



Mining Accident News No.1034

19 to 25 November 2010

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Friday 19 November 2010

New Zealand Rescuers Forced to Wait to Enter Coal Mine

Extract from Bloomberg Businessweek

New Zealand rescue workers have been forced to wait for tests to show the air is safe before entering a coal mine shaft where 29 men are missing in the country's first mining disaster in more than 40 years.



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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"I'm not prepared to put people underground until we can prove it's a safe environment," police superintendent Gary Knowles said at a news conference in Greymouth on the west coast of the nation's South Island, 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the mine site. "We just need the right opportunity and the right time to get down there."

Officials stopped testing air in the mine tunnel at 4 p.m. local time and won't resume taking samples before tomorrow, Sky News reported, citing local police. Families of the missing workers are becoming frustrated that rescue teams haven't yet tried to enter the shaft, Sky said.

An explosion ripped through the mine yesterday afternoon, knocking out power to its ventilation system. The workers' condition and location is unknown and there has been no contact with them, said Peter Whittall, chief executive officer of Pike River Coal Co., which runs the mine.



Emergency crews will not enter the mine because poisonous gas levels are too high

The men comprise 16 Pike River employees and 13 contractors, whose ages range from 17 to 62,

Whittall said. Twenty-four of those trapped are New Zealanders, two are Australian, two are British and one is South African, the New Zealand Herald reported, citing Greymouth police.

The two Britons originate from Scotland, the Foreign Office in London said today.

'Gas Hazard'

The results from air quality tests of samples taken from the top of the mine tunnel are "inconclusive," Whittall said at the press conference today. Rescuers are monitoring levels of gases including methane, carbon dioxide and ethane, he said. Knowles said he had a 16-strong team waiting to enter the mine.

While the mine is "what I would class a moderately gassy mine," there was nothing to suggest a heightened risk of an explosion, Whittall said. Gas is a "hazard" and "something we work with all the time," he said.

Two miners who managed to walk to the surface yesterday were treated in hospital and discharged today, West Coast District Health Board Chief Executive David Meates said.

Prime Minister John Key told reporters in Greymouth he had received international messages of support, including an e-mail from Britain's Prince William.

Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd said the country was providing technical officials to assist with the rescue effort. Australia is "gravely concerned" about two of its nationals who may be involved in the accident, he said in Sydney.

Help From Australia

New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally said the state was sending eight mine rescue officials to the site, while Queensland Premier Anna Bligh said her state had sent four mine safety officers, including two gas chemists, and equipment.

New Zealand's last mining disaster was in 1967, when 19 people died in a blast at the Strongman coal mine, also near Greymouth.

Mining accidents are more common in countries such as China, where a gas explosion rocked an underground mine in Henan province on Oct. 16, killing 37 people. In Chile, 33 men were rescued from a copper and gold mine last month following the world's longest mine rescue.

An accident at Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia in April killed 29 people.

China, the world's biggest coal producer and consumer, has the worst mine safety record, with an average of seven deaths a day in accidents last year. In Chile, Mining Minister Laurence Golborne said Oct. 25 that the government will probably announce changes to health and safety rules by the end of November.

Ventilation System

Yesterday's blast came without any warning of "heightened risk," said Andrew Little, the national secretary for the Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union, representing 71 of about 140 workers at the mine. "It's only been in production for a year or so," he said. "They delayed production because they weren't satisfied that the ventilation system was right, so they've been pretty careful about that."

Pike River is part-owned by India's Gujarat NRE Coke Ltd. and Saurashtra Fuels Pvt., which also take some of its low-ash, low-phosphorus coking coal, used by steelmakers. The mine was forecast to produce 320,000 to 360,000 metric tons of coal in the year through June, the company said Oct. 19.

Pike River shares slumped 14 percent to 61 Australian cents in Sydney yesterday before trading was halted. The company fell 4.4 percent to 88 New Zealand cents by the Wellington close.

Mining employs about 6,000 people in New Zealand, according to government website

www.beehive.govt.nz. The industry earned about NZ\$1.1 billion (\$857 million) in export receipts in 2009.

USA: MSHA launches second phase of 'Rules to Live By'

Extract from wvgazette.com

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today launched the second phase of an outreach and enforcement program designed to strengthen efforts to prevent mining fatalities. "Rules to Live By II: Preventing Catastrophic Accidents" was developed from data gathered by reviewing accidents that resulted in five or more fatalities, as well as from incidents caused by fires or explosions that had the potential to result in more fatalities.



MSHA analyzed citation data from eight accidents at underground coal mines that took place between 2000 and 2009, and resulted in the deaths of 47 miners. These accidents occurred at Willow Creek, Jim Walters No. 5, McElroy, Sago, Aracoma Alma Mine No. 1, Darby Mine No. 1, R & D Coal Co. and Crandall Canyon. In developing the second phase of "Rules to Live By," MSHA reviewed these accidents to identify conditions and practices contributing to the accident, safety standards violated, root causes and abatement practices. The April 5 explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine is not included, but MSHA plans to update "Rules to Live By II" when the investigation of that accident is complete.

"Too many miners have lost their lives in catastrophic accidents over the past 10 years," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "That is simply unacceptable.

"The goal of 'Rules to Live By II' is to prevent major accidents – from fires to explosions – that could be disasters by having mine operators identify and correct all hazardous conditions, and direct MSHA enforcement toward confirming that violations relating to these standards and conditions are not present at mines. We are committed to scrutinizing the data on deaths in the mining industry and getting at the leading causes of those deaths to prevent subsequent ones," said Main.

In its analysis of the violations contributing to one or more of the eight accidents, MSHA identified nine coal standards. The standards fell into one of four categories: explosions, aftermath of a fire, mining methods and examinations. MSHA is also focusing special attention on two other standards dealing with combustible materials and rockdusting to prevent coal mine fires and explosions.

