



# Mining Accident News No.1013

24 April to 7 May 2010

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Saturday 24 April 2010

## USA: Huge backlog in mine safety cases blamed for lax enforcement

*Extract from Associated Press, USA*

Federal officials ignored warnings three years ago that new mine safety regulations would trigger a surge of legal cases that could bog down enforcers. The backlog of cases is now blamed for thwarting enforcement at mines nationwide, including the site of a deadly West Virginia explosion.

Despite predictions of an overwhelming caseload, the head of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission told Congress in 2007 that he expected the rate of new cases to slow -- and so his agency didn't need more money.

Former Chairman Michael Duffy's estimate that cases would slow to about 3,000 a year were wildly inaccurate. They tripled in 2008, to nearly 9,000, as mine companies began aggressively contesting violations.

The backlog has ballooned to more than 16,000 cases.

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

Lawmakers and President Barack Obama have accused Massey Energy Co., owner of the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, and other companies of tying up resources with frivolous appeals to avoid tougher enforcement. The April 5 explosion at Upper Big Branch killed 29.

Sunday 25 April 2010

## USA: Obama pays tribute to fallen West Virginia miners

*Extract from CNN, USA*

**Beckley, West Virginia** -- President Obama paid tribute Sunday to 29 workers killed in an explosion at a West Virginia coal mine earlier this month, saying they died "in pursuit of the American dream."

"All the hard work; all the hardship; all the time spent underground; it was all for their families. ... It was all in the hopes of something better," Obama said during a memorial service for the fallen miners in Beckley, West Virginia.



Obama and Vice President Biden, who were among a group of dignitaries who spoke at the service, met with the workers' families privately before the ceremony.

In his eulogy, delivered from behind a row of 29 white crosses, Obama sought to comfort those loved ones.

"We have been mourning with you throughout these difficult days," he said. "Our hearts have been aching with you."

Biden offered similar words of comfort, saying the fallen miners "represent, what I believe is the

heart and soul and spine of this nation," and adding "a nation mourns them."

The April 5 blast at the Upper Big Branch Mine was the worst U.S. mine disaster in nearly 40 years.

Obama ordered a review earlier this month and blamed mine officials for lax regulation and lack of oversight.

On Sunday, he said: "We cannot bring back the 29 men we lost. ... Our task ... is to save lives from being lost in another such tragedy. To do what must be done, individually and collectively, to assure safe conditions underground."

West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin, who was a constant presence during the recovery efforts at the mine, also spoke at the service, telling the crowd of mourners that it was the day "to begin the healing process."

Manchin said each of the 29 men, like their fathers and grandfathers, had not only a strong commitment to their work, but also "a deep, patriotic pride that the work they did and the energy they produced made America strong and free."

He called on Americans to "say a prayer for every coal miner working today," and to "not only thank them -- but to honor them for their work and their patriotism."

He also made a vow: "After today, we turn our focus on their legacy," he said. "I don't have the answers about why this has happened, but I promise you we will find the answers."

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-West Virginia, echoed that vow during his remarks at the service, saying: "We will pass legislation to meet the requirements of those answers. And we will do it for you, the miners of West Virginia and America."

"West Virginia, all of West Virginia, is in pain, and not without some anger," Rockefeller added. "But we will find our solace and bind together as a community because that is what West Virginians do."

The somber service began with Manchin accompanying families as they lay helmets on top of 29 crosses.

A photo of each of the men killed in the disaster was displayed on large screens, and the crowd applauded for each one.

The service closed on a stirring note, as one by one, each of the headlamps on the symbolic helmets were lighted while a chorus sang "This Light of Mine."

Monday 26 April 2010

## **USA: York native dies in West Virginia coal mine accident**

*Extract from the Heraldonline, USA*

YORK -- The coal miner who died Friday after an accident in a West Virginia coal mine late Thursday night was York native John Dale "Johnny" King Jr. He was 28.

King grew up in York and moved to West Virginia six years ago after getting married. He had been a coal miner for about five years.



John King.

King, who was married with two stepchildren, attended York schools and worked at Auto Zone in York before moving to West Virginia, said Beth Crawford, King's friend since childhood.

"Johnny was the nicest guy in the world," Crawford said. "Like a brother to me and my brothers."

King's death comes just a couple of weeks after 29 miners died just miles away at another mine in the worst American mining disaster in

decades. President Obama attended a service for those miners Sunday.

