



Mining Accident News No.1029

6 to 15 October 2010

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Thursday 7 October 2010

Why are China's mines so dangerous?

Extract from BBC News, UK

China has introduced new regulations to improve safety in mining, and some will argue that moves towards better safety can not come too soon.

China's mines are dangerous by any standard. More than 2,600 Chinese miners died in accidents last year.

The country's safety record is far worse than that of other nations.



China has the world's largest mining industry

This is partly because China has the world's largest mining industry which inevitably makes the raw accident numbers look high.

But its mine safety record is also poor by measures, with the country accounting for 40% of global coal output but 80% of mining deaths around the world each year.

A Chinese miner is 100 times more likely to die in an accident than a miner in the US.

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

However, China's safety record is better than it was a few years ago.

As recently as 2004, more than 6,000 Chinese miners died in mining accidents - more than three times last year's level of fatalities.

Fewer accidents

Traditionally, mining was the single most dangerous occupation in most countries, not just China.

But around the world accident rates have been falling.



Open cast mining is typically a safer than underground mining

The trend has been particularly marked in wealthier nations. In the US, for example, mining is now rated as barely more dangerous than driving on the roads.

And there are fewer deaths in mining in the US than in either construction or agriculture.

But this does not mean that mining is a safe occupation. The figures suggest that even today about 10 Americans are dying every month in mining accidents.

Poorer countries have also seen the number of mining deaths come down.

India, which has the world's third largest coal output after China and the US, is a case in point.

In the year 2000, more than 200 miners died in Indian coal mine accidents.

By 2005, the figure was down to 35 deaths. This is the most recent year for which figures are available.

Open cast mines

Mining fatalities roughly correlate with a country's level of economic development, with accidents more common in poor nations than rich ones.

In wealthy Australia, for example, seven miners were killed in accidents in 2008, compared with 35 in middle-income Russia.

However, Russia's record - like that of most other countries- has greatly improved in recent years.

Safety is not simply linked to the level of GDP.

One reason why Australia's mines are relatively safe is that they are mostly open cast. Underground mines tend to be more dangerous than operations that involve scooping out minerals close to the surface.

There have been some serious mining accidents involving hundreds of deaths in recent years, but nothing to match the disasters of the past.

The world's worst coal mining accident took place in a part of China that was under Japanese occupation during World War II.

In that incident, 1,549 miners died after a coal dust explosion at Benxihu Colliery in Liaoning province in North Eastern China in April 1942.

Friday 8 October 2010

Tanzania Mine Accident Leaves Two Dead, 10 Missing

Extract from Bloomberg

Two miners died and a further 10 are missing after being buried alive at a gold mine in northwestern Tanzania, the Daily News reported, citing police officials it didn't identify.

The miners were working at a mine in Geita, about 1,000 kilometers (622 miles) northwest of Dar es Salaam, the commercial capital, the newspaper said. The gold mine is owned by a resident of Nyarugusu village, it said.

Police have banned mining in the area and security has been stepped up to try and stop illegal mining, the newspaper said.

Trapped Chilean miners show hidden depths after two months underground

Extract from guardian.co.uk

How the 33 Chilean miners and their families have risen to the challenge of their enforced separation.



A relative of one of the 33 miners trapped lights a candle during a vigil outside the San Jose mine yesterday. Photograph: Natacha Pisarenko/AP

Police Officer Mario Segura had just finished a course on how to save people from drowning. After hours in the cold of the Pacific Ocean, he was back at the station, ready to boil some water, drink some tea and end his 10-hour shift.

When the phone rang, he joked "probably a rescue," as the men always seemed to get hauled into the dust-clogged desert when they were about to finish a shift or had just spent the day scrubbing the cars spotless.

"I could tell by his face it was serious, he completely froze up," said Segura as he described the initial SOS that arrived at the police station on 4 August. Though the mine accident had happened at lunchtime, the specially trained Special Operations Group (GOPE in Spanish) was notified hours later, as the sun set on this deserted corner of northern Chile.

Packing ropes, carabiners, oxygen tanks and rescue ladders, the police moved quickly. Mining accidents in this part of Chile, especially in the San Jose mine, were common. "I looked at my watch and it was 7.30pm, I told my buddy we'd

be back in three hours," said Segura. "Rescues always last three hours."

But when the police commandos were first briefed by geologists from the mine and began to listen to workers describe the "volcano" of dust and debris that had poured from the mountain, they began to unload their entire stash of equipment.

For the next 36 hours, in one futile attempt after another, they slowly lowered themselves into the mine as they descended a series of perilous ventilation ducts. Rocks fell around them. Small avalanches sprung from the walls, sending rivers of debris dangerously close to the team. Finally, the men found an entrance into the mine – but it was sealed.

"Usually a mine collapses and around the edges you can find space or rubble, but this was like one huge rock had just slid down," said Segura. "It looked polished, cleanly cut."

With all escape hatches sealed, the miners had no choice but to seek refuge at the bottom of the mine, 688 metres deep, where they had a small refuge and a section of tunnel that would now be home.

Luis "Lucho" Urzua was the designated shift leader and a man who commanded great respect from his workers – 32 of whom were now depending on him for leadership. Urzua rose to the occasion. He divided the men into three groups and created a sense of purpose for each man, a move that psychologists would later determine to be a key factor in the men's ability to spend 10 weeks underground without suffering mental breakdowns.

Urzua had more than two decades of experience as a miner, but had never worked in a mine as dangerous as San Jose. Locals jokingly called the men who worked there the kamikazes. Rarely did a month go by without serious mishap. In miner lingo, the San Jose mine regularly "goteaba" (dripped), which means rocks the size of a football fell from the roof. More than a few of the 33 trapped miners have

missing fingers, a grim reminder that setting explosives in a darkened cave filled with loose rock is about as dangerous as work can be. "He never really talked about how dangerous it was, but we knew," said Carolina Lobos, 26, whose father, Franklin Lobos, is one of the 33. "He had been trapped before, in a different mine when a fire broke out, so we have been outside an accident before, but that one only lasted for 14 hours."