As with the initial 24 standards highlighted during the first "Rules to Live By" initiative, MSHA will begin with outreach to the mining community. Enforcement personnel will focus more attention on these standards through enhanced enforcement and increased scrutiny for violations of these standards. Inspectors will be instructed to carefully evaluate gravity and negligence, consistent with the seriousness of the violation, when citing violations of standards that may cause or contribute to mining fatalities. Information is also being sent to state grantees, who provide training to the mining industry.

The first "Rules to Live By" initiative, launched earlier this year, focused on standards that were frequently cited in fatal accident investigations from January 2000 through December 2008. MSHA inspectors will begin enhanced enforcement efforts for the second phase on Jan. 1, 2011.

Africa: Six Killed in Macossa Gold Mine

Extract from www.tradingmarkets.com

Maputo, (Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Six people died and a further five were injured, one of them critically, on Wednesday in an accident at a gold mine in the district of Macossa, in the central Mozambican province of Manica.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Mineral Resources, the accident happened at the Tropa mine, which has recently been opened by artisanal miners.

The Ministry had been working to legalise mining at Tropa, turning it into an area recognised for small scale mining.

A team from the Manica Provincial Directorate of Mineral Resources and Energy has gone to the mine to assess the causes of the disaster. The team will also visit the injured who are undergoing treatment in the Gorongosa Rural Hospital.

USA: Justices reverse ruling on Marshall Co. mine fatality

Extract from [The West Virginia Record, USA](#)

CHARLESTON - Kanawha Circuit Judge Tod Kaufman ignored evidence that miner William Coulson of Moundsville caused a fatal accident under the influence of an intoxicant, the Supreme Court of Appeals has ruled.

The Justices on Nov. 1 reversed Kaufman's finding that the Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training failed to carry its burden to show he was under the influence.

Evidence showed Coulson was unaware of his location in a mine where he had worked for years, Justice Margaret Workman wrote.

She wrote that he "failed to communicate with other crew members that he knew he was following just prior to the accident to establish the location of the miners ahead of him."

Coulson operated a locomotive inside McElroy Mine in Marshall County.

On Oct. 19, 2008, he followed miners Victor Goudy and Gerald Loudon in another locomotive as they brought flat cars carrying dollies to a conveyor belt.

When Goudy got down from the locomotive to pull out pins so the dollies could roll down a slope, he and Loudon saw lights behind them.

Goudy signaled with his cap light to stop the locomotive.

Coulson acknowledged the signal by turning off his lights, but he didn't slow down.

A collision severed Goudy in half.

A drug test on Coulson four hours later found two opiates, oxycodone and hydrocodone. He had a prescription for the second but not the first.

McElroy Mine fired him 15 days after the accident.

His union filed a grievance, according to Workman, who added in a footnote that termination was not the subject of the appeal.

The Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training petitioned the Coal Mine Safety Board of Appeals to revoke his mining certificates permanently.

The Office quoted West Virginia law that, "No person shall at any time carry into any mine any intoxicants or enter any mine while under the influence of intoxicants."

The Board found probable cause for temporary withdrawal, "upon proper application."

The Board set a hearing and the Office suspended Coulson temporarily.

Coulson sent the Board a letter appealing the suspension pending the hearing, but he didn't serve a copy on the Office.

The Board reinstated the certificate, without notice to the Office, finding the Office failed to make proper application.

The Office found out at last and asked the Board for its legal authority.

When the Board didn't respond, the Office petitioned Kanawha County circuit court for a writ of prohibition against the requirement for proper application.

Board members held their scheduled hearing and decertified Coulson for 90 days, finding Goudy placed himself in a dangerous and inappropriate location.

They found lack of lighting on the forward equipment contributed to the accident.

In circuit court, the Office asked for an emergency stay of the Board's reissuance of the certificate and a writ of mandamus for the Board to adopt a final order.

Circuit Judge Paul Zakaib granted the stay and the writ.

The Board entered an order 11 days later, finding Coulson operated unsafely but the Office didn't prove he was under the influence of an intoxicant.

Zakaib dismissed the action for writ of prohibition, finding the Office could pursue an adequate remedy on appeal.

The Office filed another action in circuit court seeking to decertify Coulson, and Kaufman upheld the Board's decision.

He wrote that the Office "showed simply that Mr. Coulson had ingested an unprescribed drug at some time in the recent past."

No one testified that Coulson appeared impaired, he wrote.

The Office appealed both orders and succeeded on both.

First, the Justices found the requirement for proper application exceeded the Board's legitimate powers and imposed an arbitrary requirement without authority.

Next, they found the Office presented sufficient evidence for a writ of prohibition and Zakaib erred in failing to issue it.

Workman wrote that the Office "was trying to protect the health and safety of other miners by ensuring that Mr. Coulson did not work pending a final administrative hearing given the gravity of the charges."

Last, the Justices decided it didn't matter that Coulson didn't appear impaired.

Workman wrote that he was unaware of his location and failed to establish the location of miners ahead of him.

"The evidence also showed that even though Mr. Coulson acknowledged Mr. Goudy's signal to stop, Mr. Coulson did not even show down the locomotive he was operating," she wrote.

"The most compelling evidence, however, is the fact that even the Board concluded that Mr. Coulson was operating the locomotive in an unsafe manner resulting in a man's death," she wrote.

"These facts are clearly discernible signs the appellee, Mr. Coulson, was under the influence of an intoxicant," she wrote.

The Justices directed Zakaib to grant a writ of prohibition, and they directed Kaufman to assess penalties against Coulson.

Attorney General Darrell McGraw's office supplied counsel for both sides.

Elaine Skorich and Barry Koerber represented the Office. Harden Scragg and Ronald Brown represented the Board.

Saturday 20 November 2010

USA: Massey Energy to Encourage Congress to Allow More Scrubbers

Extract from Bloomberg Businessweek

Massey Energy Co., owner of the Upper Big Branch mine where 29 people died in April, will encourage Congress to push the U.S. Labor

Department to allow more use of coal-dust scrubbers.