The mine company, International Coal Group, issued a statement after King's death that said King was trapped between a block of coal and a piece of heavy equipment.

King was in surgery for hours but died Friday, Crawford said.

King was a firefighter with the Trap Hill Volunteer Fire Department and lived in Glen Daniel, West Virginia.

King's funeral is scheduled for Wednesday in West Virginia, Crawford said, but a local memorial service is possible at a later time.

## **Canada: One dead after Yukon mine shaft collapses**

*Extract from CTV, British Columbia*

A zinc-silver mine in the Yukon Territories collapsed early Sunday morning, killing a worker performing a maintenance check inside.

Mounties say the collapse occurred at about 3:30 a.m. in a mine shaft of the Wolverine Project, located about 600 kilometres northeast of Whitehorse.



Yukon Zinc Corporation's Wolverine Project

RCMP "M" Division spokesman Sgt. Don Rogers said three men were deep within the mine doing a routine equipment check at the time.

"Suddenly the mine, the roof, the wall, whatever it was gave way and two of the workers were hit by debris and knocked backwards," he said.

"A third worker was unfortunately trapped."

When emergency crews reached the trapped miner at 3 p.m. he had already died, Rogers said.

Of the two other workers, one was taken to hospital with bruises and released. Details of the other's injuries are unknown.

The cause of the collapse has not been determined, but several agencies remain at the scene conducting investigations.

"Workers compensation is out there, as well as representatives from the coroner's office and we've got members of the RCMP Major Crime Unit," Rogers said. "We want to ensure that we complete a thorough investigation,"

Vancouver resident Mike Redfearn, a miner for 40 years, says his grandson is an employee at the mine. He learned about the collapse when he arrived for work Sunday morning.

He was able to contact family in Metro Vancouver shortly after, but has not been heard from since.

"He's at the site and apparently they can't call out, there's very few phone lines and they're totally tied up," Redfearn said.

The mine has a good reputation in the industry, he added.

"I have not heard anything negative come out about this project," he said.

## **Final body recovered from flooded north China colliery**

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

TAIYUAN, -- Rescuers have recovered the last remaining body from the Wangjialing Coal Mine, which flooded nearly a month ago in north China's Shanxi Province, bringing the death toll to 38, the rescue headquarters said Monday.

A spokesman for the headquarters said the body was believed to be the last victim trapped in the flooded mine.

Altogether 261 miners were working in the shaft of the coal mine, which was under construction, when the flooding happened at about 1:40 p.m. March 28, but only 108 were lifted unharmed to the surface.

A total of 115 miners were rescued alive April 5 after being trapped for more than a week underground.

The rescue had been obstructed by the flood water gushing from a section of the shaft, which was adjacent to a disused shaft full of water and toxic gas, said the spokesman.

Rescuers believed the disused shaft had caused the initial flood when workers broke into it.

By Monday, only three of the 115 survivors remained in hospital, and the others had been discharged, said Liu Yang, a spokesman for Shanxi's Health Bureau.

"None of the three patients suffers any life-threatening ailments. They are under medical observation, respectively, for liver problems, a skin infection and a hand neural injury," he said.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, launched an investigation April 13 into the accident.

The investigation is being led by Luo Lin, chief of the State Administration of Work Safety, with deputies from the provincial government of Shanxi, the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety, the Ministry of Supervision and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

Luo blamed the flooding on poor safety and negligence, saying the accident "should and could have been avoided."

Tuesday 27 April 2010

## **USA: Gov't to step up mine enforcement, seek reforms**

*Extract from The Washington Post, USA*

WASHINGTON -- The government will start going directly to federal court to shut down mines that make a habit of ignoring safety, the

nation's top mine safety official told lawmakers Tuesday.

Joe Main, director of the Mine Safety and Health Administration, said his agency has had the power to seek federal injunctions for years, but has never tried to use it.

"I can't speak for past administrations," Main said during the Senate's first hearing on the accident that killed 29 men. "We're going to use it."

Main also called for a slew of other legal and regulatory reforms to beef up safety enforcement in the wake of this month's deadly explosion at a mine in West Virginia.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee convened the hearing to look at weaknesses in current laws that encourage mine operators and companies in other industries to challenge safety violations to delay stiffer penalties.

More than a dozen family members of the victims of past coal mine accidents clutched pictures of their loved ones as they sat in the hearing room.

