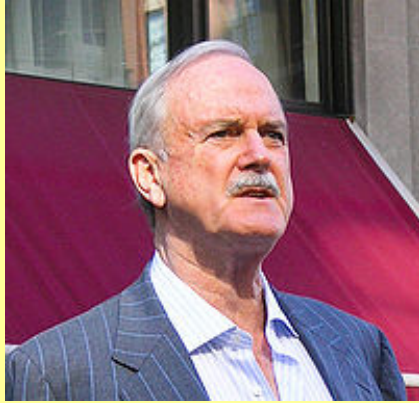
He said the transformer explosion occurred Friday night at La Providencia mine, located in the hamlet of Segovia.

A total of 32 people were working at the mine at the time of the blast, most of whom were rescued by emergency workers or walked out under their own power.

A group of emergency workers who specialize in confined-space rescue traveled early Saturday to the area. One of the main difficulties they must contend with is gas contamination inside the mine shaft.

The explosion occurred on level 10 of the Providencia gold mine, which is being developed by the Frontino Gold Mines, currently under bankruptcy protection.

Quote of the week



"If you want creative workers, give them enough time to play."

John Cleese,
(English comedian, 1939-)

Sunday 28 March 2010

At least 152 trapped in flooded China coal mine

Extract from Channel News Asia

BEIJING: At least 152 workers were trapped when a vast coal mine in northern China flooded on Sunday, state media reported, in the latest incident in the country's hazardous mining industry.

A total of 261 miners were working in the pit in Shanxi province at the time, and just over 100 managed to escape, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The mine in Xiangning county belongs to Huajin Coking Coal, and is 180 square kilometres (70 square miles) big, the report said.

QLD: Mine safety statistics released

Media Newswire (press release), Aus

Mines and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson has today released the Queensland Mines and Quarries Safety Performance and Health Report 2008-2009.

On releasing the report, Minister Robertson said nothing was more important than the safety and health of the men and women who work in Queensland's mines and quarries.

"While royalties from mining help build our schools and hospitals, put police on the beat and teachers in our classrooms, safety must always come first," Mr. Robertson said.

The Minister said Queensland has one of the best mine safety records in the world.

"It's in everyone's best interests to keep it that way. Safety must be the highest priority on every shift at every mine," he said.

The report reveals a general improvement in safety and health in the state's mines and quarries. The lost time injury frequency rate, which is a measure of the number of injuries per million hours worked, is down from 4.3 to 3.4.

"It reflects industry's efforts in making mines and quarries safer for its 40,000 workers.

"However, the average number of days lost due to injury and illness has risen from 32.9 days to 36.6 days per injury. Although there are fewer injuries overall, those injuries are more serious," he said.

"The industry watchdog, the Queensland Mines Inspectorate, is working rigorously with industry and mining unions to ensure the highest safety standards are met and maintained," he said.

"The most sobering statistic is on page 13 of the report. Four people died in 2008-2009 – in mining and quarry tragedies that shouldn't have happened," Mr. Robertson said.

"Those responsible for safety must fully play their part to ensure they never take their eye off the ball.

"Queensland has the best mine safety legislation in Australia. It must continue to be enforced, mine by mine, quarry by quarry.

"Nothing should stand in the way of a worker's fundamental right to a safe working environment and a fundamental right to return home safely at the end of a shift," he said.

View report at:

http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/zone_files/General_PDFs/minesafety_report-a.pdf

Eight Miners Rescued in Colombia

Extract from Latin American Herald Tribune

BOGOTA – Eight miners trapped inside a gold mine in Segovia, a hamlet in the northwestern Colombian province of Antioquia, have been rescued, officials said.

The miners were found on Saturday by rescue teams and were in good condition despite a lack of air, Antioquia Provincial Disaster Response Department, or Dapard, director John Fredy Rendon Roldan said.

The miners were trapped when an electric transformer exploded on Friday at the Providencia mine.

A total of 32 people were working at the mine at the time of the blast, of whom 24 were rescued by emergency workers or walked out under their own power.

Initial reports said six miners were trapped at the Providencia gold mine.