Not allowing widespread use of the scrubbers endangers the lives of miners and increases the risk of explosion, Chief Executive Officer Don Blankenship said today in a meeting with reporters in Julian, West Virginia.

"Naturally, we will encourage Congress, whether previously elected or newly elected," to look at the use of scrubbers, Blankenship said.

Blankenship said a mechanism on the continuous miner, a machine with arms resembling lobster claws that rip the coal from the seam, eliminates 98 percent of the combustible dust generated during mining. He said the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration has curtailed their use.

"There is no MSHA policy banning the use of scrubbers, as evidenced by the fact that approximately 50 percent of Massey mining units are permitted to operate their dust scrubbers on continuous mining machines," Amy Louviere, a spokeswoman for the agency, said in an e-mailed statement.

Blankenship met with reporters today to speak about the April 5 disaster at Upper Big Branch, near Montcoal, West Virginia. He said Nov. 16 in New York that his investigation indicates that the explosion was caused by natural gas, similar to what would be found in a well, rather than methane released during the course of normal mining activity.

Earlier Report

The Labor Department said in a preliminary report to President Barack Obama in April that most mine blasts of the magnitude of Upper Big Branch are caused by combustible coal dust, methane and air.

"We don't think it's coal dust," Blankenship said.

The company's shares dropped 35 percent from the day of the accident to Oct. 18, when the Wall Street Journal reported that that the company is considering a sale.

Alpha Natural Resources Inc. , the third-largest U.S. coal company, is among those that have expressed interest in buying Massey, two people with knowledge of the matter said. ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steelmaker, has also contacted Massey to express interest, according to one person.

Massey, the largest coal producer in Central Appalachia, owns 2.8 billion tons of reserves, 1.3 billion of which are metallurgical coal, used to produce steel. Benchmark prices for that grade of coal have soared to \$209 a metric ton for the three-month contract ending Dec. 31, 62 percent higher than a year earlier, driven by demand from China and India.

Massey's board meets Nov. 21 and Blankenship declined to comment on any possible acquisitions. He said Nov. 17 that all options will be "fully vetted."

Factbox: Mining accidents, disasters and escapes

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Mining disasters account for an estimated 12,000 deaths each year, making mining one of the world's most dangerous jobs.



The Pike River Coal Mine in Greymouth, New Zealand, where an explosion has trapped 29 miners. (AAP Image/NZPA: Martin Hunter, file photo)

Following is a list of mining disasters, including several in New Zealand, along with a list of famous escapes following mine accidents.

NZ mine disasters

- In New Zealand's worst mining disaster, 65 miners were killed by gas in the Brunner coal mine on the west coast in 1896.

- The country's most recent mining disaster took place in 1967, when an explosion in the Strongman mine killed 19 miners.
- An explosion killed 43 miners at Ralph's mine in the Waikato region in 1914 after a miner's headlamp ignited methane fumes.
- Nine men died when an explosion rocked the Dobson mine in 1926.
- In 1939, 11 men were asphyxiated by carbon monoxide at the Glen Afton mine in Huntly.
- In 1879, 34 miners were killed in an explosion at the Kaitangata Coal Mine in Otago. The explosion was caused by candles in an area known for firedamp
- Editors note: Black Reef Mine, near Greymouth, March 2006 - Robert McGowan, 39, drowned when he hit flooded mine workings.

According to a West Coast historian Brian Wood, who has written several books on mining, most of the nation's serious accidents have occurred in coal mines, which are different to hard-rock mines.

"You've had your quartz-mining areas in Thames, Waihi and Reefton, but there's not been a major entrapment of miners underground in any of those mines," he said.

In 1970, four workers died and others were trapped for two days when the Kaimai railway tunnel collapsed.

The shaft of the Waiuta goldmine, near Reefton, collapsed in 1951. There was nobody underground.

Global mining disasters

- China holds the record for the largest number of people killed in a single mining disaster. In April 1942, 1,572 miners were killed in an explosion at Honkeiko coal mine.
- The Courrieres mine disaster in northern France in 1906 was the worst pit disaster in

Europe, resulting in the death of 1,099 miners.

- The worst mining accident in American history was caused by an underground explosion in 1907 in Monongah, West Virginia that resulted in the death of 362 miners.
- There have been three separate mining disasters in the Canadian town of Springhill in Nova Scotia. A fire in 1891 killed 125 miners; 39 people died in an explosion in 1956; and an underground earthquake in 1958 killed 74.
- A gas explosion at the Mount Kembla coal mine in New South Wales killed 96 people in 1902, making it the worst industrial accident in Australia's history.

Worst mining disasters of 2010

- **January:** at least 25 miners died in a fire at a colliery in Xiangtan County, central China.
- **March:** around 33 men were killed at the unfinished Wangjialing mine in Xiangning, China, a lower fatality figure than expected after 153 miners were trapped.
- **April:** an underground explosion at a West Virginia mine owned by Massey Energy resulted in the deaths of 29 miners. The accident at the Upper Big Branch Mine caused the biggest loss of life from a mining disaster in the United States since 1972.
- **May:** at least 66 miners died after underground blasts at the Rospadskaya mine in Russia, the deadliest incident in a Russian mine since 110 people were killed by a methane blast at another mine in the coal-rich Kemerovo region in March 2007.
- **June:** more than 70 miners were killed after a gas explosion at a coal mine in Colombia after the country's worst mining disaster in decades. In China, an explosion at an illegally operated mine in Henan, the

nation's third-largest coal producing province, killed 46 miners.

- **October:** a gas leak in central China killed at least 26 people in a pit owned by Pingyu Coal and Electric Co Ltd, with 11 people still missing; another gas leak in 2008 at the same mine killed 23 people.

