



Mining Accident News No.1019

25 June to 1 July 2010

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Friday 25 June 2010

USA: Vicco man killed Thursday by mining machine, officials said

Extract from the Lexington Herald-Leader, USA

A continuous mining machine operator died when the machine pinned him against the wall of a Perry County coal mine Thursday, state officials said.

It was unclear how the accident happened, and interviews with co-workers of Bobby L. Smith, 29, of Vicco were being conducted Friday, said Dick Brown, spokesman for the state Energy and Environment Cabinet, which oversees the Office of Mine Safety and Licensing.

The Leeco 68 mine where Smith worked in Jeff is owned by James River Coal of Richmond, Va. Smith had 12 years' experience, according to a preliminary report from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration. No one else was hurt in the accident at 1:15 p.m. Thursday.

Mr. Smith was born Oct. 24, 1980, in Dayton, Ohio. He is survived by his wife, Amanda Caudill Smith; a son, Dustin J. Smith of Harlan; daughters Alexis Smith and Kaylee Sumner of Sassafras; grandparents Hillard and Patricia Caudill Smith; parents, Bobby and Cathy Predmore Smith; brother, Brad Smith, and sister, Ashley Throckmorton, all of Hazard.

The funeral, arranged by Engle-Walker Funeral Home, will be 2 p.m. Sunday at Lotts Creek United Baptist Church. Visitation will begin at 6 p.m. Saturday at the church.

So far this year, 39 coal miners have been killed on the job in the U.S., including five in Kentucky. A total of 29 were killed in an explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia.

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

Africa: Blast at Harmony Mine Kills Three

Extract from the Wall Street Journal, USA

JOHANNESBURG — Three mine workers investigating a possible fire were killed and two others seriously injured in an underground explosion at one of Harmony Gold Mining Co.'s mines in South Africa, the company said Friday.

The explosion occurred about 2,013 meters below the surface late Thursday at the Phakisa mine near the town of Odendaalsrus in the central Free State province.

Management halted operations at the mine and are working to make the area safe, said Esha Brijmohan, a spokeswoman for the company. Investigations to determine the cause of the fire will begin when the area is safe, she added.

The explosion was the second incident at Phakisa in a week after a rockfall about 2,100 meters underground killed a worker early last Saturday.

The explosion happened while employees were investigating a suspected fire in an underground raise, Harmony said. The company, one of South Africa's largest gold producers, said management and officials from the Department of Mineral Resources worked through the night on rescue operations. The two injured employees are being treated in a local hospital, and all other workers underground at the time of the explosion have been accounted for and are safe, Harmony said.

"At this stage, we cannot comment on production," Ms. Brijmohan said. "Our primary concern is for the families of the deceased and the injured employees."

Phakisa came into production in the 2008 financial year and comprises a single shaft system. The mine produced 345,000 kilograms of gold in the three months through March.

Putin demands Siberian mine blasts investigation speed up

Extract from newsystocks.com

MOSCOW, -- Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin demanded a speedy completion of investigations into the blasts which killed at least 67 miners at the Rospadskaya coal mine in Western Siberia in May, RIA Novosti news agency reported Thursday.

Russian emergencies officials say at least 23 miners are still missing after two blasts that rocked the mine near the town of Mezhdurechensk on May 9.

"There has still been no final finding of the causes of the two explosions. Specialists will continue to work until all circumstances of the incident are established," Putin told a meeting in the western Siberian town of Novokuznetsk.

He told the Russian industrial safety watchdog, Rostekhnadzor, that this work should be conducted quickly and professionally.

"The schedule cannot be extended interminably," Putin said, adding that "the coalmine will be restored."

Putin estimated the mine restoration would cost 10 billion rubles (nearly 330 million U.S. dollars).

Analysis of the Rospadskaya tragedy indicated the coal mining industry badly needed "systematic change," the prime minister pointed out.

Earlier in June, the Rostekhnadzor extended the probe into the incident until the end of August.

The accident at the Rospadskaya coal mine is believed to have been caused by poor observation of safety regulations.

The Rostekhnadzor detected more than 1,400 safety violations at the mine in 2009 and in first four months this year, and had suspended its production five times previously.

U.S. Wants Lawsuit by Miners' Widows Thrown Out

Extract from the Wall Street Journal, USA

The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration said Friday that a judge should dismiss a lawsuit alleging that it was liable for the deaths of two miners in a 2006 accident at a Massey Energy Co. mine, arguing that the primary responsibility for the safety of miners rests with coal companies.

