



Mining Accident News No.1014

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Saturday 8 May 2010

Siberia: 12 dead, 41 injured in Russian coal mine accident

Extract from the Tehran Times, Iran

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Death toll from the coal mine blasts in Russian Siberia region has risen to 12, a spokesman for the Kemerovo region told Interfax news agency Sunday.

Another 41 were injured in the coalmine explosions a regional emergency department source was quoted by Itar-Tass.

Methane exploded twice in hours in Russia's biggest coal mine, trapping some 60 workers and then a group of 20 rescue workers who went after them, reported EuroNews.

After the second explosion on Sunday, contact with three rescue teams -- 20 rescuers -- is lost, the source said.

It was just too dangerous to continue rescue attempts and the governor of Kemerovo region Aman Tuleyev took the decision to suspend rescue efforts until the methane has dispersed, and ventilators damaged in the explosion repaired.

Underground sections of the mine are filled with smoke, and it is impossible to continue the operation. Work is underway now to clear the mine of smoke.

According to the updated information, 359 people were in the mine when the first explosion occurred on Saturday at 20:55 Moscow time. However, the mining company confirmed that 312 people, according to the lists, were underground at the moment.

The families of those killed are likely to receive \$33,000 in compensation from the mine's owner, along with compensation paid by the state and regional authorities, a spokesman for the regional administration said.

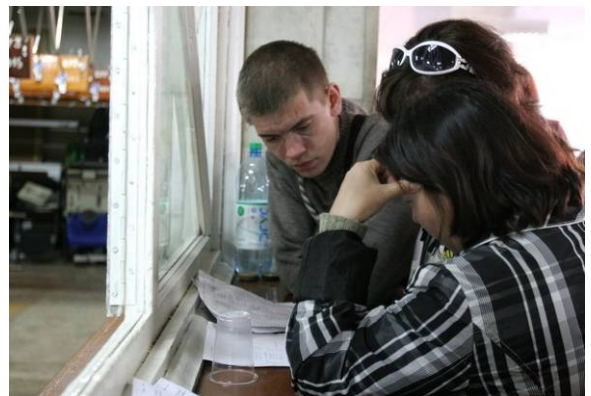


Photo: Relatives read the list of trapped miners in Kemerovo region in Russia's coal-rich Kuzbass region, May 9, 2010. (Photo: Reuters)

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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Sunday 9 May 2010

USA: Regulators ignore warnings of 'intake air' mine blasts

Extract from Charleston Gazette, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Late on the morning of March 9, 1976, a huge explosion ripped through the Scotia Mine in Letcher County, Ky. Fifteen workers died. Two days later, 11 more were killed in a second blast.

Federal investigators traced the first fatal explosion to sparks from a battery-powered locomotive being used in a fresh-air intake tunnel in the underground mine.

Air in the tunnel should have been free of explosive methane and coal dust. But various ventilation violations by Scotia Coal Co. allowed methane to build up in the tunnel.

And use of the battery-powered locomotive, with gears, air brakes and a compressor that could have easily created sparks, was perfectly legal -- then and now.

In most parts of an underground coal mine, operators must use only explosion proof, or "permissible" electrical equipment. Such special gear is not required in fresh-air intake tunnels, which are supposed to be free of explosive gases and dust.

But in the three decades since Scotia, at least seven other major coal-mining explosions were caused by the use in intake airways of electrical equipment not designed to prohibit sparks, according to federal government reports.

Over the last 34 years, nearly half of the deaths from mine explosions occurred in intake airways, the reports show. Some were ignited by miners smoking, or by sparks from rock hitting rock in a roof fall. But in most cases, those intake tunnel explosions were traced to the perfectly legal use of regular electrical vehicles, circuit breakers, belt controls, cables and other gear, instead of specially designed explosion-proof equipment.

The issue is a "considerable problem," according to Tom Dubaniewicz, an electrical engineer who has researched intake airway explosions for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Dubaniewicz wrote two papers for NIOSH about the problem, one in September 2007 and another in January 2009. Both papers, widely available to the mining industry and its regulators, called for reforms in the type of electrical equipment allowed in intake airways in underground coal mines.