Urzua guided his men through the most difficult period, the first 17 days when they had no contact with the outside world and virtually no food. Living off a meagre ration of one spoonful of tuna fish and a half glass of milk every 48 hours, the men survived for 17 days until a rescue drill bored a hole large enough to deliver food, medical supplies and letters from their loved ones.

The miners' wives and families could never have imagined that the incident in early August would last a full two months. "I have passed through every possible stage of suffering [including] pain, anguish, terror, panic and uncertainty," said Elvira "Katty" Valdivia, wife of Mario Sepulveda. "You can't imagine the conditions in which these men worked. Mario would come out of there and spit these wads of black I don't know what ... Never again will I let him work in a mine."

For many relatives, the months have been a mix of anguish and remorse. Several of the miners, it turned out, had multiple families who have now been thrust together on this uncomfortable stage.

Johnny Barrios, a shy miner known to be a great sketch artist, was pushed to the centre of the media circus when two women came to the mine to pray for their lover to be free. "Johnny doesn't want to come up," one of the psychologists for the miners would later joke in reference to the uncomfortable confrontation awaiting Barrios.

Other miners have confessed that after two months of solitude and reflection, they are aware of a singular truth – the end of their marriage. "I

have realised how empty my life has been for all these ... years," said one miner who plans to end his marriage on arrival topside.

For Victor Zamora, the confinement forced him to slow his perpetual workaholic schedule. "He found his other self down there," said Nelly, his mother, beaming with pride. "He always worked so much, he never stopped for anything, but now he has discovered that he is a poet. What he writes is so moving, so much from his heart, it is all just beautiful."

Saturday 9 October 2010

Four killed in China mine 'collapse'

Extract from www.presstv.ir

At least four people have been killed and one injured in a mining accident in northwestern China amid concerns for safety measures in Chinese mines.



The incident occurred on Friday "after a colliery collapsed in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region," local officials told China's Xinhua news agency on Saturday.

The report added that 18 miners survived the incident. Authorities have launched an investigation into the accident.

China's mining industry is notorious for its lack of safety measures and high number of casualties.

Last year, over 2,500 Chinese workers lost their lives in mining accidents throughout the country.

USA: Two injured in mining accident

Extract from WTHITV.com, USA

VINCENNES, Ind. (WTHI) - A mining accident injures two workers in Southern Indiana.

It happened earlier on Saturday at the Peabody Energy Corporation in Vincennes.



Few details are being released at this time however; the Department of Labor tells News 10 that two men were slightly injured after brakes on a man-trip malfunctioned.

Officials say that the injuries are not life threatening.

News 10 will continue to follow this story and bring you more details as they become available.

Drill Reaches Trapped Miners in Chile, but Risks Remain

Extract from New York Times

SAN JOSÉ MINE, Chile — A drill has broken through and reached the 33 miners trapped nearly a half a mile below underground for more than two months, Chilean officials announced Saturday morning amid celebratory bells. A powerful drill, twisting and pounding its way through the abrasive volcanic rock, completed a rescue hole for the miners to be hauled to the surface, according to Chile's mining minister. But a rescue would still be days away, and officials here warned that the operation was entering its most dangerous phase. Every decision, they said, carried a risk that the inspiring story consuming the Chilean

government and captivating the world could quickly turn toward disaster.

"We have done everything that technology permits," said Miguel Fortt, a consultant on underground mining rescues in the Atacama region, had said before the breakthrough. "If the Lord doesn't send us an earthquake, we'll be O.K."

The miners themselves may have to set off dynamite to widen the hole at their end so that the rescue capsule — named the Phoenix — has enough room. Engineers at the surface also need to decide whether to line the rescue hole with steel pipes to prevent loose rocks from falling into the shaft and damaging or blocking the capsule.

But whatever the approach, it is going to be a very tight fit. The rescue hole is only a little more than two feet wide and it is not even straight, which could create potential snags as the capsule shimmies up, carrying one man at a time.

"There's only about two inches clearance around it," John E. Urosek, chief of mine emergency operations for the United States Mine Safety and Health Administration had said earlier. "And they'll have to pull it out of that depth so many times, it could get wedged."

Much of the uncertainty stems from how unusual the rescue effort is, turning it into a case study for experts around the world.

"The Chileans are really writing the book on this kind of rescue," said Clint Cragg, an engineer who was part of a NASA delegation to the mine in September. "There haven't been this many guys that deep for this long. It just hasn't been done before."

Laurence Golborne, the mining minister whose ubiquity during the crisis has made him a household name in Chile, had said the rescue could begin as early as Tuesday. Lining the hole could set the schedule back further, but for some of the families waiting anxiously above, any delay in the name of safety is worthwhile.

“I prefer a thousand times that the process drags on two more days than to not line the hole,” said María Cortez, the sister-in-law of Mario Gómez, the oldest of the trapped miners. But lining the hole with tons of heavy steel pipes also presents a risk if they slip and fall, officials said.

Medical officials continue to prepare the miners for their moment in the sun. They have been keeping their weight under control so they can fit in the capsule, which is about 21 inches wide and built with suggestions from the NASA team. The men are also receiving media training to answer questions from the hundreds of reporters here at Camp Hope, the makeshift commune here where families have been living since the collapse on Aug. 5.

Engineers are expected to send down a camera to evaluate the hole and begin the process of prepping the rescue and capsule teams. But before any of the miners come up, at least two rescuers will be sent down first, to stay in the mine and assist with the capsule.

Then there is the question of who is rescued first. The miners are being divided into three teams, Mr. Golborne said, depending on their physical and mental condition, and on their “skills.”

The first group to come up are likely to be the most talented and healthiest group, who will assist the rescuers at the top with the remainder of the operation. Among those will probably be Edison Peña, a fitness buff who has been running several kilometers a day inside the many winding tunnels still accessible to the trapped miners.

The second group will be the less physically fit, like Mr. Gómez, who has a lung condition and José Ojeda, who has diabetes. And then the rest will follow.

The trip in the Phoenix could take as little as 11 to 12 minutes, according to Manuel Montesino, the superintendent for production for Codelco, the state mining company. The miners will be on

their feet inside the capsule, with a monitor to check their vital signs and a hands-free phone.