In a lawsuit filed April 28, the widows of miners Don Bragg and Ellery Hatfield alleged that MSHA bore some responsibility for the deaths of the two men after a fire broke out at Massey's Aracoma Alma No. 1 Mine in Logan County, W.Va., in January 2006.

Their lawsuit relied in part on an internal review of MSHA's actions leading up to the accident, in which MSHA found numerous instances where agency officials failed to cite the mine operator for safety violations that contributed to the accident. "MSHA's culpability in the deaths of Mr. Bragg and Mr. Hatfield is clearly discerned from its own report," the lawsuit argued.

The lawsuit seeks damages for negligence and wrongful death under West Virginia state law and was brought in the U.S. District Court for Southern West Virginia in Charleston, W.Va.

In a motion filed Friday, a lawyer for the federal government argued that the lawsuit should be dismissed on multiple grounds. The motion, signed by Fred Westfall Jr., assistant U.S. Attorney in Charleston, argued, among other things, that MSHA can't be sued for failing to properly perform inspections, because federal mine law doesn't include a mechanism to bring such claims, and that the coal companies are ultimately responsible for health and safety in mines.

"Congress never intended the responsibility for health and safety in the mines to shift to MSHA and its employees," the government's motion argued. "Rather, those functions delegated to MSHA were part of the government's regulatory

framework to try to improve health and safety in the mining industry."

In its investigation of the 2006 accident, MSHA cited Massey's Aracoma subsidiary with numerous citations for safety violations that existed at the time of the fire. MSHA and the Labor Department fined the company \$4.2 million in civil and criminal penalties. Massey's Aracoma subsidiary also pleaded guilty to 10 criminal charges, including one felony.

Bruce Stanley, a partner at Reed Smith LLP in Pittsburgh, who is representing the widows, said he will fight the government's motion. "The United States' motion sends a very important but very sad message about MSHA and government accountability—'widows, you're on your own,' " he said.

Mr. Stanley previously represented the two widows, Delorice Bragg and Freda Hatfield, in a wrongful death lawsuit against Massey, which resulted in an undisclosed settlement.

A spokeswoman for MSHA couldn't immediately be reached to comment. The agency is currently conducting a civil investigation into the April 5 explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County, W.Va., where 29 miners were killed, along with an internal review of the agency's actions prior to that accident.

Quote of the week



"Readiness of speech is often inability to hold the tongue."

Jean Baptiste Rousseau
(French poet, 1671-1741)

Saturday 26 June 2010

Two die after coal mine explosion in northwest China

Extract from Xinhua, China

Two miners were killed and ten others were injured after an explosion ripped through a coal mine in northwest China on Saturday, state-run media reported.

The explosion happened around 2.30 a.m. local time at the Hongyuan Coal Mine in Shikong Town of China's Ningxia region, according to the Xinhua news agency. It said twelve people were initially trapped after the blast, but they were freed within several hours.

The injured miners were taken to a local hospital for treatment. Their conditions were not immediately released.

An initial investigation showed that the explosion was triggered by burning explosives.

Although safety conditions have significantly improved in recent years, China is still often the scene of deadly mine accidents.

USA: Governor says UBB probe may be wrapped up in two months

Extract from the Beckley Register-Herald

Gov. Joe Manchin feels the riddle to the puzzling explosion that shook a sprawling coal mine in Raleigh County the day after Easter and killed 29 workers should be solved inside two months.

Federal and state regulators got a green light Friday to enter the Upper Big Branch mine at Montcoal after rescue-recovery team members explored the installation and declared it safe for an inquiry.

Efforts to launch the formal investigation have been hampered, at times, since the April 5 blast by threatening buildups of deadly gases, sporadic fires and waist-deep water.

"As of Monday, they're safe to go in and do a pebble by pebble, rock by rock, very fine

investigation," Manchin said in a Friday interview with The Register-Herald.

"We're going to get to the bottom of this thing."

Early on, authorities had predicted it might take as long as a year to complete the investigation, including the compiling of reports, inside the 5-mile-long mine, run by Performance Coal Co., a subsidiary of Massey Energy.

"I'm going to say within two months, maximum, that we should know exactly what happened," the governor said.