A group of emergency workers who specialize in confined-space rescues traveled early Saturday to the mine from Medellin, the capital of Antioquia.

The explosion occurred on level 10 of the Providencia gold mine, which is being developed by Frontino Gold Mines, currently operating under bankruptcy protection.

USA: Funeral Tuesday for man killed in mine accident

Extract from Ithaca Journal, USA

LANSING -- Crews have recovered the body of a driver who was killed when a 150-ton salt bin collapsed on his 10-wheel truck at the Cargill Inc. salt mine in Lansing.

The body of Rolland F. "Ron" Clark, 63, of Ovid, was taken from the accident site on Sunday afternoon, said company spokesman Mark Klein. A veteran of Vietnam and winner of the Silver Star, Bronze Star and two purple hearts,

Clark was working for Cayuga Crushed Stone Inc. of Lansing at the time of the accident.

The accident occurred at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Tompkins County sheriff's officials said. The truck was parked under the elevated bin to receive a load of salt when the bin collapsed onto the cab of the truck, Klein said.

A man who works for Cargill was on the platform in the operator's booth, using controls to empty salt into the truck, Klein said. When the bin came down, he and the booth also fell, he added. Though he didn't disclose the Cargill worker's name for privacy reasons, he said the man remains in stable condition at Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre, Pa.

Officials of the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) ordered the mine closed during efforts to lift the salt bin off the truck.

On Friday, crews cut through the housing of a conveyor belt system attached to the bin, which had been stabilized with cables, Klein said. On Saturday, they began remove salt from the bin before lifting it off.

They're cooperating with the MSHA investigation, and expect the agency to clear them to begin operations, Klein said. But out of respect for Clark, whose funeral is on Tuesday, they won't restart operations until Wednesday, he added.

"It's a terrible thing to have happened."

Monday 29 March 2010

QLD: Mine safety report reveals mixed results

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) says the state's mining industry has just reported its best safety performance on record.

The QRC says the latest report on mine safety in the state shows improvements in a range of key safety indicators.

There have been improvements in total injuries being reported and the frequency rate of lost time injuries.

But four people died in the 2008-'09 financial year in quarry and mining incidents and the time lost due to injury and illness has increased.

The QRC says there is no such thing as an acceptable level of death or injury, so health and safety of workers remains a priority.

It says it would also like to see future reports released more promptly because the most recent data is up to 15 months old.

Rescuers race to free 153 coal miners trapped by flood in northern China

Extract from Associated Press

HEJIN, China — Rescuers raced Monday to free 153 miners trapped by a flood that may have started when workers digging a new mine in north China accidentally broke into a network of old, water-filled shafts.

The derelict tunnels are posing new risks to miners even as China ramps up safety in its notoriously hazardous mines.

Rescuers raced to pump water from the Wangjialing coal mine in north China's Shanxi province that started flooding Sunday afternoon, work safety officials said. The state-owned mine about 400 miles (650 kilometers) southwest of Beijing was under construction and had been scheduled to start production later this year, the China Daily newspaper reported.

The accident would be one of the worst in recent years if rescue efforts fail and would set back marked safety improvements in China's deadly mines.

Some 261 workers were inside the mine when it flooded, and 108 escaped or were rescued, China's State Administration of Work Safety said in a statement on its Web site early Monday.

Fan Leisheng, one of the miners who escaped, described the sudden rush of water that tore through the mine.

"It looked like a tidal wave and I was so scared," Fan told China Central Television. "I immediately ran away and looked back to see some others hanging behind. I shouted at them to get out. It was unbelievable because I got out from 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) underground."

Pipes and pumping equipment had been delivered to the site and water was being pumped out of the mine, Liu Dezheng, a chief engineer with the work safety bureau in Shanxi, said during a televised news conference Monday.

China Central Television showed workers pushing trolleys loaded with water pipes toward the mine and a row of ambulances standing at the ready.

The official Xinhua News Agency reported that President Hu Jintao ordered local authorities to "spare no effort" in saving the trapped workers.

Officials have yet to declare the cause of the accident but experts said it was likely that workers broke into the old shafts or pits of derelict mines that had filled with water.