"There is unfortunately a population of employers that prioritize profits over safety and knowingly and repeatedly violate the law," said Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, the committee chairman.

Harkin called the accident at the Upper Big Branch mine "a tragic example of the dangers of this approach."

The mine, owned by Massey Energy Co., was repeatedly cited for problems with its methane ventilation system and other issues in the months leading up to the accident. One category of serious violations was nearly 19 times higher than average.

But Main said Massey used a tactic popular with some companies to avoid being placed on notice of a "pattern of violation" that could result in tougher enforcement. Mining companies are contesting hundreds of citations, creating a backlog that is overwhelming government

officials. The massive backlog often delays a finding of a pattern of violation.

Lawmakers heard from a coal miner who said he used to work at the Upper Big Branch mine but quit because he claimed Massey tolerated unsafe working conditions.

Jeffrey Harris, of Beckley, W.Va., said mine workers would take a number of gas monitors to check for gas levels, but only report the lowest reading.

"They would take air readings until they got the right one," Harris said.

Harris said workers would tear down ventilation curtains and rehang them only when inspectors came. Workers also shut down equipment when inspectors were at the mine so they couldn't take readings while they were mining, he said.



[Massey Energy Co. board director Stanley Suboleski, attends a press conference Monday, April 26, 2010 in Charleston, W.Va. Suboleski and other officials spoke about the explosion that killed 29 coal miners on April 5, 2010 in Montcoal, W.Va. \(AP Photo/Jeff Gentner\)](#)

Main said he plans new rules to simplify the way his agency determines whether a mine has a pattern of violations. He also called for new laws that would grant MSHA power to subpoena documents during its investigations, enhance criminal penalties for egregious violators and protect whistleblowers.

Mining industry spokesman Bruce Watzman said there is no need for new regulations because MSHA already has the enforcement tools it needs. MSHA can use its existing authority to close mines for imminent danger or

seek federal injunctions to shut down problem mines, he said.

Watzman, a lobbyist for the National Mining Association, called for a new, cooperative emphasis on safety programs and warned that "regulations alone aren't sufficient to bring about continued improvement."

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., said it's unfortunate that lawmakers often react to the latest disaster when deciding to improve worker safety laws.

"But it's a heck of a motivator and it makes us do things that we otherwise might not have done," Rockefeller said.

United Mine Workers union president Cecil Roberts said he wants CEOs and corporate boards of directors held accountable for work sites that repeatedly violate safety and health rules.

"There's no question in my mind that people at the very top and the board of directors knew the company was in this kind of shape," Roberts said. He accused Massey of operating under a rule of "fear and intimidation" to prevent workers from speaking out about safety problems.

The hearing did not focus on the specific cause of the mine explosion, which is still being investigated.

Massey Energy chief executive Don Blankenship was not at the hearing Tuesday, but his company has defended its safety record.

The committee is also examining safety problems in other dangerous industries in the wake of a Washington state oil refinery blast earlier this month that killed six workers. David Michaels, head of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, discussed stepped-up enforcement to improve workplace safety.

## Two die, 7 injured in east China mine blast

*Extract from People's Daily Online, China*

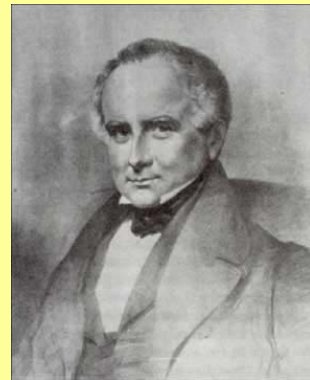
Two people were killed and seven injured in a mine blast in east China's Fujian Province Tuesday, local authorities said.

Explosives in a Shunchang county's mine went off at 9:35 a.m., killing two at the scene and injuring seven others, said the county's government in a statement.

Two with eye injuries were rushed to a hospital in the provincial capital Fuzhou and the other five went to Shunchang County Hospital, it said.

Police are investigating the incident.

### Quote of the week



"Failures to heroic minds are the stepping stones to success."

Thomas Chandler Haliburton  
(Canadian author, 1796-1865)

Wednesday 28 April 2010

## USA: Site of W.Va. Mine Disaster Still Unsafe to Enter

*Extract from Associated Press, USA*

Toxic gases are still keeping investigators out of the West Virginia coal mine more than three weeks since 29 men died in an explosion.