Retractable rollers will also help prevent the capsule from hitting the walls of the mine shaft.

Once at the surface, the miners will receive wrap-around sunglasses used by mountain climbers and surfers to protect against sudden exposure to the bright sun, and then be treated for first aid on site before being whisked by helicopters to a nearby hospital. Many of the miners have complained of dental pain and skin irritation that will require treatment when they emerge, officials said.

Rescuing the miners has become an obsession for President Sebastián Piñera and his government, which has spared no expense, technological consultation or innovation. Mr. Piñera’s approval rating has risen steadily since the miners were found after more than two weeks during which their fate was uncertain. And Mr. Golborne has become the most popular minister in the Piñera government, a recent opinion poll suggests.

Three efforts were organized to drill holes that could accommodate a rescue capsule. Known as Plans A, B, and C, they proceeded simultaneously. It was Plan B that was on the verge of breaking through to the trapped men on Friday, at a spot more than 2,050 feet below the surface — roughly twice as deep as the Empire State Building is tall.

But for many family members, with the uncertainty to come, the end still seemed far away.

“We are reaching the final chapter, but it feels like the first day,” Mrs. Cortez said. “We didn’t know if they were dead or alive, when we didn’t know anything and, just like now, we were filled with anxiety, sadness.”

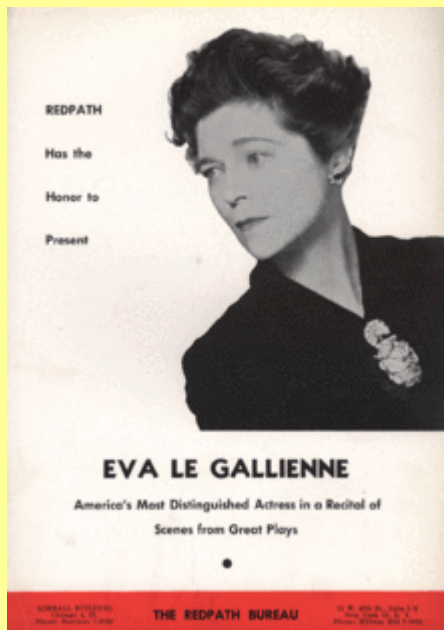


Industry &
Investment

The 20th Electrical Engineering Safety Seminar will be held at Sydney Olympic Park, on Wednesday 10 November and Thursday 11 November 2010.

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/354538/EESS-2010-reqo-brochure.pdf

Quote of the week



“Innovators are inevitably controversial.”

Eva Le Gallienne
(US actress, producer and director, 1899-1991)

Sunday 10 October 2010

Quebec mine deaths could have been prevented: report

Extract from Toronto Sun, Canada

VAL D'OR, Que. - A mining company is responsible for an accident that killed three workers last fall, according to a report released Thursday by Quebec's workplace health and safety commission.

The commission found that a series of mechanical and human errors led to the tragedy at the Bachelor Lake gold mine owned by Metanor Resources, just outside Desmaraisville, Que., a community about 650 km northwest of Quebec City.

“This is an accident that shouldn't have happened,” said the provincial agency's regional director, Marcel Charest, on Thursday.

Workplace safety investigators found that a pumping station with leaking pipes, a badly wired alarm system and neglected safety procedures helped caused the accident that

killed Domenico Bollini, Bruno Goulet and Marc Guay in October 2009.

The three men died after being lowered into freezing water while working to rehabilitate a shaft in the mine.

Charest said simple safety procedures could have prevented the deaths.

“If (the rules) are respected, when there's a flood in the bottom of the mine they'll realize before people are in the water,” he said. “But they didn't know the mine was flooded and they descended.”

Pierre Bernaquez, human resources superintendent for Metanor Resources, said Thursday the company took the report to heart.

“There was a series of problems that sadly caused the accident,” he admitted, noting the company installed a fail-safe alarm system and implemented additional safety measures in the wake of the tragedy.

“We took the report as a message we needed to improve safety in our mines.”

Nonetheless, Bernaquez said Metanor wants a further investigation into the accident by the commission. The company believes contractors who were overseeing work in the mine at the time aren't being held responsible for their part in the drowning.

The mining giant will also contest the fine, which is estimated at \$22,000.

Charest noted that despite the fact 10 miners have died in work-related accidents in the province since 2005, Quebec companies have a good safety record overall. But he wants the report to serve as a wake-up call for the industry.

“Risks are always present and if we have a message it's to ask workers and employers to respect safety regulations,” he said. “It's your health, it's your life.”

Miner Dies in Accident in Northern Chile

Extract from Latin American Herald Tribune

SANTIAGO – A worker died at Chuquicamata, the world's largest open-pit copper mine, when a huge rock fell on him, Chilean state-owned mining giant Codelco said.

Jaime Eduardo Gutierrez Zapata, 44, was working in the mine's Stock 58 sector on Wednesday when the accident occurred, Codelco said.

A 10-ton rock fell on the miner while he was engaged in drilling and cracking work.

"Codelco Norte wants to reaffirm its permanent commitment to the safety of everyone who works for the company," the state-owned company said.

News of the accident comes as Chileans live through the drama of 33 miners trapped since Aug. 5 at a mine in northern Chile.

The effort to rescue the miners is in its final phase, with three drills being used to create a rescue shaft for the men, who are trapped some 700 meters (2,275 feet) underground at the San Jose mine.

Chile: Final steps under way before mine rescue

Extract from CNN

Steel tubing has begun to be placed to reinforce the path that connects the 33 miners trapped in Chile to the surface, the final step before the extraction of the miners can begin, Mining Minister Laurence Golborne said Sunday.

Three of the tubes are already in place, he said. About 15 or 16 tubes will be placed in total.

"We are expecting no major problems," Golborne said

If all goes according to plan, the first of the miners could be pulled from the mine by Wednesday, he said. But the health and safety

of the miners remained the top priority, he added.

Given their circumstances, the miners, who have been trapped since August 5, are in "very good" health, Health Minister Jaime Manalich said.

Their spirits also remain high, he said.

When he told the miners through video conference that they would have to choose an order to be rescued in, there was no shortage of volunteers to go last, Manalich said.

