



Mining Accident News No.1031

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Friday 22 October 2010

One week after rescue, Chile miners fed up with fame

Extract from AFP

SANTIAGO — One week after being hoisted from the depths of a collapsed mine in Chile, the 33 rescued workers say they are fed up with celebrity, the media scrum and even the promise of untold riches from book contracts and movie deals.

The miners say they want their old lives back.

"Sometimes, I think it was much better inside the mine," said Omar Reygadas, 56, who scarcely a

week ago was being pulled above ground after 69 days entombed in the underground cavern.

Reygadas said in an interview with the daily El Mercurio newspaper that the weeklong media frenzy surrounding his rescue has proved almost more than he can bear.

"This whole situation has made me made me jittery; I can't sleep very well," he said.

The miners, humble day laborers who earned their living by the sweat of their brow, last week became unlikely rock stars, after surviving a harrowing ordeal 700 meters (2,000 feet) deep underground at the San Jose gold and copper mine.

Hundreds of journalists from every corner of the globe descended upon Chile to document their amazing tale of survival against the odds, after they originally were given up for dead in the August 5 cave-in.

Since their dramatic rescue, every step of the men's lives has been painstakingly documented, including the tearful reunions with anxious loved ones and the first days in their humble dwellings after being taken home.

The men said that being sequestered in close quarters within the mine was hard, but not nearly as challenging as the constant glare of television lights and relentless public scrutiny.

"I'm extremely exhausted from being besieged by the press, tired of all the events and appointments with officials," said Mario Gomez, at 63 years old the eminence grise of the group.

"I hope that all of this quiets down pretty soon," he said.

In the days leading up to and immediately after the men being brought above ground, television stations around the globe devoted hours of non-stop coverage to the rescue, and newspapers thousands of miles away made them a front-page story.

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

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Now miner Mario Sepulveda says he has had enough.

"The haranguing by the national and foreign press has been fairly relentless.

"If this is fame," he told US television, "then it's not for me."

Not all the miners, however, have had their fill of TV cameras and klieg lights. Four of the men -- Ariel Ticona, Victor Segovia, Esteban Rojas and Pablo Rojas -- were on their way to Spain Thursday to take part in a four hour long televised special program.

And all the miners attended a gala party organized earlier this week by Chilean billionaire Leonardo Farkas, a mining magnate whose party favors for each of the men included their very own motorbike.

Earlier, Farkas made presents to the men of 10,000 dollar checks and even promised to purchase new homes for any who were renters.

Even while they were still trapped in the mine, experts anticipated the current media onslaught and tried to prepare the miners by giving them training in how to handle television and newspaper interviews.

Experts said the fever-pitch celebrity status has put the men at even greater psychological risk than was feared as a result of which has followed their physically and emotionally grueling captivity.

"What has hurt the men most is the lack of a chance to rest," said psychologist Alberto Iturra, head of a team of mental experts tasked with monitoring the men's wellbeing.

"They need to rest," he said.

Iturra said it was to be expected that the men would begin to resent their newfound celebrity, and that they would even begin to miss the relative quiet and camaraderie of the mine.

"It's only natural that, after five or six days, they would begin to miss each other and would feel a bit homesick for the mine, which was so much

more peaceful and where they had so much more control over their surroundings," Iturra said.

The psychologist added that he and other mental health experts to continue to monitor the men's every move, and to help them deal with their sudden fame.

"We're going to accompany them all the time, for as long as necessary," he said.

Miner killed, 3 injured in Polish coal mine collapse

Extract from Canadian Press

WARSAW, Poland — Authorities say that a miner was killed and three were injured when a cave in the Rydultowy coal mine in southern Poland collapsed.

Zbigniew Madej, a spokesman for the mine, said Friday the collapse occurred Thursday night some 3,900 feet (1,200 metres) underground in the mine near the town of Rybnik, trapping the four miners.

Rescuers found the victim and the three injured miners early Friday. Madej says the injured are being treated at a local hospital.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the accident.

Poland's long-exploited and underfunded mines are the sites of frequent accidents and fatalities.

Sunday 24 October 2010

Unlike Chile, mining tragedy in Tanzania portends death

Extract from The Citizen, Tanzania

The recent mining accident and subsequent audacious but successful rescue operation in Chile has triggered renewed doubts on whether Tanzania, Africa's third biggest gold producer after South Africa and Ghana, stands a chance to survive a similar nightmare.