"There really is no law applicable to sparking equipment in the intakes," Dubaniewicz said in an interview last week.

And so far, despite the 34-year record of deadly explosions, no one has proposed any changes in federal law or U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration regulations to address the problem.

Asked last week if the agency was aware of the NIOSH research, thought it revealed a serious problem, or planned any action in response, MSHA officials issued a two-sentence statement.

"We will take a look at the findings of the report, and see where they're at with their recommendations," the statement said. "Then we will meet with NIOSH officials to discuss where we go from here."

Investigators have yet to begin sifting through evidence underground to pinpoint the ignition source in the April 5 explosion that killed 29 miners at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County. It will be many months before conclusions are drawn or reports made public about the worst U.S. coal-mining disaster in 40 years.

A preliminary MSHA report, ordered by President Barack Obama, blamed the blast on an ignition of methane that was probably made far worse by a buildup of highly explosive coal dust.

Investigators say they are starting out focused on two theories about possible ignition points: One is in the "gob," or the unsealed, mined-out area where the roof caves in behind Upper Big Branch's longwall mining machine; the other is in a "development section," where continuous mining machines prepare for the longwall to work. One possibility, investigators said, is that the ignition could have occurred in an intake airway in that development section.

But regardless of where the Upper Big Branch explosion was ignited, mine safety experts last week said the two reports Dubaniewicz prepared for NIOSH offered stark evidence of another area where mine safety rules have not kept up with clearly known problems that lead to large numbers of deaths.

Celeste Monforton, a former MSHA staffer who teaches public health and workplace safety at George Washington University, recalled that after the Sago Mine disaster in 2006 regulators began looking at previous accident reports and NIOSH research that clearly showed lightning strikes and weak mine seals could combine to create a major disaster.

And in the case of the intake airway explosions, Monforton noted, state and federal regulators wrote reports of each incident, but apparently never connected the dots and updated their safety standards.

"It sends these shivers down my spine," Monforton said as she read Dubaniewicz's papers last week. "It's very disturbing."

Several coal industry officials did not respond to requests for comment for this story.

Davitt McAteer, a longtime mine safety advocate who ran MSHA during the Clinton administration, said the need for explosion-proof equipment only tells part of the story.

McAteer said proper design and operation of underground mine ventilation systems should keep explosive gases and coal dust out of intake airways. In each of the instances cited by Dubaniewicz, problems started when mine

operators did not design good ventilation systems or violated their ventilation plans, allowing methane or coal dust to build up in those intake tunnels.

At Scotia, for example, the company had redirected fresh air meant for the area where the first explosion occurred into other parts of the mine.

Federal investigators cited the company for "inadequate ventilation" and for not conducting pre-shift methane checks of the area where the ignition occurred.

"We ought to only have permissible equipment in the intakes, but the rest of the story is the negligence of the operators and the fact that proper ventilation could have prevented these," McAteer said. "But because this is an industry that neglects redundant safety systems, we need to add more redundancies."

Dubaniewicz began his research while reading the MSHA report on the series of explosions in September 2001 that killed 13 miners at the Jim Walter Resources No. 5 Mine in Brookwood, Ala.

The initial explosion, which seriously injured one miner, was later traced to arcing of a battery charging system that was damaged by a roof fall.

The second blast, which claimed the lives of 12 miners headed to rescue their injured co-worker, was linked to a traffic light system for underground vehicles.

"I was kind of surprised to see that the ignition locations for both explosions were in the intakes," Dubaniewicz said.

After its own investigation of the Brookwood disaster, the United Mine Workers union recommended tougher rules for insulation of electrical wiring and for "increased safety" requirements for some installations, such as battery charging stations.

"Obviously, you cannot take equipment out of the intake airways," said Dennis O'Dell, the

UMW's safety director. "But there are things that can be done."