Famous escapes

- Chilean rescuers brought 33 trapped miners to the surface one-by-one in a rescue capsule on October 13, 2010. The miners had spent a record 69 days underground. An estimated one billion people watched the rescue live on TV.
- Brant Webb and Todd Russell walked out of the Beaconsfield Mine in Tasmania on May 9, 2006, after spending two weeks trapped nearly a kilometre below the surface. Mr Webb and Mr Russell were found alive using a remote-controlled device five days after the initial mine collapse.
- In March 1907, gold miner Modesto Varischetti was rescued nine days after a thunderstorm flooded a mine in Western Australia. Herbert Hoover, later to become United States president, was a mining engineer nearby and was involved in the rescue.
- In 1963, David Fellin and Henry Throne survived 14 days trapped in the Sheppton Mine in Pennsylvania following a cave-in.
- Nine miners were rescued after being trapped in a limestone mine near Champagnole in France for eight days in 1964.
- In July 2009, three men were rescued from the Xinqiao Coal Mine in Qinglong County, China after being trapped in the flooded mine for 25 days.

Quote of the week



"Anxiety is the space between the now and the then."

Richard Abell
(British politician, c.1688-1744)

Sunday 21 November 2010

NZ: Church leader warns locals over mining accident

Extract from www.radionz.co.nz

A Greymouth church minister has warned West Coast people that the Pike River Coal mine emergency may not turn out for the best.

More than 150 people - five times the normal congregation - attended the town's Anglican Church for Saturday night communion.

Archdeacon Robin Kingston said everyone can only hope and pray that all the miners are safely returned to the surface but if they are not the town will struggle to know how to handle things.

Prime Minister John Key was in Greymouth on Saturday offering support to the families of the 29 workers in the mine since an underground explosion on Friday.

Mr Key says international offers of assistance and support have been flooding in, including a message from Prince William.

He says the Government will provide whatever support is needed for a successful rescue mission.

On Sunday Mr Key said it was understandable that the miners' families are frustrated that the rescue operation hadn't started yet.

He said "they're frightened and they are frustrated ... we're doing the best we can to give them as much support as we can".

The Chilean and Australian governments have also offered to help in any way they can, he says.

Police have also received offers of help from police services overseas.

Welfare centre set up

A welfare centre has been set up for the families of the trapped workers.

A police spokeswoman says the centre, at the Red Cross Hall in Tainui Street, Greymouth, will provide a warm, dry haven for family and friends as they await news from the mine.

Police say the road to the mine is closed to all except rescue staff and the relatives and friends of the workers are being directed to the welfare centre.

The centre is being staffed by the Red Cross, Victim Support and a crisis management team from Air New Zealand.

Flood traps 28 in China mine

BEIJING — Rescuers were trying to free 28 people trapped in a flooded coal mine in southwest China Sunday, in the latest incident to hit the country's notoriously dangerous mining sector.

The accident at the mine in Sichuan province occurred at 11 am (0300 GMT) near the city of Neijiang, Xinhua reported, citing local authorities.

A total of 41 miners were working in the Batian coal mine when the flood hit, but 13 escaped, the report said.

A rescue operation was in progress and the whereabouts of the trapped miners were not immediately known, Xinhua reported.

However, hours after the accident occurred no further details of the rescue work or the cause of

the accident were available in China's strictly controlled media.

Provincial and local safety officials were not available for comment on Sunday evening.

Earlier Xinhua also reported three workers were trapped by flood in an iron ore mine in southern China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on Saturday night. Rescue workers were still trying to free them late Sunday.

The media instead focused on the rescue of a 43-year-old identified only by his surname Fan, who was saved after being trapped for more than three days in a one-metre- (3.3 foot-) diameter steel pipe off China's east coast.

Fan was working at the bottom of the pipe -- part of an offshore rig -- near the coast of eastern Zhejiang province when tidal pressure twisted the pipe "like a beverage can" and it sank 18 metres below the sea, Xinhua said.

The upper part of the pipe was squeezed to three centimetres (1.2 inches) at its narrowest part, the report said. While trapped for 80 hours Fan received food and water through a tube and a psychiatrist counselled him.

Footage on China Central Television showed workers cutting Fan out with a blowtorch after removing a cement column from the seabed so they could raise the section of pipe out of the sea.

He was shown being lifted onto a stretcher and being rushed to hospital, but reports said he suffered no serious injuries.

In China, considered one of the world's most dangerous places to work, an average of 187 people were killed in work-related accidents every day in the first half of this year, according to government figures.

Chinese mines are notoriously dangerous due to the widespread flouting of safety rules, typically blamed on corrupt mine operators trying to keep costs down, with coal mining particularly accident-prone.

China's poor safety record came under fresh scrutiny after the successful rescue of 33 miners trapped underground in Chile for more than two months gripped the world, sparking comparisons with China's litany of deadly disasters.

Last year 2,631 Chinese miners were killed, according to official statistics, but independent labour groups say the true figure is likely to be much higher as many accidents are believed to be covered up.

The government has repeatedly vowed to shut dangerous mines and strengthen safety, but the accidents continue with regularity as mines rush to pump out the coal on which China relies for about 70 percent of its energy.

Mine flood traps three workers in south China

Extract from China.org.cn

Three workers were trapped by flood while prospecting for an iron mine in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Saturday night, the local safety watchdog said Sunday.

The accident happened at 8:50 p.m. in a village in Yunbiao Township, Hengxian County, the work safety bureau in the regional capital Nanning said in a press release.

Of the five people working underground, two escaped without injuries, it said.

Neither of the two survivors was immediately available for an interview.

Rescue work continued Sunday, and the cause of the accident was under investigation.

A work safety bureau official said the prospecting operation was legal and had been authorized.

The area was believed to have rich iron, copper and gold reserves, he said.

NZ: Gasping for air, miner inched to surface

Extract from Stuff.co.nz

Sucking on oxygen, electrician Daniel Rockhouse slowly felt his way up the smoke-filled, darkened entrance tunnel to the mine.