"Hopefully quicker than that. But I'm saying no longer than eight weeks. That's where we stand right now."

No specific day was set for the start, but the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration said the formal investigation would get under way one day next week, following a walk-through Monday.

"A critical component of this investigation has now begun," MSHA director Joe Main said.

"Along with the already extensive witness interviews that have been conducted, the physical examination of the mine hopefully will provide answers to the cause of a tragic explosion that has affected so many lives."

Both state and federal teams will be examining physical evidence, honing in on specific expertise in mapping, dust survey, electrical, photography, flames and forces, geologic and evidence gathering.

Protocols have been defined by both MSHA and the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

While inside Upper Big Branch, team members will remain together, working from the same map distributed to all assigned to the investigation. Each member will be allowed to take notes.

Main said MSHA officials will ensure that dust samples will be stored in a secure location to maintain the integrity of the investigation.

All evidence will be placed in containers once it is photographed and placed in a secure location

on the surface before it is transferred to storage and testing facilities.

Some 100 interviews have been conducted of individuals with possible knowledge of the mine, the conditions and events that preceded the worst mining disaster in four decades. Public hearings are planned by MSHA to gain more insight into the explosion, the agency said.

Massey Energy this week filed a federal lawsuit against MSHA in an effort to regain some measure of control in deciding how underground mines are ventilated. The firm says the federal government is disallowing practices, such as scrubbers, that are known to clean air to acceptable levels and prevent buildups.

Sunday 27 June 2010

Nine Trapped after Coal Mine Flooded in Central China

Extract from CRIENGLISH.com

Nine people were trapped underground Sunday after a coal mine was flooded in central China's Hunan Province, said local authorities.

The accident happened around 11:30 a.m. at Taiyuan Coal Mine in Lutang Township of Chenzhou City when nine workers were working in the tunnel of the mine, according to the Hunan Provincial Mine Safety Bureau.

By 10 p.m., rescuers were still working to drain the water out of the colliery.

Monday 28 June 2010

QLD: Miners' working life puts pressure on families

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

The founder of an online support service for mining workers says the 'drive-in, drive-out' nature of Queensland's Bowen Basin workforce is putting a lot of stress on their families.

Service founder Alicia Ranford says many men are worried about their partners cheating on them while they are at work.

Ms Ranford says some miners feel their families do not understand the nature or pressure of their job.

She says it is important that families understand the pressures they face and try to address them before they lead to family breakdown.

"If we can tackle issues, recognise them and tackle them and show people there are things that you can do, we can help prevent family breakdown," she said.

"We can help prevent depression, we can get to the issues early and put some preventative measures in place."

Ms Ranford says miners worry most about their partners' possible infidelity, but the readjustment to home life and poor sleep patterns are also major stress factors.

She says it is a difficult life for families.

"You're away from your partner for a long time, you're at home dealing with the kids yourself," she said.

"Children find it hard to understand why dad's gone away.

"Our kids thought that my husband worked on an aeroplane because that's what he did - he went away on an aeroplane - and we had to make them understand that he worked on a mine site.

"It absolutely puts pressures on families."

Eighty feared dead in Ghanaian mine disaster

Extract from Xinhua, China

ACCRA -- A total of 80 miners trapped at the Central Region of Ghana were feared dead after they escaped from a flooded mining pit to another one which later caved in, a local official and witnesses confirmed on Monday.

An official of the Regional Coordinating Council, Kwame Oppong told Xinhua that information available to the council said the miners are part of about 120 miners in the illegal mine who escaped to an adjoining mine pit after water

gushed into the one they were working in on Sunday at Dunkwaw-on-Offin.

"Suddenly, the second mine also caved in trapping at least 80 of them," he stated, adding that rescue operations were underway hoping to find some survivors. However witnesses told Xinhua that given the nature of the disaster, finding survivors was almost impossible.

Oppong said that the Fire Service had been deployed to pump water out of the illegal mining pit to save those trapped since 2 p.m. on Sunday.

But regional fire officer Augustine Dankwa told Xinhua that the fire station in the district was ill-equipped to deal with the emergency situation.

There were no fire tenders at Dunkwah, and those of Obuasi, the nearest fire station had also broken down, he said.

According to Dankwah, the fire tenders had broken down over six months ago but parts could not be procured to repair them.

He however said the District Fire Officer of Dunkwa and a safety officer had been deployed to assess the situation so appropriate measures could be taken.