Federal officials said Wednesday they also believe there is some kind of fire or other heat source within the Upper Big Branch mine. They cite signs of acetylene and ethylene.

Mine owner Massey Energy has already pumped 7 million cubic feet of nitrogen into the underground mine to suffocate any fire.

The U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration says gas levels have been dropping, but they're

still too unsafe for anyone to enter. Agency officials are instead reviewing mine records and preparing to interview witnesses.

Investigators are searching for a cause behind the April 5 blast, the nation's worst coal mine disaster in 40 years.

## This week in mining accident history

**2 May 1972**

**Sunshine Mine**

**Kellogg, Idaho, USA**

**Underground Silver Mine**

**Mine fire and carbon monoxide gas**

**91 died**

Source: [www.usmra.com](http://www.usmra.com)

The Sunshine Mine is located about 8 miles southeast of Kellogg, Shoshone County, Idaho.

Employment totalled 522 persons, 429 of whom worked underground. The mine was operated on three 8-hour shifts, 5 days a week. Miners gained entrance to the active mine workings by walking along a 200 foot drift (tunnel) to the Jewell Shaft, and were then lowered to the 3100 and 3700 levels by means of a hoist (elevator), then transported by train to the No. 10 shaft and again lowered by means of shaft conveyance to their designated levels. The No. 10 shaft extends from 3100 to the 6000 feet. Production was being maintained on the 4000, 4200, 4400, 4600, 4800, 5000, and 5200 levels, with some development work on the 5400, 5600, and 5800 levels.

### Summary of Disaster

A fire of as yet undetermined origin was detected by Sunshine employees at approximately 11:35 a.m. on May 2, 1972. At that time, smoke and gas was coming from the 910 raise on the 3700 level.

On this date, the principal operating officials of the Sunshine Mining Company were in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, about 45 miles away, attending their annual stockholders' meeting. During their

absence, surface and underground foremen were responsible for the activities of their own crews, with no designated individual in charge of the entire operation. Shortly after lunch, about 11:40 a.m., two electricians stepped out of the electric shop on the 3700 level, smelled smoke, and shouted a warning.

This fire precipitated the death of 91 underground employees by smoke inhalation and/or carbon monoxide poisoning. A subsequent shutdown of production of 7 months followed. Evacuation efforts at the time of the onset resulted in 81 men being evacuated the first day and 2 men being rescued 7 days later from the 4800 level.

The Bureau of Mines believes the probable cause of the fire was spontaneous combustion of refuse near scrap timber used to backfill worked out stopes. Extensive ground falls and caving occurred in the immediate area when timber supports were consumed, making investigation of the entire fire area impossible. The Sunshine mine fire was the largest disaster in the hard-rock mining industry since the 1917 mine fire in Butte, Montana, which took one hundred and sixty-three lives.



[Memorial to the miners who died in the Sunshine Mine Disaster on 2 May 1972. The statue is 3.8 metres tall.](#)

The fire was one of the worst mining disasters in American history and is the worst disaster in Idaho's history. As a result, every miner in the U.S. now carries a "self-rescuer" (a breathing apparatus made with hopcalite and much simpler than a SCBA), which gives the miner a

chance to avoid death due to carbon monoxide poisoning. The Sunshine Fire was the catalyst for the Metal/Nonmetal Health and Safety Act of 1977, which put in place the MNM regulations currently in the USA.

Today, a monument to the lost miners stands beside Interstate 90 near the mine.

The mine ceased production in the first quarter of 2001 as a result of several factors, including the low price of silver and the lack of regular and consistent exploration and development activities due to prior management shifting cash flow from the mine to sustain corporate expenses, debt and other projects.

From historical records beginning in 1904 the Sunshine Mine has produced 364,893,421 ounces of silver from 12,953,045 tons of ore through 2001 when the mine was closed.

Sunshine Mine Disaster Video at:

[http://video.mining.com/videos/323c0/sunshine\\_mine\\_disaster\\_-\\_entire\\_video\\_\(niosh\).aspx](http://video.mining.com/videos/323c0/sunshine_mine_disaster_-_entire_video_(niosh).aspx)

Thursday 29 April 2010

## **USA: Two Kentucky Coal Miners Missing After Rock Fall**

*Extract from the Associated Press*

PROVIDENCE, Ky. -- Two coal miners were missing Thursday after an underground rock fall in western Kentucky, the mine and a union representative said.