About 500 metres further up the tunnel, he came across loader driver Russell Smith, 50, who was blasted 15 metres off his vehicle in the force of the gas blast which rocked the mine on Friday.

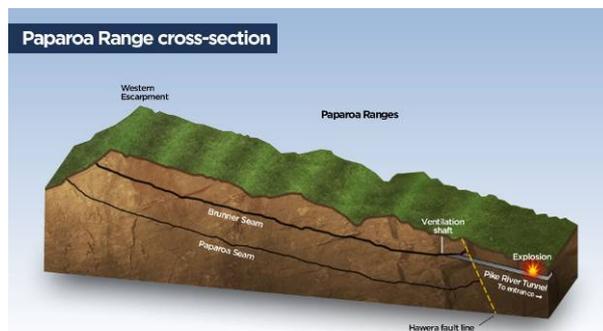
Mr. Smith was disoriented but not unconscious and Mr. Rockhouse, 24, supported him the rest of the way out of the tunnel.

Pike River chief executive Peter Whittall revealed dramatic details of their "traumatic" escape yesterday, shortly after spending two hours visiting the men.

They were discharged from hospital on Saturday after being treated for moderate injuries.

Mr. Whittall said Mr. Rockhouse's story was "distressing". His brother Ben is among the 29 men still trapped.

He was 1.7 kilometres into the solid rock pit – and between 300 and 400m from his nearest colleague – when a methane explosion shot a fireball through the mine. The first indication that something was wrong came when gas monitoring devices failed.



But it was Mr. Rockhouse who raised the alarm. Initially overcome by the blast, he stumbled to the one working phone to call to the surface. "There was no-one else around that phone and that phone is still there ... no-one is answering it," Mr. Whittall said.

As the tunnel filled with smoke, he moved his way up to the surface, wearing breathing apparatus and stopping every 50-100m to inhale from fresh-air outlets that run through the mine.

Mr. Whittall said Mr. Rockhouse wanted to feel the fresh air on his face. After a few gulps of air, he placed the "rescuer" back on his face and continued up the tunnel.

"They are still hard to work, you are breathing in and out of a bag. We all like to have open mouths and breathe well," he explained.

"Having something stuck in your mouth when you're hot, you're sweaty, his eyes would have been stinging because of the smoke. Fresh air in your eyes and fresh air in your face would have been a nice relief for him."

Despite earlier reports, the pair did not see anyone else on the roadway. Mr. Rockhouse removed his breathing apparatus as he approached the surface.

"They both walked. Daniel's a big guy but Russell's a pretty big guy too and a bit too heavy to carry. So he was able to help him with his arm under him and the two of them walked from the mine," Mr. Whittall said.

Once on the surface, the pair were taken straight to Grey Base Hospital and were recovering at their Greymouth homes yesterday.

Nine killed by hired thugs at Chinese mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The violence involving explosives and gunfire broke out after an underground shaft from one mine broke into a competitor's in Yunnan province, a report by the official China News Service posted on the State Work Safety Administration's website said.

Zheng Chunyun, owner of Yuejin mine, allegedly hired thugs to attack the Xiaosongdi mine on Thursday.

"We were ambushed with an explosion," one of the injured, who was not identified, was quoted as saying in a Shanghai Daily report.

There was an explosion and a crack of gunfire then people started falling to the ground, the China News Service said.

Four people died instantly and five died in hospital, the agency said.

Eighty people armed with steel pipes and knives - allegedly hired by Mr Zheng - then immediately descended into the mine, it added.

Yunnan media reported on Sunday that bullet wounds were found on the bodies and guns were found at the scene.

Police have been stationed at the hospital and around the mine amid fears that a retaliatory attack could escalate the violence, China News Service said.

Monday 22 November 2010

NZ: Rescuers cling to hope as drill enters mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Rescuers in New Zealand say they have started drilling a narrow shaft to reach 29 trapped miners, but admit the situation remains "grave".

A gas explosion rocked the Pike River Mine near Greymouth on Friday, and rescuers have not been able to contact the trapped men.

Efforts to enter the mine have been hampered by fierce heat and toxic gases.

The situation remains grave [as] we have not had contact with the men now for three days

– Superintendent Gary Knowles

The advice I have is that there is oxygen in the mine and there is every chance that those miners have managed to get to a pocket of that oxygen flow and therefore that they are alive

– New Zealand PM John Key

There is just a sense of helplessness quite frankly, because we haven't got a search

and rescue started yet and that is what everyone is just praying for.

- Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoon



Sombre mood: The miners have spent a third night trapped underground, without any word on their condition. (AFP)

This morning, police Superintendent Gary Knowles said rescue teams were still on standby and were waiting "until the opportunity arises" to start their operation.

"The situation remains grave [as] we have not had contact with the men now for three days," he said.

This morning, the second Australian trapped in the mine was named as Queensland Fraser Coast resident Willy Joynson.

The 48-year-old father of two has been living in New Zealand for 12 months and was due to return his home town of Tinana near Maryborough in January.

His mother, Beryl Joynson, says family members will fly to New Zealand in the next couple of days.

Josh Ufer, 27, from Townsville is also trapped in the mine.

Family members are saying privately they do not think they are going to be seeing their men coming out alive and the mood is a lot more sombre.

But New Zealand prime minister John Key said he had been told there was "every chance" the missing men were still alive.

"The advice I have is that there is oxygen in the mine and there is every chance that those miners have managed to get to a pocket of that oxygen flow and therefore that they are alive," he said.

But he admitted the families of the missing men were "feeling extraordinarily high levels of fear, anxiety and frustration".

Pike River Mine chief Peter Whittall said drilling had started overnight and a 15cm-diameter shaft, about 100 metres deep, had been drilled so far.

He said the shaft could be used to take gas samples or put laser imaging gear or a fibre-optic video link down the hole to assess conditions in the mine.

"All information is gold," he said. "Any information we get has got to be an advantage for the people making the decisions."

Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn said a robot was being prepared to be sent in to the mine this afternoon.