Thirty three workers of one of Chile's San Jose mines were stuck more than 700 meters

underground, about three quarters of a kilometre, for more than two months when the walls of a mine suddenly collapsed over their heads on August 5.

Given the nature of the tragedy, hopes were understandably fast fading on the prospects of the miners' survival in the immediate aftermath of the accident, as while deep underground, their limited rations started to run out. However, they endured acute food and water shortages for seventeen days until a supply shaft was drilled through the rocky earth crust by Chilean engineers as the world watched excitedly.

Many people agree that if a similar disaster befell Tanzania today it would certainly result into immediate human catastrophe.

"It is not possible for people to survive for such a long time and be rescued alive if such accident occurred in Tanzania, this is simply due to lack of preparedness to deal with such occurrences," Tanzania Mines, Energy, Construction and Allied Workers Union (TAMICO) Secretary General, Hassan Ameir said in reference to Chile accident in which miners were trapped underground for 69 days.

Many stakeholders in the sector agree with this grim assessment. They point out the fact that in Tanzania miners have died in explosions or even suffocated when the pits collapsed.

In 2002, some 48 miners were suffocated to death when a compressor used to pump in clean air failed to work.

In 2008 at least 65 miners drowned to death after floods swept through pits and tunnels at the tanzanite-rich Mererani mines in Manyara region. Some 35 people survived the catastrophe.

Also at Mererani in 2006 a miner was killed by falling loose rocks, and in March 2010 the death of three miners in the same area was attributed to collapsed pits. And these are but just a few of deaths caused by mining accidents in the country.

Except for a few foreign-owned mining firms, the majority of ongoing mining operations use rudimentary tools and seriously lack in enforcement of safety standards.

Experts warn that under the present circumstances more fatal disasters are likely to happen unless concerted effort are immediately taken to enhance safety standards in the country's mining industry at large.

Dr. Alan Masindai, engineering geologist at the University of Dar es Salaam says Tanzania lacks laws compelling enforcement of high safety standards in the domestic mining and extraction industry.

According to the geologist, there is need to examine mining pits properly and regularly to establish their strength and durability as part of safety enforcement procedures.

In addition, he says mining firms should be obliged to set up geotechnical sections with competent engineering geologists capable of analyzing and predicting hazards in the mining and construction industry to avert tragedies.

Dr Msindai noted that Tanzania also lacks coherent and efficient public safety policies.

"To judge by what is happening in construction, mining and other industries, it is clear that decent work is not a strategic objective of this country's model for economic growth," the academician said.

On its part, TAMICO has urged the government to put in place measures that would ensure miners' safety and prompt rescue in case of accidents like the one that occurred in Chile.

TAMICO Secretary General, Hassan Ameir told The Citizen this week that some mining operations in the country were not being carried out in the appropriate manner and lacked adequate safety measures.

He noted that only some foreign-owned mining firms, like Barrick Gold company have strict rules that compel workers to observe safety regulations and procedures in their daily

operations. Workers neglecting or failing to comply with such rules normally risk disciplinary action.

Ameir commended those few mining firms in the country already adhering to high safety standards and called on workers in the sector and elsewhere to observe safety requirements and rules.

Deemed safety compliant include the Bulyanhulu gold firm which in 2009 received a national award from Tanzania Occupational Safety and Health Authority for their health and safety programme.

The mine has an experienced emergency response team, which is often sent off-site to other locations to assist in rescue operations at both operating and closed mines.

It is operated by Barrick gold, the company regarded as among the firms with high safety standards. Public relations and communications manager Teweli Teweli described their safety measures as "impressive".

"Bulyanhulu is the only mine in the country which has experienced, competent and well trained team of people with unique safety skills and specializing on underground rescue," Mr Teweli explained.

He said safety training is mandatory and run by the emergency response team at Bulyanhulu. It involves drills in hazardous chemical material incidents, rope rescue, motor traffic vehicle accidents extrications and rescue.

Other areas of training include advanced fire fighting, operation of self-contained breathing apparatus as well as search and rescue drills.

According to Mr Teweli, due to their unique skills, Bulyanhulu and other Barrick rescue teams have been involved in a number of rescue missions across the country.

For instance, the team was involved in rescue missions at the closed Buhemba mine during a number of accidents, he said.

"Recently Africa Barrick Gold's rescue team at Bulyanhulu responded to two rescue missions out of Bulyanhulu mine-- Mwanza Airport for Air Tanzania accident and Reef 2 where an artisan miner was trapped in a hole" he said.