"They continue to have an admirable attitude," he said.

The last six hours before the rescue starts, the miners will be switched over to a liquid diet and vitamins ahead of their trip to the surface.

The change in diet is one way that officials are trying to mitigate some of the challenges associated with the rescue. These include the loneliness of being in the rescue capsule, and dizziness and panic because the capsule will spin around as it rises, Manalich said.

After the 2,300-foot hole in Chile is secure, materials and equipment will be brought in so that the rescue capsule -- dubbed the Phoenix -- can be lowered into the mine. Then, authorities will lower a doctor and a rescuer into the chamber, Manalich said earlier. Medical and rescue personnel will be in place to start extracting and treating the miners.

Once the men have been extracted, they will undergo about two hours of health checks at a field hospital set up at the mine. They will then be flown by helicopter to a hospital in the town of Copiapo -- approximately a 15-minute flight.

Miners who are healthy enough will be allowed to visit briefly with family members in a reunion area before being taken to the hospital.

Health officials have increased the miners' physical activity in recent days to gauge how they can handle the stress of being removed.

The overall response has been good, though some miners have exhibited anxiety or have had minor cardiac issues, Manalich has said.

The miners have been in contact with the outside world through a small bore hole that sends them food, water, supplies and other necessities.

Nine suffocate in China mine

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Nine people have died of suffocation after a rescue attempt went wrong at a lead and zinc ore mine in central China's Hunan province, state news agency Xinhua reported on Saturday (local time), citing local authorities

The deaths occurred on Friday when two miners were overcome by a lack of oxygen in a disused air shaft at the mine in Yuanling county and rescuers and family members went in to try and help.

One miner died, as did five rescuers and three family members who tried to come to the aid of the miners but were themselves overcome.

The second miner was being treated in hospital afterwards but his life was not in danger.

China's mining sector is notoriously dangerous: last year 2,631 miners were killed, according to official statistics, but independent labour groups say the true figure could be much higher.

The high fatality rate is generally blamed on inefficiency and corruption in the sector, with coal mining particularly accident prone.

Municipal officials are investigating the accident at the Changqing Lead Zinc Corporation.

Monday 11 October 2010

MSHA cites Dotiki for fall: Company objects, notes feds found no roof warning

Extract from Evansville Courier & Press, Ky. USA

Federal mine regulators have cited the Dotiki Mine for not doing enough to prevent the

underground roof fall that killed two miners on April 28.

Mine owner Alliance Resources Partners L.P. took issue with the citation, noting that the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration's investigation report declared that the accident came without warning.

The MSHA report, released Friday, also declared that the mine was obeying its federally approved roof control plan at the time of the accident.

Nonetheless, MSHA cited Dotiki because "the roof was not adequately supported or otherwise controlled to protect persons from hazards related to falls of the roof."

An earlier state investigation resulted in a similar ruling.

The roof collapse killed miners Justin Travis, 27, of Dixon and Michael Carter, 28, of Hanson. Travis was a continuous mining machine operator with more than three years of mining experience; Carter, a continuous mining machine helper, had two years of experience.

Federal investigators concluded that the roof fall occurred shortly after the mining machine cut coal from a seam approximately 900 feet beneath the surface of the ground. Unknown to the miners, the shale in that portion of mine roof had been weakened by natural fractures or faults, resulting in hidden slickensides or "slips" in the roof.

Even though the roof immediately above Travis and Carter's heads had been reinforced with long bolts, the removal of coal nearby and the presence of the overhead slips resulted in the collapse of what MSHA called a "massive" section of roof -- up to 76 feet long, 19 feet wide and as much as 10 feet thick.

"The absence of any sign of 'slips' in the immediate roof gave no warning for the need to install supplemental or additional support," MSHA concluded in its report.

The coal company applauded the findings of the federal investigation but objected to being cited for a violation of mine safety law.

"The MSHA investigation confirms the factual findings of our own internal investigation -- this roof fall was an unpredictable accident involving unforeseeable geological conditions," Kenny Murray, vice president of operations at Webster County Coal (the Alliance subsidiary that operates Dotiki), said in a statement.

"At no time during its investigation did MSHA indicate that this accident was preventable or that Webster County Coal was in any way negligent," Murray continued. "To the contrary, the MSHA report specifically acknowledges" that the approved roof control plan was being followed and that there was no signs of slips in the roof before the accident.

"Furthermore, in its citation MSHA specifically found that Webster County Coal was not negligent. In light of these facts, we strongly believe the citation issued today by MSHA is not justified," he said.

MSHA's Office of Assessment will fine the company sometime later, according to spokeswoman Amy Louviere.

Alliance, meanwhile, can appeal the agency's citation.

"The company always has an opportunity to request a conference with the district (MSHA) manager," Louviere said in an e-mail message. "If the matter can't be resolved, the company can take the case before an administrative law judge with the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission."

In July, the state issued a notice of non-compliance to Webster County Coal related to the April 28 roof fall, saying the company was in violation of Kentucky law that require companies to have a roof control plan that adequately provides protection to miners from falls of the mine's roof or ribs.

The company said at the time that "the accident was the result of unpredictable and unforeseeable geologic conditions that were highly unusual at the Dotiki mine."

A slickenside, as cited in the MSHA report, is an indication of a crack or fault line in rock, according to Kentucky State Geologist Jim Cobb, director of the Kentucky Geological Survey.

"It's a polished surface along a fracture" caused by friction when the two sides have "moved past one another," Cobb said.

MSHA's Louviere noted that "the slickensides were not evidenced until the roof fell. You had to look up over the fallen material to the newly exposed roof approximately 10 to 12 feet to see the slickenside. That is what made it unusual. Generally, the slickenside would be visible in the mine roof."

Dotiki, one of nine mining complexes operated by Alliance, employs more than 400 miners. It produced 4.2 million tons of coal last year, according to the company.

The mine has operated since 1966. Before the April roof fall, three miners had died in separate accidents: An electrocution in 1984, an underground tram accident in 1988 and an above-ground dozer accident in 1995.

Although the mine had been cited for violations at various times, the MSHA investigation reported that Dotiki's safety record, by at least one measure, was better than the industry average last year.