Mine explosions

Here is a list of mine explosions that occurred in intake airways and were blamed on sparks from electrical equipment that was not explosion proof:

-- March 9 and 11, 1976 -- A total of 26 miners were killed in two explosions at the Scotia Mine in Letcher County, Ky. The first of the fatal blasts, which killed 15 miners, was blamed on sparks from a battery-powered locomotive used in an intake air tunnel.

-- Nov. 7, 1980 -- Five miners died in an explosion at Westmoreland Coal's Ferrell No. 17 Mine near Uneeda, W.Va. Investigators trace the ignition to a locomotive used in an intake airway.

-- June 21, 1983 -- Seven miners are killed in an explosion at Clinchfield Coal Co.'s McClure No. 1 Mine at McClure, Va. The ignition was believed to have been caused by sparks from one of the following: a battery-powered mantrip, a circuit breaker, a dinner hole light connection, an electrical cable plug, or a cable for a conveyor belt feeder.

-- July 4, 1983 -- One miner is killed at Helen Mining Co.'s Homer City, Pa., Mine. Investigators blame arcing on mine vehicle controls.

-- Feb. 16, 1984 -- Three miners die in an explosion at Pennsylvania Mine Corp.'s Greenwich Collieries No. 1 Mine in Indiana County, Pa. Arcing of a battery powered locomotive is blamed.

-- Dec. 26, 1987 -- One miner dies in a methane and coal dust explosion at Double R Coal's No. 1 Mine in Duty, Va. Investigators blame two power centers, a battery charging cable and a scoop vehicle.

-- Sept. 13, 1989 -- Ten miners died at Pyro Mining Co.'s Pyro No. 9 Slope William Station Mine at Wheatcroft, Ky. Investigators could not

pinpoint whether the ignition occurred at the mine face or in the intake airway, but among the possible sources was a wire in the intake.

-- Sept. 23, 2001 -- Thirteen miners die in a series of explosions at the Jim Walter Resources No. 5 Mine in Brookwood, Ala. The two major explosions were linked to electrical equipment in the intake tunnels.

Sources: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration

Monday 10 May 2010

USA: West Va. starts mining safety tip line as safety violations pile up

Extract from CivSource, USA

West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin announced the creation of a Mine and Industrial Accident Safety Hotline/TipLine for people to report potentially harmful conditions at mines and industrial sites across the state. The move is part of the state's response to the growing concerns about mine safety after the deadly collapse at the Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia in April.

The tip line will be open 24 hours a day/7 days a week and will be managed by the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management call center. Callers may choose to remain anonymous.

"I want all miners and workers from any other industry in West Virginia to feel empowered to report problems in the workplace without fear of retribution," said Gov. Manchin. "This hotline will hopefully encourage more workers to become involved in strengthening safety procedures from the front lines."

The Governor chose the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management call center in order to ensure that an independent agency was taking the calls and then routing them to the appropriate regulatory

or law enforcement body. Regulators or law enforcement who get a call from the call center will also be required to report back on how each issue has been addressed. The tip line operators are also trained to handle situations where emergency response may be involved.

The state is also looking at creating a special group of inspectors to police mines with repeat safety violations, a measure outlining such a group is expected to come before the state legislature in a special session this week. Under the new plan, the state Secretary of Commerce would manage four special enforcement and accident prevention teams that would target troubled mines.

Investigations into the explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine continue at both the state and federal levels, investigators have been unable to get back into the mine as conditions inside remain gaseous and unsafe.

The Obama administration has pushed for increased inspections and safety measures as part of the federal response to the explosion. A sweeping inspection from federal regulators last month resulted in MSHA issuing 1,339 citations and 109 withdrawal orders which require miners to leave unsafe mines. All told, the citations and orders were given to 57 mines across 10 states, some with repeat offenses and troubled safety records.

The Mine and Industrial Accident Safety Hotline/Tip Line can now be accessed at 1-866-808-0875 any time of day or night.