Mr Teweli also told this paper that the team sent equipment and facilities which were used during the rescue mission when the tanzanite mines at Mererani in Manyara region were flooded in late March 2008.

Score of miners died at the site when their pits were flooded following heavy rains. Volunteers were rushed to the area and the government obtained equipment from Bulyanhulu and other organisations which helped in the rescue operation. The equipment was for draining the water as fast as possible.

The floods occurred at a time when the east Africa region was experiencing excessive rainfall swamping city slums, damaging crops and cutting off remote villages.

Poor technology used in extraction and recovery of minerals, the inability to invest in safe working equipment and tools, lack of technical know-how are still some of the factors that threaten miners' lives in the country.

Research by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2002 reveals lack of adequate scaffolding technology for accidents from collapsing walls and tunnels of mines in the country.

Stabilizing the shaft walls requires engineering knowledge, willingness and ability to take adequate measures, the study says.

The study titled, "Tanzania's Precious Minerals Boom; Issues in Mining and Marketing", points out that in areas where drilling is carried out using drilling equipment like jackhammers, there are rarely any measures to suppress the dust.

The report says that in correct usage, drilling equipment for underground work is provided with a special connection for water that is used to suppress dust and for cooling.

Quote of the week



“A man's dreams are an index to his greatness.”

Zadok Rabinowitz
(Rabbi of Lublin, Poland; 1823-1900)

Monday 25 October 2010

Shanxi's Richest Coal Miner on the Run

Extract from ChnaRealTimeReport

China's coal mines are infamously dangerous — and their owners infamously rich.

On the heels of a Chinese mining accident that killed 37 miners comes the latest scandal coated in coal dust.



According to Chinese media reports, police are searching for the richest miner in Shanxi Province for allegedly using a forged passport and identity papers to go on gambling trips to Macau and other places (also in Chinese).

Zhang Xinming, chairman of the Shanxi Jinye Coal & Coking Group, is a self-made millionaire, who with his family was worth \$440 million in 2009, according to Forbes.

Zhang reportedly sold his company for 10 billion yuan, or \$1.5 billion yuan at current exchange rates, to China Resources Power Holding Co. earlier this year.

Police allege he has sent some of the money overseas under a false name and has fled the country, according to media reports.

The 47-year-old Zhang is a rags-to-richest story. Born to a poor peasant family, he worked in Shanxi province's rich coal pits and earned enough to set up a logistics business in the mid 1990s. He was savvy enough to parlay his good start into a leading position in the Shanxi coal sector.

Coal bosses like Zhang have recently become targets of popular resentment after stories surfaced of conspicuous consumption: Lavish Beijing apartments and fleets of Hummers and BMWs bought with trunk-loads of cash contrasted sharply with the poor and dangerous lives of the miners they employed.

In response, the government has ordered consolidation of Shanxi's mining industry to increase safety and efficiency, but that drive has also decreased output. The number of independent producers has been cut from more than 2,000 to less than 500. Shanxi was until recently the biggest coal producer in China, which is reliant on the fossil fuel for three-quarters of its electricity. Inner Mongolia is now the leading producer.

After Beijing announced the consolidation policy, private sector miners like Zhang found themselves being strong-armed to sell to competing state-owned firms and complained they weren't getting fair treatment.

Zhang's reputation is less than stellar. State media reported that, in addition to the accusations about illegally moving money overseas, he has also been investigated for corruption and possible organized crime connections.

Responding to the report, Chinese Internet users appeared angry, though not surprised.

"He's only now appearing on the wanted list," one reader wrote on the website of the Fuzhou Evening News. "He's already taken the money and run."

"What coal boss doesn't dig around without permits, use blackmail like a gangster and sell coal resources like a scalper?" wrote another on the popular Netease portal. "I wish we could investigate them all!"