The mine experienced 3.68 injuries for every 200,000 hours worked in 2009, compared with the national average of 4.16 for underground mines.

Alliance Resource Partners, based in Tulsa, Okla., says it is the fifth-largest coal producer in the eastern U.S., selling 25 million tons last year to electric generating plants. It employs approximately 3,090 people.

MSHA investigation report:

www.msha.gov/fatals/2010/ftl10c3435.asp

NZ: Man airlifted to hospital after mining accident

Extract from TVNZ.co.nz

A mining accident at the top of the South Island has resulted in one man being flown to hospital with suspected spinal injuries.

A 44-year-old man working at the Dolomite Mine near Collingwood was flown to Nelson Hospital around one this afternoon.

A Summit Rescue Helicopter spokesperson says the man fell five metres from a ladder onto a concrete floor.

The man sustained suspected spinal and leg injuries.

USA: Mine Accident in Fayette County Leaves One Man Dead

Extract from www.cbs59.com

An experienced coal miner died after an accident at the Kingston Mining Inc. No. 1 Mine.

KINGSTON -- According to leaders with Alpha Natural Resources William Dooley, 56, of Oak Hill was killed in an accident at the Kingston Mining Inc. No. 1 Mine at 10:30 a.m. Monday, Oct. 11.

According to Ted Pile, Vice President of Corporate Communications with Alpha Natural Resources, a piece of the roof broke off and hit Dooley while a crew was setting up ventilation curtains.

Dooley was taken to Raleigh General Hospital where he was declared dead. Dooley was an experienced roof bolting machine operator, who began working for Kingston in August 2001. He is survived by a wife and three children.

Ted Pile said the Kingston Mining Inc. No. 1 Mine has an excellent safety record. The mine has apparently never suffered a fatality since it opened 13 years ago.

Additionally, Pile said there have been only two lost time accidents at the mine in the past three years.

The section of the mine where the accident occurred is closed. Pile said that state and federal mine investigators are on the scene.

This week in mining accident history

12 October 1912

North Mount Lyell Mine

Queenstown, Tasmania, Australia

Underground copper mine

43 killed by smoke from fire

Source: Wikipedia.org

The **1912 North Mount Lyell Disaster** (also known as the **Mount Lyell Disaster** and **North Mount Lyell Fire**) refers to a fire that broke out on 12 October 1912 at the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company operations on the West Coast of Tasmania. The mine had been taken over from the North Mount Lyell Company in 1903.

The fire started on a Saturday morning, between 11:15 and 11:30 am, when the pump house on the 700ft level of the mine was reported as being on fire. Initially the status of the fire, numbers casualties and survivors were confused in the first day or so. Considerable problems occurred removing men from the mine who were still alive.

The victims among the 170 miners who went underground in the North Lyell mine on Saturday October 12th, 1912 were not killed by flames or heat, but a dense pall of smoke in the main shaft prevented escape or rescue for 42 men. Some who did escape had their lungs damaged by smoke and fumes and did not live long. The loss of life would have been much higher had it not been for the acts of bravery both underground and on the surface by miners and non miners alike.



Waiting for news at the tunnel mouth, North Mount Lyell Mine, circa 1912

The rescue attempt involved the transporting of breathing equipment from one of the Victorian mining towns to Queenstown, via a speedy shipping across the Bass Strait and the alleged fastest times by engines on the Emu Bay Railway, the Government Strahan-Zeehan Railway line between Zeehan and Regatta Point, and from there by the abt line to Queenstown.

Such was their rush to get the rescue gear to the mine, the S.S. *Loongana*, the ship which crossed Bass Strait carrying the equipment, made the crossing in just over 12 hours - a record which stood for many years. Also the train travelling times between Burnie and Queenstown were never bettered.

As a result of the fire, initially 42 lives were lost; the bodies were buried in unmarked graves in the Queenstown General cemetery. Initially, the first two bodies to be recovered were buried in the Linda Cemetery, however when the final victim (John Bourke) was recovered, the pair were buried at Queenstown at the same time as Bourke. Within a few months of the tragedy, one of the miners who escaped death and then re-entered the mine to assist in the rescue efforts, Albert Gadd, died from carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of the disaster. Gadd should be known as the 43rd victim of the mining tragedy.

The royal commission that was held at the time of the retrieval of bodies after the fire and despite various theories as to the cause of the fire, an open verdict remained.

Tuesday 12 October 2010

S.Africa: Worker dies at Gold Fields' Beatrix mine

Extract from the Times Live.co.za

A miner has died at Gold Fields' Beatrix mine in the Free State following a fall of ground, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said.

The incident occurred earlier on Tuesday, the NUM said in a statement.

"An investigation led by the Department of Mineral Resources and the NUM is currently underway."

The accident followed the death of a miner at Gold Field's South Deep mine over the weekend.

"This brings to two the number of mineworkers who have died at Gold Fields in a few days," the NUM said.

The NUM sent its condolences to the families of the dead workers.

It also called upon the mining industry to act in the interests of its workforce "and stop living in a dream world of safety when workers die like locusts".

Gold Fields could not be immediately reached for comment.

USA: Nine miners hurt in accident

Extract from WKYT, USA

Nine miners have been hurt in an accident at a Kentucky mine.

We're told the man trip, which takes miners out of the underground mine, rolled back into it Sunday around 10:30pm, striking an embankment and over turning at Flint Ridge Mine #2 in Breathitt County.

Two miners were flown from the scene; James Harris of Hindman and Chris Gibson of Jackson.

We're told their injuries are not considered life threatening.

S.Africa: NUM to down tools over Lonmin, Gold Fields fatalities

Extract from Mining Weekly.com

JOHANNESBURG – South African gold-miner Gold Fields said on Tuesday that it had temporarily closed its Beatrix number-three shaft in the Free State after a worker died in a fall-of-ground accident.



Gold Fields spokesperson **Sven Lunsche** told *Mining Weekly Online* that the Department of Mineral Resources had issued a section 54 notice and that the shaft would remain closed until the gold-miner had met certain requirements set out by the Inspector of Mines.