This week in mining accident history

4 July 1838

Huskar Pit

Silkstone, South Yorkshire, UK

Underground coal mine flood

Methane explosion

26 children killed

Source:<http://georgian-victorian-britain.suite101.com/article.cfm/huskar-pit-disaster-1838>

Silkstone in South Yorkshire was the site of an accident that shocked Britain. It caused a Royal Commission of Inquiry, and ended female employment in coal mines.

Today Silkstone is a quiet village on the outskirts of Barnsley. In many ways it is the epitome of relaxed rural life, with its village green, church and ducks on the local stream. A local pub, The

Red Lion boasts it was the site of an inquiry in 1838.

The Churchyard holds a monument to some of Silkstone's dead.



Twenty six children, 11 girls and 15 boys, aged seven to 17 died on 4th July 1838. What is striking and horrifying is that they died at work, killed in a horrific mining accident that shocked a nation, and brought about a change in the law forever.

Children's Occupations in Coal Mines

Children as young as four as well as women were commonly employed in coal mines. Children tended to work as trappers or hurriers. Younger children were trappers; their job was to open and close the doors that controlled fresh air entering the mine. They opened the doors to allow the hurriers through, pushing their wagons of coal. Trappers could be sitting in the dark for twelve hours operating the doors. Hurriers were older children and women who worked semi naked, chained to the wagons they pulled through the mine.



Thunderstorm Floods Coal Mine

On the 4th July 1838 a terrible thunderstorm hit the Silkstone area. The incessant rain caused a local stream to flood. The children working underground were told to stay where they were, until they could be safely taken from the mine. Enough steam could not be generated to operate the winch to carry them safely from the mine. Instinctively the children thought the problem was gas and made their way to day hole (old entry into a drift mine). The stream had flooded so much that water was gushing down the day hole, and the children were met with a wall of water. Fourteen older children managed to climb on a ledge to safety and were pulled out by their hair. The rest were crushed against the entrance and drowned.

Queen Victoria, Royal Commission and Mines Act of 1842

Following the inquest in the Red Lion Inn, the rest of the country, including a young Queen Victoria, became aware of the conditions in which children and women were working. A Royal Commission was established in 1840 to investigate the employment of children. The Commission brought to public awareness the working conditions of not only children but women. The Victorians were horrified to discover that women were working underground, semi-naked alongside men. The scandal was illustrated by The Times newspaper, who printed images of bare breasted women "hurrying" wagons, to which they were attached by a chain between their legs. The Royal Commission report became a best seller, and ultimately resulted in The Mines Act of 1842, which banned women and girls from employment in Mines, and outlawed the employment of boys under 10 years old.

Women were the main beneficiaries of the findings of the Royal Commission and the subsequent Mines Act. Their removal from the lewd working arrangements in coal mines, allowed them to concentrate on "being wives and mothers".

Tuesday 29 June 2010

USA: Massey appeals MSHA order in mine explosion

Extract from Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Troubled coal producer Massey Energy Co. took legal action against the industry's chief safety regulator for the second time in a week Monday.

Richmond, Va.-based Massey said it is appealing a federal Mine Safety and Health Administration order covering what the company is allowed to do during the investigation of a deadly explosion at its Upper Big Branch.

MSHA won't allow the company to use cameras, coal dust analysis and other tools to investigate the April 5 explosion, which killed 29 men at the Raleigh County mine. It is the worst U.S. coal industry disaster in 40 years.

"It is troubling that MSHA would seek to limit the ability of investigators to locate and analyze important evidence that is essential in determining the cause of the Upper Big Branch mine accident," Massey general counsel Shane Harvey in a prepared statement. "MSHA's actions imply that the agency does not want a thorough, objective and inclusive inquiry."

The company said it has appealed to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, which handles disputes over citations and orders issued by MSHA over alleged violations of safety regulations.

MSHA said the order was developed and agreed upon with four of the five parties conducting the civil investigation of the explosion. The U.S. Department of Justice is conducting a separate criminal probe.

"These rules were put in place to ensure that evidence is not disturbed during the sampling or mapping process and were agreed to by all participating parties including the United Mine Workers of America and Gov. Joe Manchin's review team except Massey." MSHA spokeswoman Amy Louviere said, "Any accident investigation, especially one with a criminal

component, must be conducted with painstaking care."