This week in mining accident history

28 October 1939

Valleyfield Pit

Fife, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

35 killed by explosion

Source: www.scottishmining.co.uk

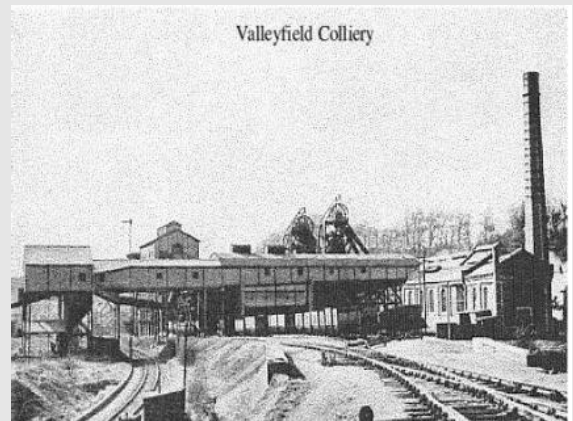
35 men were killed at Valleyfield Colliery, Fife on 28th October 1939 when shot firing caused an explosion of fire damp.

An explosion of firedamp is believed to have been the cause of the disaster, which occurred shortly before four o'clock on Saturday morning. It is one of the worst in the history of Scottish mining, and probably the most serious which has ever happened in Fife. Government inspectors and officials of the Fife Coal Company, owners of the pit, which is about five miles west of Dunfermline, carried out preliminary investigations over the weekend, and an official inquiry will soon be held. The Procurator-Fiscal of the County was on the scene of the tragedy yesterday and on Saturday.

The Sheriff will order the inquiry, which will be held in Dunfermline. Pending this, there can be no detailed explanation of the accident, but in an official statement issued early on Saturday the Company announced with regret that "an explosion of firedamp occurred at Valleyfield Colliery at 4 a.m. this morning." Later in the day, Mr C. Augustus Carlow, the managing director, said to a representative of The Scotsman: "This was a gassy pit, but every appliance that

modern science can devise has been applied to this pit to the utmost possible extent. The air was measured yesterday, and so much air was passing that the men were inconvenienced by the wind."

Men Killed Instantly - Some idea of the terrible effects which the gas must have had was given to a representative of The Scotsman last night by a member of one of the rescue parties. He is an official of a miners' association, and throughout yesterday and Saturday was down the pit assisting in the recovery of the bodies. "I have been in a few accidents," he said, "and know what gas is. Your first feeling is one of thumping palpitation in the heart. Then your legs become weak, and you feel as if you must sleep. You cannot be bothered with anything else. All you want to do is to stay where you are." He explained that this was what must have happened after the explosion. The men who had not been instantly killed by the shattering upheaval must have died only a few minutes later from the effects of the gas. "Some of them we came across," he said, "were lying on their side with their hands beneath their face, just as if they had got down to sleep."



From the pit bottom to the actual coal face where the explosion occurred, he pointed out, was about a mile. So bad had been the impact, however, that the efforts of the rescue squads were severely hampered "The place was like a shambles," he said. Twisted girders and rails, big falls of rock, and tubs and machinery smashed to smithereens."

Royal Sympathy - Messages of sympathy were received from the King and the Prime Minister, and copies were stuck on a door near the pithead leading into the blacksmith's shop, which was used as a mortuary.

The Royal message, addressed to the Earl of Elgin as Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, read:- "The Queen and I are deeply grieved to hear of the Valleyfield Colliery disaster. Please convey our heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved and keep us informed as to the condition of the injured and the progress of rescue work.—George R.I."

An inquiry lasting three months found that there were serious breaches of regulations, the owners and management being charged with neglect.

Tuesday 26 October 2010

Qld: Court hears mine truck crash evidence

Extract from ABC News online, Aus and Daily Mercury

A hearing will continue in a north Queensland court today over an incident at a Bowen Basin mine where a truck's brakes allegedly failed.

Broadlea Coal Management Proprietary Limited and former senior site executive Darren Carpenter are each facing one charge of failing to discharge a safe workplace.

The driver suffered a broken neck and multiple leg fractures after the truck crashed at the Broadlea mine near Moranbah in March 2007.

When the brakes failed on a service truck heading down an access ramp at Broadlea Mine, driver Dave Jessup reached for the two-way and yelled: "Emergency. I've got no brakes."

The truck then crashed and overturned. Mr Jessup had multiple fractures to his leg and a broken neck.

The truck was a triple-axle 1989 model Mercedes Benz flat top that carried 11,000 litres of fuel, a compressor, oils and grease to service trucks in the open cut mine pit.

It had a history of bad brakes and there was rust in the cabin, Mr Jessup said.

Under cross examination by Tony Glynn, SC, for Broadlea, Mr Jessup said he had worked at the mine site for about five weeks and he had never done any pre-start checks on his vehicle. He had done pre-start checks during an induction course and there was a pre-start check book in the truck.