He said the robot would check whether there was a clear path for rescuers once the go ahead to enter is given.

"They're sending a robot in," he confirmed.

"There's an obstacle or a truck that's parked in the tunnel itself, but they've been assured by the driver that there's a metre on each side and they can move around that, so they'll be getting some vision with the robot."

But Supt Knowles said rescuers would not send the robot in until they were sure that it would not create an electrical spark which could cause another explosion.

Rescuers are also cutting a track through the bush up to the top of the main ventilation site to speed up the rescue effort.

Anxious relatives wait for news

It has been a traumatic wait on the surface for family and friends of the trapped men, who range in age from 17 to 62 and include two Britons, two Australians and a South African.

Mr Kokshoorn says the locals are bereft.

"There is just a sense of helplessness quite frankly, because we haven't got a search and rescue started yet and that is what everyone is just praying for," he said.

"We just want that search and rescue to commence. It is like being in limbo waiting for it.

"We are just going nowhere and every hour that goes past is an hour lost."

Mr Kokshoorn says people are sticking together and supporting each other, but are growing more and more anxious about the plight of their loved ones and friends.

Mr Kokshoorn, himself, knows about half a dozen people trapped in the mine.

"Milton Osborn, he is a councillor. He is one of my councillors. I am very closely involved with him all the time," he said.

"I know about five or six of the other people. Their parents are good friends of mine. I mean, it is a ripple effect right through the community. There is no question about that."

The Vicar of Greymouth's Holy Trinity Church, Marge Tefft, says people are praying for a miracle.

"Well, it is a very sombre mood at the moment and growing anxiety for the welfare of the trapped miners," she said.

"We don't give up hope but we are not unrealistic either of what the possible outcome might be."

NZ: Trapped miners named

Extract from *The Daily Telegraph, NSW, Aus*



Grave concerns ... Police superintendent Gary Knowles speaks as Pike River Mine Ltd. Chief Executive Peter Whittall, right, listens during a media briefing in Greymouth, New Zealand. Picture: AP Photo/NZPA, Ross Seford Source: AP

THE NAMES of the 29 miners trapped at the Pike River coal mine have been publicly released this morning including a second Australian man, Willy Joynson.

New Zealand Police Superintendent Gary Knowles, who is in charge of the rescue mission, named the group.



Friends and relatives attend a community meeting at Greymouth to find out the latest news of the New Zealand mine explosion. Picture: Stuart McEvoy Source: The Daily Telegraph

The names, ages, home town and nationality of the miners:

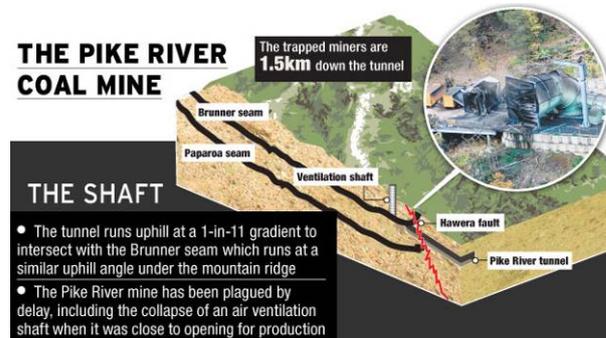
- Glen Peter Cruse, 35, Cobden, New Zealand
- Allan John Dixon, 59, Rununga, New Zealand
- Zen Wodin Drew, 21, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Christopher Peter Duggan, 31, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Joseph Ray Dunbar, 17, Greymouth, New Zealand

- John Leonard Hale, 45, Ruatapu, New Zealand
- Daniel Thomas Herk, 36, Rununga, New Zealand
- David Mark Hoggart, 33, Foxton, New Zealand
- Richard Bennett Holling, 41, Blackball, New Zealand
- Andrew David Hurren, 32, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Riki Steve Keane, 28, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Terry David Kitchin, 41, Rununga, New Zealand
- Samuel Peter Mackie, 26, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Francis Skiddy Marden, 41, Rununga, New Zealand
- Michael Nolan Hanmer Monk, 23, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Stuart Gilbert Mudge, 31, Rununga, New Zealand
- Kane Barry Nieper, 33, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Peter O'Neill, 55, Rununga, New Zealand
- Milton John Osborne, 54, Ngahere, New Zealand
- Brendan John Palmer, 27, Cobden, New Zealand
- Benjamin David Rockhouse, 21, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Blair David Sims, 28, Greymouth, New Zealand
- Keith Thomas Valli, 62, Winton, New Zealand
- Malcolm Campbell, 25, Greymouth, New Zealand (British)
- Peter James Rodger, 40, Greymouth, New Zealand (British)
- Jacobus (Koos) Albertus Jonker, 47, Cobden, New Zealand (South African)
- William John Joynson, 49, Dunollie, Australia
- Joshua Adam Ufer, 25, Australia

Australian Willy Joynson, 49, a father of two from Tinana on the Fraser Coast, north of

Brisbane, is among the group missing since a gas explosion tore through the mine on Friday.

Police on Sunday confirmed that Joshua Ufer, also from Queensland, is also among those trapped.



Source: The Daily Telegraph

VIC: Man crushed to death at quarry

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A 50-year-old man has been crushed to death at a quarry in Nyora, south-east of Melbourne, this afternoon.

Ambulance Victoria says the man was driving an excavator at the TGS quarry around 12:30pm (AEDT) when the accident occurred.

It is believed part of the quarry collapsed, crushing the man.

WorkSafe Victoria is investigating the accident.

Suriname: Seven killed in gold mine collapse

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Seven men were killed and two others were seriously injured when the sand walls of a gold mine collapsed in Suriname (formerly Dutch Guyana), police in the former Dutch colony said.

Police inspector Bertrand Riedewald said the accident occurred late on Saturday when a mudslide eroded the open pit's 20-metre walls and buried the illegal miners, who were mainly from the country's Maroon indigenous community.