Massey is welcome to make suggestions about sampling and photos, Louviere said.

Massey already is facing off with MSHA in a separate federal lawsuit. Massey sued the agency last Tuesday in an attempt to limit its oversight of mine ventilation plans. The company has accused MSHA of forcing it to follow the agency's plans. Modern mines rely on ventilation to dilute methane gas, the suspected cause of the Upper Big Branch explosion.

Canada: Teck reports explosion at coal mine

Extract from Reuters

Teck Resources said an explosion occurred on Monday in the coal dryer at its Greenhills coal mine near Elkford, British Columbia, and it had mobilised teams to control a brush fire triggered by the blast.

All employees, visitors and contractors have been accounted for, and four employees have been treated for minor smoke inhalation, Canada's biggest base-metals miner said early Tuesday.

The cause of the accident is not known at this time, the company said.

The damage to the dryer building is extensive, and it is expected to be several days before the damage can be fully assessed and the extent of the interruption of production at Greenhills can be estimated, the Vancouver-based company said.

QLD: Accident injures two mine workers

Extract from the Daily Mercury, Qld

TWO North Goonyella underground miners are in hospital after they were injured in an incident involving a shuttle car at the weekend.

A 38-year-old fitter/mechanic, who was pinned between the shuttle car and a wall in the underground mine, is in Mackay Base Hospital with a fractured pelvis.

The 26-year-old driver of the shuttle car is in the Royal Brisbane Hospital after having emergency surgery to his left hand, which was crushed in the incident.

The incident comes just over three years after the death of Moranbah North underground miner Jason Blee, who was pinned by a shuttle car.

CFMEU safety and health representative Greg Dalliston said in the last four years at least seven miners had been pinned by shuttle cars in the Bowen Basin, including a 51-year-old who was pinned at Anglo Coal's Bundoora Mine, near Middlemount, in November last year.

Peabody yesterday confirmed the incident, which happened around 2pm on Saturday.

"The operator of the shuttle car sustained injuries to his left hand, while a fitter/mechanic who was in the area adjacent to the cabin also sustained injuries," Peabody Energy Australia general manager external affairs Jennifer Morgans said.

"The crew came to the assistance of the two miners and they were evacuated from the scene to surface.

The shuttle car driver was transported from Mackay by the Royal Flying Doctor Service on Sunday morning.

Mr Dalliston praised the quick response of crew members to get the two injured miners out as quickly and as safely as they had.

Ms Morgans said Peabody's general manager for safety had travelled to the mine site to assist management with the ongoing investigations and post incident administration.

"Peabody will continue to provide assistance to the injured men and their families as they embark on their recovery. Since the incident we have been in constant contact with both families," she said.

Late last year the coroner in Jason Blee's inquest handed down 18 recommendations, including: all underground mines should review interactions between pedestrians and moving machinery and a working party should be

formed to meet with shuttle car designers to consider improvements to shuttle cars.

USA: Mine bill to crack down on repeat violators

Extract from Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic lawmakers, seeking to prevent another mine disaster like the April explosion that killed 29 workers in West Virginia, proposed sweeping new legislation Tuesday that would make it easier to shut down mines with poor safety records.

The bill — to be introduced in the House this week — would also boost penalties for serious violations, grant mine regulators the power to subpoena documents and testimony, and offer greater protection to whistleblowers who report safety problems. The Senate is expected to take up a similar measure soon.

Leaders of the House and Senate committees that oversee mine safety said the measure is needed to fix a badly flawed system that came to light after the accident at the Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, W.Va. — the nation's worst mining accident in four decades.

"Mine operators who callously and repeatedly put their workers in danger must be held accountable," said Rep. George Miller, chair of the House Education and Labor Committee.

Democratic leaders have said they want to pass the legislation by year end. Mine industry officials who were still reviewing the details said they expect some tinkering, but warned lawmakers against going too far.

"While it may be necessary to supplement the tools they have, they have to implement tools they already have," said Luke Popovich, a spokesman for the National Mining Association.

Some Republicans expressed disappointment that Democrats did not work with them in crafting the plan. Sens. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., and Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., said they wanted to see the kind of bipartisan approach that happened the last time Congress passed comprehensive

changes to mine laws following the 2006 Sago mine disaster.

"Instead of pursuing that productive approach, Democrats have chosen to introduce a sweeping piece of legislation that affects every business in this country and only amplifies the adversarial role of (government regulators) without increasing safety," the senators said in a statement.