He said the truck zigzagged when service brakes were applied and boosters leaked.



Mining truckie Dave Jessup leaves court after testifying in 2009. Although he suffered multiple leg fractures in the crash in March 2007, he said his current leg fracture was not connected with the crash (photo by Peter Holt, Daily Mercury, Mackay, Qld)

Mr Jessup, who admitted he was not wearing a seat belt, said he was driving down the access ramp in first gear, took his hand off the gear stick to hold the steering wheel and the truck jumped into second gear.

"I tried to pull it back into first gear and had my foot on the brake at the same time.

"The engine revved loudly and I thought it might blow up."

He said he knew the gear stick had to be held in first gear or it would jump.

"It did it all the time. If you didn't hold it in first, it would jump into second," he said.

Mr Jessup believed he was doing 10 to 15km/h when the gear jumped and was doing up to 30 or 40km/h when he crashed.

Mr Jessup said he spoke to two "dirt bosses" about the condition of the truck and said he was

told: "There's a new truck coming. Keep (this one) going until it arrives."

Outside court in November 2009, Mr Jessup said he had settled a claim for damages for injuries he suffered in the crash.

Broadlea Mine, near Moranbah, was operated at the time by ANCI Holdings Australia and has since been taken over by mining giant Vale, which has inherited the prosecution as the new owner.

The hearing, before the Industrial Magistrates Court in Mackay, is expected to run for the rest of the week.

Court tells US MSHA to rework mine refuge chambers training

Extract from Galax, Virginia (Platts)

A federal appeals court has agreed that the US Mine Safety and Health Administration must explain why it is requiring "hands-on" training annually rather than quarterly under a final rule for use of refuge chambers in underground mines.

But the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit also ruled in the Tuesday decision that the United Mine Workers of America, which appealed aspects of the rule to the court, didn't make a case for more living space for each miner, or "volume," in its arguments.

"We are pleased that the court agreed with us with respect to the critical need for adequate training regarding the use of underground refuge chambers," UMWA spokesman Phil Smith said Tuesday.

"We are very hopeful that the Mine Safety and Health Administration under the current administration will develop rules that will lead to a higher level of training for miners. We hope miners will never have to deploy a refuge chamber in a real emergency, but its imperative that they receive an adequate level of training in the event that they do have to," he added.

A rule requiring refuge chambers for underground mines came out of the 2006 Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act enacted by Congress in response to a number of deadly underground mine accidents that year.

Those accidents included two in January alone-- the explosion at International Coal Group's Sago mine, in which 12 miners died, and an underground mine fire at Massey Energy subsidiary Aracoma Coal's Alma No. 1 mine that led to the death of two workers.

In December 2007, Congress directed the Labor Secretary to propose regulations consistent with the recommendations of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health requiring rescue chambers, or facilities that afford at least the same measure of protection, not later than June 15, 2008, and to finalize the regulations not later than December 31, 2008.

On June 16, 2008, MSHA published a notice of proposed rulemaking and, following the receipt of comments, promulgated the final rule on December 31, 2008. The UMWA then petitioned for review of the miner training and refuge volume provisions in the final rule.

The union argued before the court on September 13 that NIOSH recommended more frequent training in the proper deployment of the refuge chambers, contrary to what the MSHA rule stated. The UMWA said that "[t]o adequately protect miners in the post-accident situation, the training protocol must require hands-on training at least every 90 days."

UMWA SAYS 60 CUBIC FEET NOT ENOUGH SPACE

The NIOSH report also recommended, according to the appeals court's decision, "providing at least 15 square feet of unrestricted floor space and at least 85 cubic feet of unrestricted volume per miner in the refuge alternatives to enable miners to perform basic functions...However, the report advised that '[t]he values listed...should not be considered as

absolute, but rather as reasonable starting points for specifications."

MSHA proposed and the UMWA objected to a refuge chamber providing 60 cubic feet per miner, including 15 square feet of floor space. The court denied UMWA's objection to this provision of the rule.

"We grant the petition with respect to the training requirement for miners and remand the Final Rule for MSHA to explain the basis for requiring 'hands-on' training only annually rather than quarterly," the court said.

"Although the training provision is, as statutorily required, 'consistent with' the recommendations of NIOSH, these requirements are nonetheless arbitrary and capricious because MSHA has not explained the basis for them other than to state it relied upon its 'knowledge and expertise,'" it said.