"Three miners were able to escape during the collapsing, while two survivors got severely

injured and were taken for medical treatment to the hospital," Inspector Riedewald said.

The mine at Money Hill, 150 kilometres south-east of the capital Paramaribo, belongs to the Surgold concession, a joint venture between US-based multinationals Alcoa and Newmont.

Money Hill is popular among small-scale wildcat miners, and Surgold has often urged them to halt their activities in the concession area and warned of the dangers of the illicit mining.

In a statement, Surgold said the accident took place in an illegal artisanal mining area located within Surgold's Merian Right of Exploration.

Safety standards should have guarded against accident, says engineer

Extract from The Sydney Morning Herald, Aus

THE mining disaster in New Zealand was the result of something incredibly rare if all the correct safety standards were in place, an Australian engineer has said.

Gavin Mudd, an environmental engineer, said the mining industry's emphasis on safety made these sorts of accidents very unusual in developed countries.

"If they had all the [safety] systems in place it shouldn't have happened," Dr Mudd, from Monash University, said. "The question at the moment is whether they did have that high standard in place."

The explosion at the Pike River coalmine was caused by a build-up of highly flammable methane gas, which is continually released from coal deposits.

Methane gas explosions are the most common cause of accidents in coalmining, Dr Mudd said.

He said an investigation would hopefully show the explosion was caused by a sequence of events that could not have been planned for, or whether the mine's operator may have cut corners.

A mining engineer, Bruce Hebblewhite, said ventilation systems were used to insert fresh air into coalmines to dilute methane. For an explosion to have occurred the concentration of methane would have needed to reach a certain explosive level, he said.

"And there needed to be a source of ignition. But we don't know what either of those were," Professor Hebblewhite, from the University of NSW, said.

The explosion could have been caused by a pocket of methane that had built up in fractures of the rock.

"We don't know if there was one emission or whether there are continuing high levels of methane," Professor Hebblewhite said.

The rescue teams were also monitoring the levels of other gases in the tunnel, such as carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, which form as byproducts of an explosion. The presence of these gases suggested there may still be some form of combustion occurring in the tunnel, Professor Hebblewhite said.

"It is a very dynamic situation," he said. "There is still potentially a source of ignition which may come into contact with any other air gas mixture down there."

The New Zealand disaster was different to the mining accidents that occurred at Beaconsfield and, more recently, in Chile, he said.

"Chile was copper and Beaconsfield was gold. They were metalliferous minerals which generally don't contain these types of gases.

"Both those accidents weren't explosions but falls of ground which trapped people on the other side," he said.

NZ: Key rejects Aust-NZ mine comparison

Extract from www.stuff.co.nz

Prime Minister John Key has rejected suggestions Australian mines are safer than New Zealand's.

At a media briefing this morning, journalists from across the Tasman quizzed Key about safety standards in Kiwi mines.

Key said New Zealand had a good safety record in its mines and had been engaged in mining for a long period of time.

However, a series of inquiries into the disaster would be held, "in due course".

"You are asking to speculate on something that we don't know so let's wait and see how things pan out," he said.

"Whatever happened here there will be an inquiry, or a series of inquiries, and we will need to ask ourselves some tough questions."

He said the Pike River mine had begun production "in the knowledge that it was believed to be a safe environment where there would not be accident".

He added: "We would not allow our people to go into the mine...if we hadn't believed those to be the conditions."

He also rejected suggestions the area, in the Paparoa range, was unsafe for mining.

"It's been a long time ago since there has been a significant mining incident. I think Strongman was the last one, which was '67, so that is a long way back in our history and mining techniques have developed and evolved enormously in that time."

Asked why New Zealand mines do not have stocks of food and water, like Australian mines, Key said: "If you are right, and I'm not sure that you are, that there are different standards applying in New Zealand to Australia, that would surprise me because we tend to share that information."

It was revealed yesterday that the trapped Pike River coal miners have access to both fresh water and air. The only food they would have is whatever they took in with them.

Pike River chief executive Peter Whittall said he didn't accept the suggestion the coal seam was prone to explosions.

"The mine has gas in it - as a large number of coal mines around the world do. Every mine I ever worked in does.

"It's certainly a hazard of the mine, [but] is the first mine I've ever worked in that has had this happen."

He said the mine had risk assessment plans in place.

"What I would say is that obviously it goes without saying that at the time of the incident there was an unsafe situation otherwise it wouldn't have occurred. It doesn't say the mine was operated unsafely, it doesn't say that the event leading up to incident were being managed unsafely. But at the time - and none of us know what the situation was - there must have been an unsafe situation had developed. What that was, I don't know."

Forty three years ago 19 men from the area perished when an explosion ripped through the nearby Strongman mine.

India: One dead, eight trapped as Jharkhand mine caves in

Extract from sify news, India

Ranchi, Nov 22 (IANS) One woman was killed as a mine caved in Monday morning in Jharkhand's coal city Dhanbad, police said. Eight miners are feared trapped.

The accident occurred at the closed Khudia colliery of Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL) in Dhanbad, some 260 km from here.

'Around 10 to 12 illegal miners were working at the ECL mine. The roof suddenly caved in, trapping nine of them. The woman's body was removed by the villagers. The rest are still trapped,' a police officer told IANS.

More than 350 people have lost their lives in illegal coal mining in the state over the past decade.

All 29 trapped in China mine rescued

Extract from AFP

BEIJING — Rescuers on Monday pulled to safety 29 people trapped in a flooded mine in southwestern China in a rare bit of good news for the country's disaster-prone mining sector.

China Central Television broadcast live images of people being taken on stretchers from the Sichuan province coal mine to ambulances, about 24 hours after they were stranded in the pit, as rescuers and onlookers cheered.

China is accustomed to tragic news about its beleaguered coal miners, while the success in Sichuan stood in stark contrast to the situation in New Zealand, where 29 men remained missing after an explosion at a coal mine last week.