Under the current system, mine companies can file lengthy legal appeals that can last months or years, delaying the finding of a pattern of violation that could lead to stricter oversight. That system — and the massive case backlog it spawned — allowed the Upper Big Branch mine to avoid more scrutiny, despite the fact that it was repeatedly cited for ventilation and dust problems in the months leading up to the blast.

The bill would end those delays and develop a better system for the Mine Safety and Health Administration to identify mines with a pattern of serious violations. If a mine meets the new criteria, miners would be withdrawn and the mine reopened for a probationary period with stepped up inspections. The mine would have to meet safety benchmarks for one year.

The agency would offer more guidance to help troubled mines get back on track, such as additional training or creation of special health and safety programs.

MSHA could also seek a court order to close a mine due to continuing health and safety problems and require increased rock dusting to prevent coal dust explosions like the kind investigators believe occurred at Upper Big Branch.

The bill would grant miners the right to refuse to work in unsafe conditions and increase protections for workers who complain about unsafe conditions. Miners would not lose pay if their mine is closed for safety reasons.

Ghana Mining Accident Kills At Least 70

Dunkwa-on-Offin, Ghana - A gold mining pit in central Ghana has collapsed, killing at least 70 people. The victims were part of a group of small scale miners who became trapped when rain caused a cave-in.

Rescuers working to save the trapped miners in Dunkwa-on-Offin were hindered by a lack of heavy machinery. Rescue workers have been pumping out water and excavating in an attempt to retrieve bodies and any survivors in the Sunday accident.

According to reports, 140 people were working in the illegal mine at the time of the accident. News reports also say some of those working at the site were women and children. Some people were able to escape before the complete cave-in.

Authorities in the area said they don't think they can get any survivors and those that are trapped may be dead now.

The mine, which was abandoned years ago, is popular among amateurs who dig for gold themselves.

Wednesday 30 June 2010

QLD: Mining union urges safety law changes

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) says mine safety legislation needs to be changed to make it compulsory for coroner's recommendations to be implemented.

Two men were injured at the North Goonyella mine near Moranbah in central Queensland at the weekend, with one of the men pinned between a shuttle car and the mine wall.

CFMEU spokesman Steve Smyth says the accident appears to be very similar to a 2007 accident that killed local miner Jason Blee.

He says the CFMEU wants an investigation to determine if the company implemented the

coroner's recommendations following an inquest into Mr Blee's death.

"It's not as if they've had to go out and spend millions of dollars to implement these recommendations," he said.

"They already have most of the resources and equipment they need.

"They need to be ensuring that the guys that are in and around the pit have the best available equipment and training so that if something unfortunate like this happens, they've got the ability to recover the situation."

9 killed by sudden gas outburst in coal mine in SW China

Extract from Xinhua, China

KUNMING, -- Nine miners were killed Wednesday by a sudden outburst of gas and coal at a coal mine in southwest China's Yunnan Province, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at the Goutou coal mine in Weixin County, Zhaotong City, at around 11 a.m. Wednesday, Weixin publicity officials said late Wednesday afternoon.

Rescuers have recovered the bodies of the nine miners. The cause of the accident is under investigation.

No other details were immediately available.

China relies heavily on coal to fuel its fast growing economy. Accidents are frequent in small mines with inadequate safety measures.

USA: Massey Energy Coal Plant Fire 'Suspicious,' to be Investigated

Extract from Business Week

A second blaze at Massey Energy Co.'s Bandmill coal preparation plant in Logan County, West Virginia, in less than a year is being treated as "suspicious," the local fire chief said.

The fire broke out at about 6:15 p.m. local time yesterday on one of the top two floors of the 12-storey plant, which is idled while being rebuilt after a devastating fire in August.

"There was a shift change when the fire occurred, and we are treating it as a suspicious fire," Scott Beckett, fire chief of the Logan City Fire Department, said in a telephone interview. "A fire twice in a year in a \$75 million building means something isn't right. The fire marshal will go in and do a complete investigation."

Massey, based in Richmond, Virginia, is under investigation because of the April 5 explosion at its Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia that killed 29 miners. It said last month it planned to restart the Bandmill plant in September.

Roger Hendriksen, a spokesman for Massey, didn't immediately return telephone calls or an e-mail seeking comment.