"It could be that they broke into old workings, works that were not properly mapped out," said David Feickert, a coal mine safety adviser to the Chinese government. "That's a common problem with flooding, and Shanxi is an area where they have very extensive mining, a lot of old mines."

Though China's mining industry is still the world's deadliest, it has dramatically improved its safety record over the last seven years, said Feickert, who is based in Wanganui, New Zealand and Beijing.

Accidents killed 2,631 coal miners last year, less than half the 6,995 deaths in 2002, the most dangerous year on record, according to the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety. That

means on average more than 7 miners die every day, down from 19.1 in 2002.

The decline in deaths comes amid a ramping up in the mining of coal, which fuels about 70 percent of China's voracious energy needs.

Much of the safety improvement has come from shutting down smaller, labor-intensive operators or forcing them into mergers with better-funded state companies.

Lu Jianzhang, a former researcher with the China Coal Research Institute in Beijing, also said that he suspected old mine shafts were to blame. If that were the case, it could brighten the prospects of finding survivors, he said.

"Since the amount of the water is limited and runs out after the initial flood, there is still probably hope for miners' survival," Lu said.

Wangjialing's parent company, Huajin Coking Coal Co., is co-owned by China's second-largest coal mining company, the China National Coal Group Corp., with the remaining 50 percent stake owned by the Shanxi Coking Coal Group Co., another major miner

This week in mining accident history

31 March 1969

Mina de Barroteran Coal Mine

Coahuila state, Mexico

Open Pit Coal Mine

Flooding causes avalanche

153 dead

Source: www.survivalring.org

Mina de Barroterán coal mine disaster was the second worst disaster in Mexico's coal mining history. The disaster occurred on March 31, 1969, and 153 miners were killed when flooding caused an avalanche.

The Mina de Barroteran coal mine is 220 kilometers (135 miles) south of the Texas border city of Eagle Pass.

As with nearly all mine disasters in recent memory, there are indications that this tragedy

could have been averted if better safety precautions had been taken. Accidents are common in Mexican coal mines because of the poor working conditions. Wages are substandard, in many cases less than US\$5.00 per day. Many workers are non-union, hired through labor contractors, and are poorly trained.

During the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, nearly 1000 miners died in explosions or flooding accidents related with the operation of coal mining in the Mexican state of Coahuila.

Tuesday 30 March 2010

USA: Manchin offers W.Va. help with Chinese mine rescue

Extract from Phillyburbs.com

Gov. Joe Manchin is offering to help rescuers trying to free more than 150 miners trapped in a flooded coal mine in northern China.

The governor's office says Chief of Staff Jim Spears extended the offer to China's U.S. embassy Monday.

The Chinese miners have been trapped since Sunday at the Wangjialing Coal Mine, a new operation due to start production this year.

Spears says state mine rescue experts could provide expertise via telephone and Internet to rescuers in China.

West Virginia is the second largest coal producing state in the country and largest producer from underground mines.

Leaks reported at China mine days before flood

XIANGNING, China — Workers reported underground water leaks days before a flood coursed through a coal mine in northern China, where 153 people remained trapped Tuesday in potentially one of the country's worst mining disasters, a worker and state media said.

There has been no communication with the miners since the flood tore through the

Wangjialing mine in Shanxi province Sunday afternoon. Some 1,000 workers are tunneling around the clock to drain away water but appear days away from making any rescue.

Officials have yet to declare the cause of the accident, but experts said it was likely that miners broke into the old shafts or pits of derelict mines that had filled with water.

The disaster is a setback to recent, significant improvements in the dire safety record of China's mining industry, the world's deadliest, claiming thousands of lives each year. Shanxi province is China's top coal-producing region.

Anxious relatives of those trapped — many of them migrants from other provinces — gathered at the site Tuesday and complained about what they said was the slow pace of the rescue work, saying they weren't seeing water being pumped out of the mine.

"We need to see some action to make us feel like they are doing all they can," said Long Liming, brother-in-law of one of the trapped miners. "They have the materials; the pipes are here, why aren't they getting to rescuing people?"