Tuesday 11 May 2010

Coal mine accident traps nine in northwest China

Extract from China Daily

LANZHOU - A coal mine accident trapped nine people underground in northwest China's Gansu Province Tuesday, local authorities said.

The accident took place at about 8:30 a.m. at a shaft of the Jinhe Coal Mining Company in the

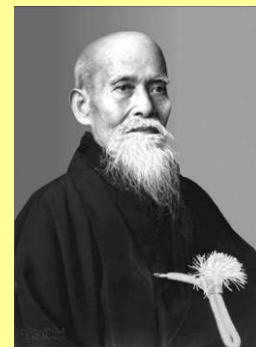
suburbs of Lanzhou, the provincial capital, the Gansu Provincial Works Safety Administration said in a statement.

The administration said the accident was related to gas, but did not specify the nature of the accident.

No further details were provided.

Xinhua reporters are en route to the site.

Quote of the week



"Progress comes to those who train and train; reliance on secret techniques will get you nowhere."

Morihei Ueshiba
(Japanese aikido founder, 1883-1969)

One killed, several trapped in Bangladesh coal mine accident

Extract from the Thaindian News, Bangladesh

Dhaka, (IANS): A miner was killed and several others remained trapped Tuesday in a coal mine accident in northern Bangladesh, a media report said.

The accident took place about 400 metres underground in Barapukuria coal mine at Dinajpur in northern Bangladesh.

The country's first such accident saw a day-long rescue operation comprising around 200 staff of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL), and Chinese mining consortium CMC-XMC in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur.

Around 7:45pm the last trapped person, a Chinese miner named Swing, was rescued.

The dead was identified as Ranjit, The Daily Star reported on its website.

Sources at Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd said 13 workers were trapped when a roof collapsed around 8.30 a.m.

Eight workers were rescued and rushed to the company's hospital. The body of Ranjit was also recovered.



Rescuers take a coalminer to hospital after a tunnel roof collapse trapped miners in the Barapukuria coalmine yesterday morning.

The company is under the state-run Petrobangla and is engaged in coal mining since 1988.

The rescue operation was being slowed down due to excessive heat underground, and high gas density in the mineshaft, a BCMCL source said.

A competent source of the company said mine roof collapse is a common accident in underground mines. In this case, the accident happened because the mining in Face 1108 was being done without creating any pillar to support the roof.

"Normally we create a pillar to support the roof. But sometimes we go for long wall mining without creating any pillar. It is risky. In the past, we extracted coal from another face that had no pillar," he said.

The miners were feeling uncomfortable about the roof for the last couple of days, he added.

Managing Director of BCMCL Quamruzzaman was not available for comments as he is abroad on an official tour. Other officials of the company declined to comment.

Few years ago, a British mine expert died from poisonous gas inhalation inside the mine. Another mine accident of a different nature

occurred there in 2004, in which four miners were trapped, and later rescued.

The mine faced a major disaster in the late 1990s during its development phase, when underground water flooded the original shaft, stalling the mine's progress for many months. Ultimately it had to be re-designed.

In a media release, the Chinese embassy said its commercial counsellor Lin Weiqiang was sent to the mine to oversee the rescue operation spearheaded by the Chinese contractor.

Md Shamsul Alam, acting deputy commissioner of Dinajpur, and Hasan Muhammad Shawkat Ali, acting superintendent of Dinajpur police also visited the spot in the afternoon.

S.Africa: Samancor expects severe production losses after mine accident

Extract from metalbulletin.com

Samancor, South Africa's second-largest ferrochrome producer, is expecting "severe production losses" at its mining operations following a fatal accident late last week. "Samancor Chrome management stopped all blasting activities at Eastern chrome mines directly after the incident," a company representative told MB in an email. "The [Dept of Mineral Resources] also requested that all blasting activities be stopped pending an investigation into the incident, which is currently under way in collaboration with them and union representatives.

Wednesday 12 May 2010

Canada: Worker killed at potash mine

Extract from the Leader-Post, Canada

Few details are being released about the death of an Agrium Inc. employee Tuesday at the company's Vanscoy potash operation.