Tim Miller from the United Mine Workers Union said at least two others escaped when a ceiling collapsed at the Dotiki mine near Providence, about 150 miles west of Louisville. Miller described it as a large underground coal mine.

"Rescue operations were initiated immediately, but efforts to contact the miners have been unsuccessful," a spokeswoman for the mine told the Evansville Courier & Press. She said the accident happened late Wednesday.

Calls by The Associated Press to mine operator Alliance Coal Company were not immediately answered.

Miller said he was called around 6 a.m. by a woman who had received a call from the mine. The woman said she was told her husband and her son, who were working in the mine, were safe, but that two other miners were missing.

Miller described a rock fall as a ceiling collapse, usually in an isolated area.

He said the Dotiki Mine is a large operation that employs more than 300 miners.

## **UPDATE: 2 Kentucky Miners Found Dead after Rock Fall**

*Extract from FoxNews.com, USA*

PROVIDENCE, Ky. -- A rescue team found a second Kentucky miner dead Thursday after a roof collapse at an underground coal mine with a long history of safety problems.

Kentucky Office of Mine Safety and Licensing spokesman Dick Brown said the two miners were killed in an accident at the Dotiki Mine near Providence in western Kentucky late Wednesday. Gov. Steve Beshear identified the miners as 27-year-old Justin Travis and 28-year-old Michael Carter.

"Our entire state mourns along with the families and friends," Beshear said in a statement. "Despite our sadness, we must press forward to the work ahead of us -- fully investigating what caused this accident and determining ways to avoid such accidents in the future."

Earlier in the day, Beshear said emergency crews had reached the site of the collapse, about four miles from the mine entrance, and were "within an arm's length" of the body of a miner trapped under rock when the roof became unstable and they had to retreat.

"About that time, the roof started moving again," he said. "Rocks started falling again. And they had to pull back."

Beshear also met with family members in the Nebo Baptist Church. While he was inside, a woman was brought out of the church on a



stretcher and taken away by ambulance. Family members had declined to talk to reporters.

State and federal records show more than 40 closure orders for the mine over safety violations since January 2009.



An entrance to the Dotiki mine in Hopkins County, Ky., is seen Thursday, April 29, 2010. Two employees at the Dotiki mine in Hopkins County, KY. are missing and rescuers were unable to contact them after a roof collapsed Thursday, April 29, 2010, officials said. Rescue operations are underway. (Photo AP)

Records show inspectors from the Kentucky Office of Mine Safety and Licensing have issued 31 orders to close sections of the mine or to shut down equipment because of safety violations since January 2009. Those records also show an additional 44 citations for safety violations that didn't result in closure orders.

MSHA records show the mine was cited 840 times by federal inspectors for safety violations since January 2009, and 11 times closure orders were issued.

The records show 214 of the citations were issued in the first four months of this year, and twice inspectors issued closure orders this year.

The accident happened while the miners were operating what's known as a continuous miner, a toothy machine that digs coal for transport to the surface, said Ricki Gardenhire, a spokeswoman for the Office of Mine Safety and Licensing.

Friday 30 April 2010

## **WA: Fortescue trial to proceed**

A wrongful death case against Fortescue Metals Group (FMG) will go ahead after a Perth court saw no basis in the dismissal of charges.

The miner had previously sought a dismissal of the charges of failing to provide a safe workplace following the deaths of two workers after Cyclone George swept through FMG's mining camp.

It stated that the laws under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for which it was charged did not apply as the miner is exempt.

Instead Fortescue claimed that its safety management procedures came under the Mines Safety and Inspection Act, aiming to have the case dismissed as the charges failed to identify the measures Fortescue should have taken to effectively avoid risks.

However, the court found no basis in these dismissal attempts.

The two workers were killed after Cyclone George hit Fortescue's camp 100 km south of Port Hedland, on 9 March 2007.

Fortescue is the first of several companies to go to court over charges arising from the cyclone

## **Canada: Tunnel fire shuts down Afton**

*Extract from Kamloops Daily News, British Columbia, Canada*

A suspected machine fire 300 metres below the ground in New Afton Mine's main tunnel shut down operations and put the mine rescue team to work Thursday.

No one was injured in the fire, estimated at about 1.5 kilometres down the decline, or main tunnel, for the copper-gold mine under development on Kamloops' western boundary. The provincial mine safety branch was alerted to the problem at the mine, which was put in lockdown mode

early Thursday and remained that way through the day.