"A conclusory statement is inadequate when expert evidence in the rulemaking record indicated why quarterly hands-on training was necessary and MSHA itself had identified problems of skill degradation," it added.

On the provision for minimum refuge volume per miner, court said that "the final rule was a logical outgrowth of the proposed rule: MSHA gave interested parties sufficient notice and opportunity for comment. The provision also is neither arbitrary nor capricious."

MSHA officials did not respond to requests for comment Tuesday.

The National Mining Association, which filed as an intervenor in the case on behalf of MSHA, likewise declined comment on the decision. "This is a UMWA filing and we'll just sit this one out...at least until there's some agreed upon decision we may want to comment about later," NMA spokesman Luke Popovich said Tuesday.



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-rego-brochure.pdf

Wednesday 27 October 2010

DJ Worker Dies in South African Platinum Mine Accident - Union

Extract from TradingMarkets.com

JOHANNESBURG, (Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- A mineworker was killed early Wednesday in an accident at South Africa's Bafokeng Rasimone platinum mine that is jointly owned by a local community and Anglo Platinum Ltd. (AMS.JO), the National Union of Mineworkers said.

The winch-related accident occurred shortly after midnight, and the union said it is investigating the circumstances that led to the fatality.

The Bafokeng Rasimone venture is 67% owned by Royal Bafokeng Platinum Ltd., a mining company controlled by a 300,000 strong community in a platinum-rich area of the country. The company plans to list on the Johannesburg stock exchange Nov. 8.

USA: Worker killed in accident at W. Kentucky mine

Extract from courierpress.com, USA

A coal miner was killed this morning when he was apparently struck by a shuttle car at a Waverly underground mine.

According to a release from the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, James Jeffery Falk, 39, of Webster County was hit about 8 a.m. at the River Valley Coal mine. No other injuries were reported.

Cabinet spokesman Dick Brown said Falk had more than four years of mine experience.

River Valley is owned and operated by Alliance Resource Partners L.P. It employs more than 430 miners. Investigators from the Kentucky Office of Mine Safety and Licensing are still investigating. The area of the mine where the accident happened has been closed until further notice.

This is the sixth mining fatality in Kentucky this year.

Aura Minerals Advises of Fatality from Vehicle Accident Outside Sao Francisco Mine

Extract from www.marketwatch.com.au

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) -- Aura Minerals Inc. regretfully advises that an employee of Fagundes Construcao e Mineracao Ltda. ("Fagundes"), the mining contractor at the Company's Sao Francisco mine, was fatally injured in a two vehicle accident on Monday afternoon on the municipal road between the mine and the town of Pontes e Lacerda in Mato Grosso, Brazil. Another Fagundes employee was severely hurt and several others sustained non-life threatening injuries. The Fagundes employees were travelling to work for their regular shift when their bus and a Company vehicle collided. The families of those injured and all relevant authorities have been contacted and an investigation into the accident has commenced.

Aura Minerals extends sincerest condolences to the families and co-workers of the victims. Patrick Downey, CEO of Aura Minerals said, "We are saddened by the loss of a Fagundes employee and our thoughts at this time are with his family. We are hopeful for a quick recovery for all others injured in the accident."

Thursday 28 October 2010

Twelve killed in China coal mine flood

Extract from theheraldsun.com.au

TWELVE workers were killed and one injured in a flood in a colliery in southwestern China, state media said Thursday, in the latest accident to hit the nation's notoriously dangerous mining industry.

The incident happened Wednesday in Guizhou province's Machang town when 50 miners were

working underground, the official Xinhua news agency quoted a spokesman for the provincial coal mine safety bureau as saying.

A total of 38 workers managed to escape, the report said, adding the mine managers had fled after the accident but were caught Thursday.

The cause of the flooding is currently under investigation.

More than 2,600 miners were killed in job-related accidents last year, according to official data -- or about seven people a day. Independent labor groups say the actual number of deaths is probably much higher.

China last week vowed to beef up safety in the industry -- the latest pledge made in a nation where accidents happen with regularity as mines rush to pump out the coal on which the nation relies for about 70 percent of its energy.

Just two weeks ago, 37 people were killed in what authorities have called a "gas outburst" in a mine in central China's Henan province.

It was the first major accident in China since the dramatic rescue of 33 miners trapped for more than two months in Chile -- an event that triggered considerable public criticism over China's mine safety record.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

ADIT

A nearly horizontal passage from the surface by which an underground mine is entered.



-Ed