Mine manager Todd Steen said the worker was above-ground in the mill when the fatal injury occurred at about 1:30 p.m.

Information about the employee's gender, age and position were withheld Tuesday by the RCMP.

A United Steelworkers union member who works at the Vanscoy mine site told The StarPhoenix the employee -- an electrician -- had been killed after being struck in the head with what was described as a metal shiv.

The union's safety liaison later confirmed he was struck in the head by a "piece of rigging device."

Steen said it's too soon to release details of the accident.

"We're in such early stages of the investigation that I think at this point to speculate on what happened would really be just that, it would be speculation," he said.

The company has brought in grief counsellors to speak to the deceased employee's co-workers, said Steen.

Agrium sent representatives to meet with the family of the fatally injured worker.

The Vanscoy operation has been shut down for an indefinite period of time.

The death has sparked a province-wide ban on the type of lifting being performed at the mine.

"It's a technique used throughout the province. It will end," said Kelly Reynolds, a safety liaison for United Steelworkers Local 7552.

The initial investigation has been complete and it is now up to the health and safety committee at the mine to wrap up its investigation, he said. The family has been notified and it is up to them if they will release the worker's name.

This was the seventh worker killed at the site since mining began in 1968, and the 53rd worker to be killed in 52 years of potash mining in the province.

Reynolds commended the mine for its response to the death.

"I have to commend the company because that's not typically the way companies work in the province," he said. "The mine has been really responsive."

No other employees at the potash operation were injured in Tuesday's incident.

Glennis Bihun, executive director of the occupational health and safety (OHS) branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, said two OHS inspectors were conducting an investigation at the scene on Tuesday.

"It is our job to conduct an investigation into the events that led up to this incident and identify the causes of this incident and look for ways to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future," she said.

The mine produces about 1.8 million tonnes of potash annually.

USA: Mingo County Miner Hospitalized After Mining Accident

Extract from WSAZ3, news channel, USA

MINGO COUNTY, W.Va. (WSAZ) -- A miner is in the hospital after a mining accident in Mingo County.

The accident happened Monday afternoon at the Ruby Energy Mine owned by Massey Energy.

According to a mine safety spokesperson, a continuous miner operator was struck by a shuttle car and pinned between the car and the wall of the mine.

The miner was taken to St. Francis Hospital in Charleston.

No other information is being released at this time, including the miner's name.

Thursday 13 May 2010

Putin Consoles Families at Scene of Siberian Coal Mine Tragedy

Extract from Radio Free Europe



Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (right) visits a victim of the Rospidskaya mine disaster at a hospital in Novokuznetsk today.

As the death toll from the Rospidskaya mine disaster in Siberia continues to climb, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited Siberia's Kemerovo region today to mourn with relatives of victims, visit the injured, and help the community cope.

Russian authorities have raised to 60 the confirmed number of miners and rescue workers who have died as a result of the double explosion in the mine during the weekend. Thirty other miners are still missing. Scores of others were injured by the blasts.

Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu admitted that "there is less and less hope in the search for survivors."

Shoigu said that, so far, workers have recovered only corpses, including the bodies of 19 rescue workers who descended into the mine after the first explosion and were cut off by a second blast.

A visibly strained Putin -- dressed in black and with his voice choked with emotion -- told distraught relatives in the nearby city of Novokuznetsk that their situation is "so awful and tragic that no words of condolence are appropriate."

Compensation to Families

Putin said all of Russia is suffering from the disaster. He said the Russian government would do all it could to help, including the payment of compensation to relatives of those who died.

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Mourners carry flowers and a picture of 50-year-old Fedor Akintiyev, one of the dead miners, at his funeral today in Mezhdurechensk.

"Assistance must be targeted and should not be limited to one-time payments," Putin said. "We should provide housing to the families in need, help organize children's holidays and their further education."

Some officials have suggested the blasts could have been triggered by a sudden buildup of methane gas.