The fire continued to burn and emit smoke, making it impossible for crews to get at the source. Late Thursday afternoon visibility

improved enough to send in a reconnaissance team.

The danger from a mine fire is risk of carbon monoxide poisoning as flames consume oxygen in the shaft.

Ron Allum, New Gold's vice-president of Canadian operations, said a worker operating a shotcrete machine — used to spray a cement-like mixture on tunnel walls — noticed it start to smoke at about 11 p.m. Wednesday evening.

"He checked for sources of the smoke and things were clearing up."

The worker radioed a supervisor about the problem and a decision was made to evacuate the mine and call in the mine rescue team.

"It was the proper thing to do," Allum said.

Evacuation of about 15 workers from the shaft took about 15 minutes and went according to plan, he added.

The rescue team, some of them called from home, conducted an assessment.

"They couldn't get as far as the machine before they ran into significant smoke. We pulled out the team and started monitoring."

Allum said there was no visible smoke coming from the entrance to the tunnel but visibility was poor in the shaft most of Thursday. The mine rescue team is equipped with oxygen.

Speculation is the shotcrete machine reignited. The only flammable items are diesel fuel, oil, rubber power cables, Allum said, adding the fire will eventually exhaust itself.

There was no estimated time to return to construction beneath the surface. Fewer than 20 people were off the job due to the fire and smoke.

Allum said the mine rescue team will determine what happened and if there are further risks.

## USA: FBI Investigating Fed Officials and Massey Energy Over Possibly Bribery

*Extract from AP/The Huffington Post, USA*

NPR News reports that the FBI is investigating the possible bribery of federal officials overseeing mining industry regulation by Massey Energy, the owner of the Upper Big Branch mine that exploded three weeks ago, killing 29 miners.

"The Mine Safety and Health Administration is the target of a federal criminal investigation," NPR notes, and "FBI agents are also exploring potential criminal negligence on the part of Massey Energy."

The nation's top mine safety official told lawmakers earlier this week that the government will start going directly to federal court to shut down mines that make a habit of ignoring safety.

Joe Main, director of the Mine Safety and Health Administration, said his agency has had the power to seek federal injunctions for years, but has never tried to use it.

"I can't speak for past administrations," Main said during the Senate's first hearing on the accident that killed 29 men. "We're going to use it."

Main also called for a slew of other legal and regulatory reforms to beef up safety enforcement in the wake of this month's deadly explosion at a mine in West Virginia.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee convened the hearing to look at weaknesses in current laws that encourage mine operators and companies in other industries to challenge safety violations to delay stiffer penalties.

Sunday 2 May 2010

## **USA: MSHA wants to toughen safety check rules**

*Extract from the Charleston Gazette, USA*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Before every shift worked in an underground coal mine, coal operators are supposed to check for safety problems. Violations are to be marked with a "danger" sign. No one is supposed to go to work until the violations are fixed.

At least that's what federal mine safety law has said since 1969, when Congress passed the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act.

But since 1992, that's not what the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration has required. That year, the first Bush administration weakened MSHA regulations, requiring mine safety checks to look for violations only if they posed an immediate hazard to miners.

Now, MSHA chief Joe Main wants to change that. Main, a former United Mine Workers safety director, proposed last week to restore the language Congress intended, as part of his plan to respond to the deaths of 29 miners at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in the worst U.S. coal-mining disaster in 40 years.

"We need a system that encourages employers to engage in planning and control of hazards," Main told a Senate committee last week. "This kind of planning, coupled with enforcement, will result in actual protection of workers."

The "fireboss" run in a coal mine is a key part of safety and health protections. A fireboss, typically a salaried employee or foreman, goes into the mine before a working shift to check methane level, air flow and other safety conditions.

Under the 1969 law, such safety checks -- called "pre-shift examinations" -- were required to be done within three hours before each shift.

Violations that were discovered were to be written in mine records, and warning signs

placed in the area of the violations. Under the 1969 law, this applied to any "condition which constitutes a violation of a mandatory health or safety standard" or "any condition which is hazardous" to workers.

For years, MSHA regulations to implement the 1969 law contained that same language.

But in 1992, MSHA removed the requirement that pre-shift examinations include warning signs for any violation of safety and health standards.