Tuesday's Beatrix fatality follows a fatal tramming accident at the gold company's South Deep mine in Gauteng province last week. A section 54 notice on the area affected by the October 6 accident has been lifted.



NUM spokesperson Lesiba Seshoka
(Picture by: Duane Daws)

Lunsche said that the latest two fatalities had only strengthened the company's resolve to

improve its safety performance. "We have made a lot of progress over the past year in improving our safety record, but as these two fatalities show, we are a long way from where we need to be. Our policy of 'mining only when it is safe to do so' remains the cornerstone of our production strategy."

Meanwhile, the NUM said that the mining industry should stop living in a "dream of safety", while workers were dying like "locusts".

The powerful union said that 4 000 of its members would down tools at Lonmin's Rustenburg operation on Wednesday in protest over a mineworker who died on Friday at the platinum-miner's Newman shaft, after a fall-of-ground accident.

NUM spokesperson **Lesiba Seshoka** said that similar action at the Gold Fields operations was envisaged and added that a date would soon follow. The union represents 38 000 members across all Gold Fields' operations.

Wednesday 13 October 2010

Chile: Trapped miners' ordeal nearly over

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Chilean authorities are on the brink of launching a rescue operation to bring 33 trapped miners to the surface at the San Jose mine in the north of the country.

After more than 69 days trapped almost 700 metres below the earth, the rescue operation is expected to start at about 9:30am AEDT.



Going underground: Workers test the rescue capsule (AFP)

But it is expected to take about 48 hours to bring all the trapped miners to the surface.

Chile's mining minister, Laurence Golborne, says authorities are carrying out final tests on a rescue capsule called the Phoenix Two and says the miners are in good shape.

"I think they are pretty calm," he said.

"They are working on their own things and they are helping us with the platforms that need to be built into the tunnel.

"They are working with the communications people, giving us some lines to establish TV, video, image and communications to the point where the Phoenix will land."

The men will be given oxygen bottles for their trip to the surface. Rescuers will work around the clock and it is expected to take 48 hours to bring all the miners to the surface.

Chile's health minister, Jaime Manalich, says the men will also be given special sunglasses to protect them on the way to the surface.

"It's quite obvious that if they have been more than 69 days with no light, no natural light, probably they could have some damage being exposed to this light," Mr Manalich said.

A 31-year-old driver, Florencio Avalos, has been chosen to be the first miner brought to the surface.

Hundreds of people, including the men's families and the world's media, are at Camp Hope to watch this history-making rescue.

The miners' families are cooking chicken on a makeshift barbecue set up on a 44-gallon drum and trying to keep their children entertained.

Among them is Priscilla Avalos, who has two brothers trapped underground.

"Today is going to be a very long day. So much waiting. Yesterday felt long but today is going to be even longer," she said.

"I think we're going to let everything out. Everything we've been holding in. It's going to be very emotional."

Earlier one of the miners expressed fears that attempts to rescue them could cause the mine's roof to collapse.

The man wrote a letter to his father, saying they have heard rocks falling and are afraid their shelter will cave in.

But officials say they have tested every step of the rescue operation and they are confident that all the men will see daylight soon.

Rescue operations chief Alejandro Pino says he has been helping the miners to write a speech for when they emerge.

"Today, we tried to come up with a speech and I asked them to give me just one word, and with that word, I would show them how to come up with a speech," he said.

"The word they chose to start with was extraordinary: it was 'comradeship'."

As engineers rush to reinforce the rescue shaft, the miners have argued over who should be freed first.

Mr Manalich said by being able to put aside their needs and wanting their colleagues to have a chance at freedom and fresh air first, "they have had a really commendable spirit of solidarity and commitment to their friends".

Canada: Charges laid in fatal mining accident

Extract from The Western Star, Canada

WHITEHORSE, Yukon — The company that employed apprentice mechanic Paul Wentzell, who was killed in an industrial accident at the Wolverine Mine in the Yukon, has been charged with eight counts under the Occupational Health and Safety Act in connection with the death.



Paul Wentzell

Procon Mining and Tunnelling was charged Thursday in territorial court in Whitehorse.

The accident on Oct. 19, 2009 claimed the life of the 20-year-old who had been working at the mine as an apprentice mechanic.

The young man from Daniel's Harbour had driven the industrial equivalent of a Toyota Land Cruiser into the mine with a part for some equipment.

He parked the truck on a 15 per cent grade and applied the emergency brake.

He got out and walked toward the work site.

The brake failed and the Alberta resident was struck by the vehicle. He wasn't feeling well and a co-worker took him to the mine medic. He was flown to Whitehorse where he died of internal injuries.

The company is charged with failing to ensure the truck's emergency brake was in working order, failing to identify the vehicle as unsafe for use, failing to maintain the vehicle to good engineering standard, failing to inspect the vehicle every 250 hours, failing to ensure the young man had proper training on the Land Cruiser, failing to ensure he demonstrated the skill to operate the machine, failing to ensure the apprentice mechanic was under the direct supervision of a qualified person, and failing to ensure the emergency brake was properly identified.

The company is slated to appear in territorial court in Whitehorse to answer the charges Nov. 16.

S.Africa: Performance bonuses compromise safety says NUM

Extract from www.timeslive.co.za

The local mining sector should focus more on safety and less on meeting targets, in light of the recent Chile mining accident, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) says.

"Sometimes our mining industry acts more like the taxi industry," NUM president Sensani Zokwana told media in Johannesburg.

"These mines are focused on more trips to get more money which compromises the safety of others."

Zokwana said mine owners should slow down and deal with providing a better basic wage for miners, rather than offering bonuses for productivity... which encouraged miners to take risks and potentially endanger lives.

“Sometimes our mining industry acts more like the taxi industry.”

"If you look at a company like AngloGold, my answer would be yes, they are not genuine in addressing their 'zero fatalities' policy as long as they offer bonuses as motivation," Zokwana said.

Lessons from Chile

He said South African could learn many lessons from the Chile mining rescue operation, in which countries and companies were working together to free 33 miners who had been trapped 688 metres underground for 69 days.

"We can take this home to us and say, do our mines meet the requirements of the law in terms of safety?"

Zokwana said the country had the knowledge and skills to deal with deep mines, but what was lacking was the implementation of safety legislation by private mine owners.