Meeting with local officials in Kemerovo today, Putin said it is important to conduct a thorough investigation into the causes of the tragedy.

"We need to know what caused so many casualties, what caused a tragedy this big," he said. "[We need to know] if mining was carried out properly, if measuring equipment functioned well, and what the managers of the Rospidskaya mine had done to improve its reliability."

Putin later visited the mine in the town of Mezhdurechensk, seeing for himself the blackened craters and burned-out wreckage of surface infrastructure left by the force of the explosions.

The missing men are trapped nearly half a kilometer beneath the surface. With more than 400 kilometers of tunnels, the Rospadskaya mine is larger than the entire Moscow metro system.

'One of the Best'

The disaster has focused attention on the aging infrastructure at many of Russia's coal mines. But coal miners' union chairman Ivan Mokhnachuk told RFE/RL's Russian Service that the Rospadskaya mine was known to be one of the industry's more modern facilities.

"I've been at [Rospadskaya] many times, and I've seen how it's all organized there," Mokhnachuk said. "As someone who has worked in the mine for 12 years, I can definitely say it's one of the best coal mines [in Russia]. I don't think anyone can tell you at this point what exactly happened there."

Mokhnachuk said that underground facilities at the Rospadskaya mine included mechanized and automated ventilation and decontamination systems to deal with the problem of methane gas.

"There is absolutely no link between the age of the mine and this particular accident. It depends mostly on the coal beds the miners are working on," he said. "They are mining coal of mark K [at Rospadskaya], which means they are working with high-gas-bearing beds prone to sudden methane releases."

Oleg Petropavlovsky, a coal sector analyst at the Moscow-based brokerage firm BKS investment, says explosions do occur naturally in such mines.

Petropavlovsky confirmed that the development of the Rospadskaya mine during the last five years has included the installation of "state-of-

the-art" ventilation and safety technology. But he concludes that investigators also should not rule out the possibility of human error.

Other experts say Russian coal miners themselves are sometimes careless about following safety regulations, including rules that forbid the smoking of cigarettes inside mines. Putin said today it is possible that the first blast was caused by human error, including "careless use of fire."

A criminal investigation has been launched for negligence of security rules on the part of the mine's managers. But the mine's owners insist readings showed acceptable methane concentration levels in the shafts at the time of the blast.

Rospadskaya is part-owned by steelmaker Evraz, a company 36 percent-owned by Chelsea Football Club's billionaire chief Roman Abramovich. Shares in the Rospadskaya mine plunged 15 percent in opening trade today on the Moscow stock exchange.

The governor of the Kemerovo region, Aman Tuleyev, insists the mine will be rebuilt.

This week in mining accident history

9 May 1992

Westray Mine

Plymouth, Nova Scotia, Canada

Underground coal mine

Methane explosion

26 killed

Source: www.wikipedia.com

The **Westray Mine** was a coal mine in Plymouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, which was the site of a methane explosion in 1992 that killed 26 miners.

On Saturday, May 9, 1992, a methane gas, and subsequent coal dust explosion at 5:18 a.m. ADT killed 26 miners. It was Canada's worst mining disaster since 1958, when a cave-in at

another Nova Scotia coal mine, in Springhill, claimed the lives of 75 miners.

In the wake of the explosion, Canadian and international media coverage descended upon the tiny hamlet of Plymouth and the nearby towns of New Glasgow, Stellarton, Westville and Trenton. Coverage gripped Canadians for several days as teams of draegerman (mine rescuers) searched the debris-strewn depths of the mine for survivors.



Today a memorial sits in a park in nearby New Glasgow at the approximate location above ground where the remaining 11 miners are trapped. The memorial will always be there in remembrance of those who died there: The memorial's central monument, engraved with the names and ages of the twenty-six men who lost their lives in the disaster states, "Their light shall always shine."

Over the next several days, media reported non-stop from a community centre located across the street from the mine while rescue teams encountered extremely hazardous conditions underground. Westray officials did not cooperate well with the media, which affected the release of information.