MSHA said at the time that the agency "recognizes that 'technical' violations of mandatory standards may not immediately endanger miners, but where such violations constitute hazards, danger signs must be posted."

In a new regulatory agenda announced April 26, Main's boss, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, announced that the agency was going to propose to revert to the pre-1992 regulatory language to conform to the law Congress passed.

"In the ever-changing mine environment, it is critical that hazardous conditions be recognized and abated quickly," the department's regulatory agenda said. "Operator pre-shift examinations for hazards and violations of mandatory health or safety standards are mandated in the Mine Act and are a critical component of an effective safety and health program for underground mines.

"While this requirement was previously included in regulations, the 1992 final rule addressing ventilation in underground coal mines only included the requirement that the pre-shift examiner look for hazards," the agenda said.

"The 1992 rule omitted from the regulation text taken from the Mine Act requiring examination for violations of mandatory safety or health standards," it said. "The reinstatement of this practice should result in reduced risk of injury, death and illness, and should lead to fewer citations for safety and health violations during

MSHA compliance inspections of underground mines.”

Monday 3 May 2010

## **China: Rescuers search for 5 trapped in flooded graphite mine**

*Extract from China Daily*

CHANGSHA - Rescuers are continuing to search for five people trapped underground in a flooded graphite mine in central China's Hunan Province, according to provincial work safety authorities.

The mine flooded at around 5:00 a.m. Saturday as five miners repaired the shaft laneway at the Xinyuan Graphite Mine in Heye Town, Guiyang County.

Local governments in the county and Chenzhou City, which administers Guiyang County, are overseeing the rescue.

Ouyang Zhaoxi, deputy head of the publicity department in Guiyang County, told Xinhua Monday the rescuers are having difficulty reaching the trapped miners as the flooded area is very deep underground.

Two pumps are pumping water out of the mine.

## **China: Mine blast kills 7**

*Extract from Global Times*

Seven people died and one was injured in a gas blast Sunday at a coal mine in Guizhou Province, the province's work safety authority said.

The accident occurred at Xinhua Coal Mine in Jinsha county where 68 miners were working in the shaft. Sixty-one miners escaped and the other seven were killed on the spot.

The coal mine is licensed with a designated annual production capacity of 150,000 tons.

## **Rescue workers recover 28 bodies from China mine**

BEIJING — Emergency workers have recovered 28 bodies from a mine in China's Inner Mongolia region that flooded in early-March, leaving three people still unaccounted for, state news agency Xinhua reported Sunday.

The workers had spent weeks draining the Luotuoshan coal mine, filling it with 8,000 cubic metres of rubble and pumping out more than 1.3 million cubic metres of water, said Xu Yongfeng, the deputy general manager of Wuhai Energy, the mine's owner.

On Sunday, 15 bodies were lifted out of the shaft, after 13 were recovered earlier, the rescue headquarters said. One other person died while receiving first aid treatment at the site, bringing the total number of deaths to 32.

Water gushed into the pit on March 1 and rescue efforts were declared finished two weeks later as no signs of life were detected.

China's vast coal mining industry is notoriously accident prone, with about 2,600 people killed last year due mainly to lax regulation, corruption and inefficiency.

Inner Mongolia, located in the north of the country, is one of the country's largest coal producing regions, rivalling the coal heartland of Shanxi.

Wuhai Energy is part of the mining giant Shenhua Group.

## **Chile: Breakwater Resources Announces Accident at Toqui Estatuas Mine**

*Extract from TransWorldNews.com*

Breakwater Resources Ltd. has announced the death of an employee caused by an accident at Toqui's Estatuas mine in Chile last weekend. The cause of the death is currently unknown and officials are currently working on the investigation.

Tuesday 4 May 2010

## **S.Africa: Harmony Gold Mining: Worker Dies In Accident at Joel Mine**

*Extract from FoxBusiness.com*

LONDON -(Dow Jones)- Harmony Gold Mining Company Ltd. said Tuesday that a rockfall accident occurred at its Joel mine in the Free State yesterday, resulting in the death of a mineworker.

### **Main Facts:**

Incident occurred Monday in a ledging panel, some 1,130 meters below surface.

Management, together with the Department of Mineral Resources will commence investigations Tuesday.

## **USA: Fatal Mining Accident Reported in Upshur County**

*Extract from WSAZ-TV*

UPSHUR COUNTY, W.Va. -- A fatal mining accident has been reported at a strip mine near Buckhannon in Upshur County.