"Without a strong inspectorate, workers would not be safe if owners alone were in charge of safety because they are focused on cost and profit," he said.

NUM national secretary for health and safety Eric Gcilitshana said more initiative was needed from private companies to assist with mine accidents, as was the case with Murray & Roberts in providing the drills needed to break through to trapped Chilean miners.

"People are asking why this company hasn't helped with all our local accidents... but it's because they didn't open up about their capacity to help... until we saw it for ourselves on TV," Gcilitshana said.

Nationalisation debate

As for the nationalisation of mines, Zokwana said a debate free of insults was needed to decide how a state mining company would operate and what the role of private companies would be.

A recent nationalisation debate between the African National Congress and its youth league had become heated when those believing it was ANC policy to nationalise mines and make resources state-owned clashed with others believing nationalisation was only needed in certain sectors to safeguard the economy.

"We are calling for the activation of the state mining company... we cannot have a situation like we did with Eskom where we ran out of coal because global prices were too high," he said.

Zokwana said there was a perception that calls for nationalisation were made by many 'tenderpreneurs' who had run into trouble following the global financial crisis.

"Their calls are seen as a ploy to bail them out... they think they can sell their mine to the state to earn some money," he said.

Regardless, a nationalisation debate was needed at the very least to see how the interests of NUM's members could be defended, particularly concerning their pensions, he said.

Thursday 14 October 2010

Last miner freed from underground prison

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Rescuers have now freed all the 33 miners who were trapped underground in a collapsed mine in Chile for 10 weeks.

Luis Urzua, 54, the man who acted as leader for the trapped men during their long ordeal, was the last man to be winched to the surface at 11:55am AEDT.

A six-man rescue team which had descended nearly 700 metres into the mine will now come back to the surface, marking the end of a drama which has captivated the world.



Chilean miner Franklin Lobos embraces a rescue member as he exits the Phoenix 2 capsule after being brought to the surface of the San Jose mine on October 14, 2010. (AFP: Juan Mabromata)

NASA specialists have said shift leader Mr Urzua was critical in maintaining the miners' morale during their ordeal, which began when they were trapped by a cave-in on August 5.

All have been met with hugs, kisses and tears from family, rescuers and officials.

Miners rescued:

- 1 Florencio Avalos, 31
- 2 Mario Sepulveda, 40
- 3 Juan Illanes, 52
- 4 Carlos Mamani, 23
- 5 Jimmy Sanchez, 19
- 6 Osman Araya, 30
- 7 Jose Ojeda, 56
- 8 Claudio Yanez, 34
- 9 Mario Gomez, 63
- 10 Alex Vega, 31
- 11 Jorge Galleguillos, 56
- 12 Edison Pena, 34
- 13 Carlos Barrios, 27
- 14 Victor Zamora, 33
- 15 Victor Segovia, 48
- 16 Daniel Herrera, 27
- 17 Omar Reygadas, 56
- 18 Esteban Rojas, 44
- 19 Pablo Rojas, 45
- 20 Dario Segovia, 48
- 21 Yonni Barrios, 50
- 22 Samuel Avalos
- 23 Carlos Bugueno, 27
- 24 Jose Henriquez, 54
- 25 Renan Avalos, 29
- 26 Claudio Acuna, 56
- 27 Franklin Lobos, 53
- 28 Richard Villarroel, 23
- 29 Juan Aguilar, 49
- 30 Raul Bustos, 40
- 31 Pedro Cortez, 24
- 32 Ariel Ticona, 29
- 33 Luis Urzua, 54

Overnight, Chilean rescue crews worked around the clock to bring the men to the surface.

Among them was 63-year-old Mario Gomez, the oldest miner underground.

His daughter, Romina Gomez, was there to greet him.

"I was expecting him to come out looking pretty rough, but he's really, really good," she said.

Ms Gomez was surrounded by family and said they had all agreed that their father will never be let down a mine shaft again.

"That's it. We're going to do everything we can to ensure he doesn't ever have to enter a mine again. Nothing more, never again," she said.

While other families continue waiting, the Gomez family are packing up.

Ms Gomez says they will miss the camaraderie at Camp Hope.

"Yeah a little bit, but we've had two-and-a-half months here. You get used to it.

"You have connections with people, and so I guess there will be sadness, but equally I'm really happy that for us this is all over."

Florencio Avalos, the second-in-charge of the trapped group, was the first miner winched up the 625-metre shaft, followed by union official and electrical specialist Mario Sepulveda.

The men were followed shortly afterwards by former army corporal Juan Illanes and Carlos Mamani, the only Bolivian in the group. He was later greeted by Bolivia's president, Evo Morales.

Good health

The 12th miner rescued, Edison Pena, was deeply depressed at one point during his ordeal; his relatives sent him a collection of Elvis Presley songs to help him through.

Doctors who have examined the men say most are healthier than they expected.

All the miners underwent thoracic and lung examinations.

With two exceptions, they were described as being in "perfect condition".

One has silicosis and the other is slightly weak.

Mr Manalich says those rescued are being rehydrated and given vitamins.

"We have had very little problems, we had basically an increase in blood pressure in all of them while they were pulled up," he said.

"In all cases they recovered satisfactorily after a brief rest.

"They are in very good health conditions. They have already been assessed by specialists including dermatologists, ophthalmologists and the recovery is going well and as programmed."

USA: Massey Energy Again Fails Surprise Mining Inspection in West Virginia

Extract from www.algov.com

Massey Energy Co., owner of the mine where the worst accident in 40 years took place in April, failed another inspection following a surprise visit on September 28 by federal regulators.

Officials with the Mine Safety and Health Administration found numerous violations that could have caused an explosion at the Seng Creek Powellton Mine, located about 40 miles south of Charleston, West Virginia. Miners were caught illegally cutting too deeply into a coal seam, while a foreman admitted to skipping mandatory tests for explosive gases. Inspectors also discovered ventilation curtains (designed to flush away dangerous gases) not in use near areas where coal was being cut.

On April 5, an explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch Mine in Raleigh County, West Virginia, killed 29 workers, making it the deadliest mining accident since 1970.