A Wangjialing miner said that workers had warned of water leaks in the underground shafts as early as last Thursday but were ignored.

"They told leaders, but nothing was done about it," said Yang Shengcai, 48, a miner from Hebei province. "They would call and say, 'There's water here,' but still nothing was done. I don't know why. This kind of thing is up to the leaders to handle."

The Beijing News reported Tuesday that the leaks were so bad that before the accident, workers had asked that pumps be brought in to clear some of the pooled water.

David Feickert, a coal mine safety adviser to the Chinese government, said hidden shafts are a common cause of mine floods. Shanxi would be particularly vulnerable, he said, because it "is an

area where they have very extensive mining, a lot of old mines."

The Wangjialing accident could prove one of the most deadly mine accidents in China since a coal mine flood in eastern Shandong province in August 2007 killed 172 miners.

China's State Administration of Work Safety said 261 workers were inside the Wangjialing mine when it flooded, and 108 escaped or were rescued. The 153 workers who remained underground were believed to be trapped in nine different places in the mine, which was flooded with up to 5 million cubic feet (140,000 cubic meters) of water, state television said.

It was unclear if anyone was still alive in the shafts, some of which extended a half-mile (one kilometer) into the earth. China Central Television said there have been no signs of life or communication with people underground since the flood happened.

The broadcaster reported rescuers have drilled 65 feet (20 meters) of a planned 400-foot (120-meter) water diversion channel that they hope can clear waters away from the trapped workers. Work had yet to start on a second, 980-foot (300-meter) tunnel leading from the ground straight down to the affected shafts because engineers were uncertain where to start the drilling, the report said.

Authorities were also worried that gases from the abandoned shafts may have flowed into the mine, bringing new dangers such as explosions or poisoning.

"The top priority now is to speed up pumping the water and achieve the goal of saving people," Luo Lin, the director of the State Administration of Work Safety, told China Central Television. "In addition, the drilling needs to be done faster too."

Zhao Chuan, a rescue worker, said intermittent electricity cuts were hampering their efforts.

Liu Dezheng, a chief engineer with the work safety bureau in Shanxi, said rescuers were

rotating on four-hour shifts and must be prepared to work for "at least seven days and seven nights."

Dozens of miners' relatives, including women carrying small children, gathered near the mine office, demanding rescuers do more. A few amid the crowd of about 60 people shouted at police who were trying to keep them from rushing into the office, though the scene was generally peaceful.

Tang Yinfeng, a migrant worker from the southern province of Hunan, said two of her younger brothers were trapped underground. "I want to bring oxygen tanks down," said Tang, 49. "I want to save them myself."

While deadly accidents are commonplace in China's mines, its safety record has improved as authorities have shut down smaller, labor-intensive operators or forced them into mergers with better-funded state companies.

Accidents killed 2,631 coal miners in 2009, down from 6,995 deaths in 2002, the most dangerous year on record, according to the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety. That means on average more than seven miners die daily, down from 19 in 2002.

WA: Mount Keith wins mine safety gong

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

BHP Billiton's Nickel West division has been recognised at the Chamber of Minerals and Energy's annual Safety and Innovation Awards.

Nickel West's Mount Keith operation won the chamber's Engineering Safety Award for a mobile communications structure which removes the need for working at heights.

The Industry Road Safety Alliance won the People category for its work in improving road safety in and around mine sites.

The chamber's David Todd says the awards highlight the progress being made in mine safety in WA.

"It's all about sharing good ideas, best practice. Its recognising the tremendous preventative work that's put in by the industry and the people and it's generally the people at the coalface, literally, or the mine face, who come up with the solution," he said.

"It's really a tremendous thing to see."

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

T

tipper/tipple A method of emptying *skips*, where the skip rails ran onto a framework that allowed the whole skip and rail section to be tipped or rotated over an ore storage bin or onto *screens*. Most commonly used in coal mines.



Old coal mine tipple, circa 1900s
New Castle, Colorado, USA

-Ed



THE EASTER BUNNY GETS A RUDE AWAKENING.

Slow down and drive safe this Easter