The bodies of 15 miners were discovered and afterward the search and rescue was changed to a search and recovery operation. After underground conditions worsened, the decision was made to abandon recovery efforts, entombing the bodies of 11 miners at the depths of the mine. Several days later RCMP investigators re-entered the mine with a draeger

team to gather evidence for criminal prosecution but they did not enter the "southwest main" shaft where the remaining miners' bodies were located, again due to hazardous conditions.

The 117 miners who were not working on shift at the time were given 12-weeks severance pay.

The company was charged with 52 non-criminal counts of operating an unsafe mine under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. In 1993, the non-criminal charges were stayed by Crown prosecutors, who expressed concern they might jeopardize future criminal charges.

Two of the mine's managers, Gerald Phillips and Roger Parry, were charged with manslaughter, but the charges were stayed by the trial judge on the grounds that prosecutors had failed to disclose key evidence to the defense. The stay was appealed to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal which ordered a new trial. The order for a new trial was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada, which criticized the trial judge for having called the director of prosecutions during the trial to complain about the manner in which prosecutors were conducting the case.

After the Supreme Court ordered a new trial, prosecutors decided not to pursue the charges because they determined there was not enough evidence to secure convictions.

The Nova Scotia provincial government conducted a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Westray Mine and the safety issues resulting from the explosion. The report submitted in 1998 recommended a sweeping overhaul of all provincial labour and mining laws which were mostly acted upon.

The former mine site was razed in 1998 with the most visible reminder of the tragedy, the two 15-storey blue concrete coal storage silos, being imploded on November 27, 1998. The damaged mine shaft had been permanently sealed following the decision to abort further recovery attempts in May 1992 and after investigations were completed.

Friday 14 May 2010

NZ: Fatal mining accident 'shouldn't have happened'

Extract from The Press, New Zealand

The death of a West Coast miner who was crushed to death by a sea of rock and water "should never have happened," a coroner says.

Father of four Robert McGowan, 39, was killed in a flooded mine at Dunollie, near Greymouth in 2006.

A report released today by Buller coroner Peter Roselli found McGowan suffered fatal impact and crush injuries as a result of a tunnel washout.

McGowan and mine manager Gary Haddow were using explosives in the Tiller Mine at Dunollie when an adjoining mine burst open. Haddow survived but McGowan was killed by the rock and water.

Roselli said the mine owner and manager had deviated from their working plan and developed the mine in a different direction, towards the old mine.

Roselli recommended owners of underground mines be required to have instrument surveys carried out regularly to protect workers from old abandoned mines.

Lesley Haines, Head of Workplace for the Department of Labour, said McGowan's death had been preventable.

It is important that the mining industry and the Department learn from this Coroner's report in order to make mining safer," she said in a statement.

USA: Patriot Coal's West Virginia mine shut on MSHA order

Extract from Reuters

A West Virginia mine operated by Patriot Coal Corp facing ventilation problems was shut down

by the U.S. Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA), a Labor Department spokesman said.

"On Tuesday, MSHA issued an order closing the Harris No. 1 mine in Boone County, West Virginia," the spokesman said. "The order was issued because the mine's ventilation system was not functioning as designed."

The mine, which produces steelmaking coal, was facing a problem of air reversal in its bleeder system and had not been reopened as of Friday morning, he added.

Patriot did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Leslie Fitzwater, spokeswoman for the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, said the company had been warned earlier about low oxygen levels in parts of the mine during a routine MSHA investigation, but the problem had not fixed when MSHA officials returned to the mine on Tuesday.

Fitzwater also said officials with the state agency expect the mine to be reopened early next week.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

V

vanner

A concentrating machine in which minerals are sorted according to weight by running the mineral in suspension onto an inclined continuous belt washed by streams of water. *Tables* largely replaced vanners in most fields. A common type was the 'Frue vanner'.



A working Frue vanner at the King Edward Mine Museum, at the former Camborne School of Mines, Truro, UK

-Ed