Mine Safety Communication Director Jama Jarrett tells WSAZ.com a group of miners was moving some mine equipment when someone was hit with a chain.

The miner died, Jarrett confirmed.

No other details are being released at this time.

Wednesday 5 May 2010

## **NSW: Miner airlifted to burns hospital**

*Extract from Central Western Daily, Aus*

A CADIA Valley Operations contractor has been rushed to the Concord Hospital Burns Unit after being involved in a serious accident at the mine yesterday afternoon.

The NSW Ambulance helicopter flew the 28-year-old to Sydney after he sustained third

degree burns to 10 per cent of his body and further burns to another 20 per cent.



**INVESTIGATION:** Inspector Peter Atkins leaves Cadia Valley Operations after attending an accident where a contractor sustained third degree burns.

It was one of two serious incidents in the area that required the assistance of rescue helicopters at the same time.

It's believed the worker was splashed with petrol while refuelling a generator on the back of a vehicle, which subsequently ignited.

He also dislocated his shoulder during the accident, which took place near the mine's tailing dam.

Police attended the scene along with officers from NSW Industry and Investment's mine safety division.

An investigation is underway, Cadia Valley Operations confirmed late yesterday.

Police say there are no suspicious circumstances.

## **S.Africa: Three die in Buffelsfontein mine incident**

*Extract from Timeslive.co.za*

**Three employees died at Buffelsfontein gold mine during a fall of ground incident, the mine's owner, JSE-listed Simmer & Jack says.**

Mine overseer Johannes Hendrik Naude, 43, of Klerksdorp and shift bosses Adriaan JP Zietsman, 37, of Orkney and Steven Grobbelaar, 24, also of Klerksdorp, died during the incident at the mine's Number Five Shaft, on level 27 on Tuesday.

The men were engaged in a routine inspection at the time of the incident.

"This is an extremely difficult time for our mining community and we extend heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the deceased," Nico Schoeman, chief executive of Simmers, said in a statement.

The mine's Number Five Shaft remained closed pending an investigation into the incident.

## USA: Victim of W.Va. coal plant accident identified

*Extract from The Associated Press, USA*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Regulators have released the name of a man killed in an accident at an idled West Virginia coal processing plant.

Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere identified the victim as David Lincolnogger on Wednesday. The 74-year-old Lincolnogger was hit in the head with a hook that snapped off a tow chain at the Adrian Prep Plant in Upshur County.

Lincolnogger worked for an equipment dealer. Louviere says he was at the plant Tuesday to remove an excavator he'd purchased.

It's unclear whether Lincolnogger's death will be considered mining related. Louviere says that will be decided by MSHA's fatality review committee.

Lincolnogger would be the 36th person killed at a U.S. coal mine this year, including 29 in an explosion at West Virginia's Upper Big Branch mine April 5.

## USA: Report released about deadly mining accident

*Extract from WYMT News, USA*

The Mine Safety and Health Administration issues a report about a deadly mining accident last year.

It happened at Sapphire Coal Company's Sandlick Two Mine in Letcher County.

On December 16th, 2009, Phillip Newton died after a piece of rock fell from a roof and trapped Newton beneath it.

The report says the accident occurred because the operator failed to follow the approved roof control plan.

<http://www.msha.gov/FATALS/2009/FTL09c18.asp>

Thursday 6 May 2010

## India: 4 dead, six trapped in Chhattisgarh coal mine accident

*Extract from indianexpress.com*

Raipur: A deputy general manager of Public Sector South Eastern Coal Fields Limited (SECL) and three workers were killed and 30 others were injured, a dozen of them seriously, in a blast inside a coal mine today while they were trying to plug a Carbon Monoxide leak at Anjani Hill mine at Chirmiri in Koriya district of Chhattisgarh.

"Six workers are still trapped inside the coal mine that caved in due to the blast. Rescue operations are in full swing" Koriya district collector Alok Awasthi told The Indian Express over telephone from the accident spot.

He said SECL's Deputy General Manager (operations) S K Goswami and a worker died immediately after the accident around afternoon while another worker died on his way to the hospital. He said 14 injured were admitted to the local hospital while seriously injured have been referred to a specialty hospital at Bilaspur being run in association with the SECL.

## Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

### U

**underlay**

Also 'underlie'. An inclined shaft following the dip of an ore body.

-Ed