At least nine fire departments tackled the blaze yesterday with assistance from a local mine rescue academy and Massey emergency services crews, Beckett said. Firefighters contained the fire within the top four floors of the structure and stopped it from spreading, he said.

The fire was under control by about 10:30 p.m. local time. "We did a building check by 11:15 p.m. and were good to go," Beckett said. Massey posted security guards at the site, he said.

Remote Location

Extinguishing the blaze was made difficult by the plant's remote location, which meant water had to be trucked in, Beckett said.

No injuries were reported, Marilyn Crosby, 911 director for Logan County's Office of Emergency Services, said in a telephone interview earlier. The plant, on Rum Creek Road in Logan County, is in a non-residential "rural and secluded area," she said.

The Bandmill plant is intended to process coal used in steelmaking and for the type burned as fuel by power companies.

The revamped operation would have the capacity to process 1,200 tons of coal an hour, serving four underground mines and two surface pits. Massey said in May it would change the

name of the Bandmill plant to Zigmond Processing.

After the explosion in April at the Upper Big Branch mine, which has halted production, Massey said it plans to increase output from its other operations.

Upper Big Branch is closed indefinitely as government officials try to determine the cause of the blast. Massey planned to produce 1.6 million tons of metallurgical coal from the underground mine this year at about \$91 a ton.

Czech: One miner dies, five injured in Darkov mine

Extract from Prague Daily Monitor

Karvina, North Moravia, - A 34-year-old miner died and five men were injured in an accident in the Czech Darkov mine near Karvina owned by the OKD company Wednesday afternoon, OKD spokesman Vladislav Sobol said Wednesday.

The man, who worked for an OKD supplier, was killed by loose rock.

The five injured miners were transported to hospital. Their condition is not serious, Sobol added.

This has been the third fatal work accident in the Ostrava-Karvina mining complex this year, and the second directly connected with coal mining.

A commission comprising representatives of the Darkov mine and OKD management, trade unions, the police and the Ostrava District Mining Office is investigating the cause of the accident.

In February, a 43-year-old miner succumbed to injuries caused by a cutter-loader in the OKD's Karvina mine.

Another fatal accident this year occurred in the CSM mine in Karvina where a 54-year-old employee did not survive a fall into a 16-metre deep reservoir. He was reconstructing a building in the mining complex.

Last year three miners died in the OKD mines and 346 suffered work-related injuries, which

was 70 fewer than a year before. In 2008 seven fatalities were reported.

OKD invested over 0.5 billion crowns in labour safety in the past two years.

OKD, the largest employer in the region, had 14,331 employees last year and another 3225 people worked in its suppliers' companies.

The miner's average monthly gross pay was about 28,700 crowns in 2009.

Thursday 1 July 2010

China: Eight trapped miners confirmed alive, one still uncontactable

Extract from Xinhua, China

TAIYUAN, -- Eight of nine miners trapped underground Wednesday at a flooded coal mine in north China's Shanxi Province were confirmed alive, while another remains uncontactable, said local mine safety authorities.

As of 11:30 p.m. Wednesday, eight miners trapped 1,380 meters below ground had contacted the rescuers and they would be rescued soon.

The accident happened around 5 p.m. at Shengping Coal Mine in Jixian County when 23 miners were performing repair work underground.

Fourteen miners managed to escape.

USA: Greenbrier County Man Killed in Mine Accident

Extract from WTRF, Wheeling, WV, USA

LEWISBURG -- One coal miner was killed in an accident in Greenbrier County.

Leslie Fitzwater, with the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training confirmed that one man died of injuries suffered in an accident Thursday morning.

It happened at White Buck Coal Co.'s Pocahontas Mine in Greenbrier County.

Jesse Lawder with the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration says the victim was an

electrician who was run over about 8:30 a.m. by a piece of heavy equipment used to haul coal.

The man's name has not yet been released.

White Buck Coal Co. is a subsidiary of Massey Energy.

A Massey spokesman did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Information on **World-leading OHS** is available from the Industry & Investment NSW's website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/world-leading-ohs

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

W

water wheels

Generally over-shot or back-shot water wheels used to power machinery at some mines. Obviously limited in Australia to the better watered parts of the country. Some wheels in Victoria were over 20 m in diameter. Pelton wheels largely superseded water wheels in the late nineteenth century.



Garfield Company's water wheel, Chewton, 1900s
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