Only weeks after the accident, Massey was caught operating three other mines where safety rules were violated and miners had to be evacuated by federal inspectors.

Chile mine rescue 'a wake-up call for safety'

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

With all the trapped Chilean miners now free, attention is turning to the long-term impact of the

disaster on a country that is more often associated with the excesses of the Pinochet regime.

Rescuers hoisted the last of the 33 trapped miners to safety today after a two-month underground ordeal as millions watched around the globe.



Shift leader Luis Urzua (C) was the last of the miners to be winched to the surface. (AFP)

President Sebastian Pinera delayed a trip to Europe to stay at the San Jose gold and copper mine in the northern Atacama Desert so he could be on hand to greet every rescued miner.

Opinion polls suggest Mr Pinera is now the most popular politician in Chile, but his new-found popularity masks endemic problems in the country's mining industry.

Chile is not a signatory to the main international mining safety accords and almost 50 miners died in accidents last year.

The country is home to just 1 per cent of the world's mine workers, but notches up 8 per cent of the fatal accidents.

Mr Pinera says the latest accident should never have happened and that industry-wide problems should be addressed.

"That's one of the lessons that we have to take, because at the end of the day in Chile we have a lot of mining companies - big companies which are very good in terms of safety," he said.

"But small companies like this one, they didn't really, they didn't take care, good care of their workers.

"And this mine should have never been acting or working in the conditions they were, because there were no safety conditions to protect the lives."

Mr Pinera has been backed by Juan Somavia, the director-general of the UN agency International Labour Organisation and a Chilean national.

Mr Somavia has described the rescue of the 33 miners as a wake-up call on health and safety issues.

"Security at work is a very major problem in the world," he said.

"And fortunately in Chile we were able to deal with this tragedy. But it's not always the case worldwide and for the International Labour Organisation that I lead this is a very crucial message that we have to heed."

Some of the families of the rescued miners are planning to sue the owners of the San Jose mine and safety authorities. The government may also be in the legal firing line.

The mine itself was originally opened in 1889 and has a long history of accidents that have killed and seriously injured many miners in recent years.

Mario Sepulveda, the second miner to reach the surface yesterday, has already spoken out about mine and industrial safety in Chile.

"This country must understand once and for all that we can make changes, that many changes have to be made. We can't stay as we are," he said.

"I think that business people have to help so changes can be made as to workers. Things cannot stay the way they are."

Pinochet past

One of the main anchors on Chile's national television station TVN, Amaro Gomez-Pablos, says the world still associates Chile with Pinochet.

The late Augusto Pinochet ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990, when 3,000 people died in political violence and tens of thousands were tortured or exiled.

"Worldwide whenever you travel to any country immediately you say the word 'Chile' and it's associated with Pinochet. I think this will be a page-turner," Mr Gomez-Pablos said.

"We'll flip the page over worldwide in terms that Chile will no longer be associated [with that]. The rescue effort of these 33 men has also meant the death of an icon that was always typically associated with this country."

The president agrees.

"I hope that from now on, when people around the world hear the word Chile, they will not remember the coup d'etat or the dictatorship," he said.

"They will remember what we've done, all the Chileans together.

"Because, here all the Chileans are united, committed with this rescue effort. And that's an example for the whole world."

In the meantime, the 33 rescued miners will be locked away from the public for the next two days. Then they will emerge as heroes.

Friday 15 October 2010

World's eyes on Chile's rescued miners

Extract from ABC Online, Aus

Chile's 33 rescued miners are pondering their new celebrity status as they recover from their months-long entrapment deep under the earth.

Most of the miners were found in surprisingly good health considering that they had been stuck in a wet, hot, collapsed mine tunnel below a remote desert since August 5.

The men were resting in a hospital after being hoisted to the surface in a rescue operation watched by hundreds of millions worldwide. One

of the miners had pneumonia and was being treated with antibiotics.

In a complicated but flawless operation under the South American nation's far northern Atacama desert, the miners were hauled out one by one through 625 metres of rock in a metal capsule little wider than a man's shoulders.

With much of the world transfixed by the rescue, celebrations erupted in Chile.

The miners set a world record for survival underground and were welcomed as national heroes.

It took less than 22 hours from the time the first miner was brought to the surface until the last one was pulled to freedom late on Wednesday (local time).



Happy ending: Sebastian Pinera meets the rescued miners (Supplied: Jose Manuel de la Maza)

About 2.5 hours later, the last of six rescuers who had gone down the shaft to help the miners get out also emerged from the gold and copper mine, and the operation was complete.

"The trip up was calm. Everything was well prepared. I came up listening to music," said miner Richard Villarroel, whose wife is expected to have a baby boy in November.

He said the worst moment was when the mine was first shut by the cave-in.

"I thought I would never see my wife again and that I would not see the birth of my son," he said.

Families were being allowed to visit in shifts at the hospital in Copiapo, where the miners were being treated and where president Sebastian Pinera visited them on Thursday.

"We hope that some of them, two or three, can be released this afternoon," said Jorge Montes, an official at the hospital.

Invitations pour in

Still wearing dark glasses to protect their eyes from glare after being trapped so long in near darkness, the miners received an invitation from Mr Pinera to visit the presidential palace toward the end of the month.

The president, a soccer fan who also plays the game, challenged the miners to a match against a team made up of his cabinet.

"The team that wins will stay in La Moneda (the presidential palace). The team that loses goes back to the mine," he joked.

Despite the suffering they went through, and the emotional stress some will still face, the previously unknown miners could now have plenty to look forward to if they take up the offers open to them.

Miner Edison Pena, a fan of Elvis Presley, got an invitation from Graceland to visit the museum dedicated to the rock and roll legend in Memphis, Tennessee.

"We heard on the news that he's a huge Elvis fan," Graceland spokeswoman Alicia Dean said.

Real Madrid and Manchester United invited the miners, many of whom are avid soccer fans, to watch them play in Europe.

A flamboyant local singer-turned-businessman has given them \$10,000 each and a Greek firm has offered an islands tour.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

ABANDONED WORKINGS

Sections, panels and other areas that are not ventilated and examined in the manner required for work places.

-Ed