China's official Xinhua news agency said 22 of those rescued were miners, while the other seven were people sent down after the accident in an initial rescue bid who also became trapped.



Rescuers carries a trapped miner wrapped in white quilts out from the flooded Batian Coal Mine in Xiaohetown southwest of Sichuan. -- PHOTO: AP

At least 35 miners were working in the Batian mine near the city of Neijiang when the flood hit, but 13 managed to escape, reports said.

Those pulled out Monday wore eye masks to protect them from the sun after emerging from the dark shafts. Some appeared wet, but state television said those rescued were in stable condition.

AFP was not immediately able to contact provincial and local safety officials for comment.

Tuesday 23 November 2010

Rescue robot breaks down in NZ mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Efforts to rescue 29 men trapped in a New Zealand coal mine received a setback this morning when a remote-operated robot broke down shortly after being sent into the tunnel.

In a blow to rescue hopes, Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn said the robot had short-circuited shortly after entering the Pike River mine.

"We've had a kick in the guts. The robot went in the tunnel, it got water in it and short-circuited. It's history," he said after emerging from a meeting with rescue coordinators.



Rescue authorities are trying to source a replacement robot from the US or Western Australia. (AFP: NZ Defence Force, file photo)

Police Superintendent Gary Knowles said the robot would no longer be used, but rescue authorities were trying to source a replacement from the United States or Western Australia.

"This is a very serious situation and the longer it goes on, hopes fade. We have to be realistic," he said.

"We are not able to go underground until the environment is safe.

"As soon as we are able to deploy assets from the US or Australia [we will be able to go ahead]."

The 29 men, including two Australians, have been missing since an underground explosion at the Pike River mine, near Greymouth on the South Island, on Friday.

The two Australians men are William Joynson, 49, and Joshua Ufer, 25, both from Queensland.

Drilling

Supt Knowles said drilling of a bore hole to reach the mine shaft continued overnight.

Pike River CEO Peter Whittall said the bore hole was at 142 metres this morning.

He said crews had to stop and change drill bits overnight after running into very hard rock.

But he said drilling had since recommenced and it was estimated it would take another five hours before the hole was completed.

The head of NZ Mines Rescue, Trevor Watts, said crews were enduring "heart-wrenching" frustration at not being able to deploy underground.

"The conditions that our rescue personnel are going to face are potentially going to be hostile," he added.

Families frustrated

Laurie Drew, the father of one of the miners, says the lack of information is making life difficult for the families of the trapped men.

"Everybody's frustrated, everybody's upset," he said.

"They're all hurting as much as I do. I had my moments. I can keep it together but deep down it's still heart's bleeding like everybody else.

"We've got faith that they're going to come out safe but it's just how long it's going to take to find out for sure what's going on down there."

USA: Harlan, Kentucky mine worker killed, three injured in separate accidents

A contract mine worker in Harlan County, Kentucky was killed early Tuesday morning at 12:05 a.m after he lost control of a coal truck on site at the Rex Coal Strip Mine #1. Rhett Mosley, 32, of Perry County was driving into the pit when the heavy truck rolled out of control on the steep grade of the pit mine. There were no other injuries reported.



Entrance to Rex Coal Co. mine, where a mine worker was killed

According to the preliminary report from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration, Mosley either attempted to jump out or was thrown from the vehicle, and the truck struck an embankment and overturned onto him. No other details have been released and the mine has been closed while the Kentucky Office of Mine Safety investigates. In investigations of similar accidents over the past decade, MSHA has found that poorly maintained brakes and over-capacity loads have been frequent contributing factors.

The relatively small mine has not seen a fatality since the Rex Coal Company began operations in 2006. However, since 2008 coal tonnage has quadrupled at the mine and citations have increased. Although the pit mine employs only 19 workers, the site has produced more than 61,000 tons of coal this year.

In the last two years, although MSHA lists only nine inspections, the Rex Strip Mine #1 has been cited 50 times, including 14 serious and substantial violations. Most of the citations were accompanied by fines that remain unpaid—in

fact, none of the fines for serious violations have been paid.

The mine has been closed until further notice.

This is the seventh mine-related fatality in Kentucky this year.

The death of Mosley brings to 47 the number of coal mining deaths this year in the US, 40 of them in Kentucky and West Virginia. In all, coal and other mineral mining accidents have claimed the lives of 66 mine workers across the country.

The Rex mine fatality comes less than a week after an accident in another Harlan County mine injured three miners. According to the Kentucky Office of Mine Safety, a personnel carrier and a supply hauler collided during operations in the Abner Branch Rider mine, operated by Bledsoe Coal and owned by the James River Coal Company.

The vehicles may have been running on the same rail at the time of the accident, but neither safety officials nor the company has given further details. The three miners were hospitalized, with two requiring an airlift to Holston Valley Medical Center in Kingsport, Tennessee. The mine reopened shortly after the accident.

Since the beginning of the year, the Abner mine has been cited 175 times, including many for serious and substantial violations. The company has not paid a single fine, which in 2010 amounted to about \$268,000.

MSHA has designated the Abner Branch mine as “meeting MSHA potential pattern of violations criteria” based on the number of citations between September 1, 2009 and August 31 of this year.

MSHA released a list November 19 of 13 coal mines to which it had issued 286 serious and substantial citations and closure orders during October. Among them, the Left Fork Mining Company’s Straight Creek #1 mine in Bell County, Kentucky was the worst, with 92 closure

orders in the past year. A closure order is only issued in cases where potential disaster is imminent.

During one inspection of the Straight Creek mine on October 29, MSHA inspectors had to seize the mine telephones so that management could not forewarn underground foremen of their visits. They found multiple violations on coal dust accumulation and venting that posed immediate danger.

Other mines in the state found to have egregious violations were Vision Coal Inc.'s Mine #2 in Letcher County; White Star Mining's White Star #1 in Pike County; James River Coal Co.'s Mine #68 in Perry County; and Dodge Hill Mining Co. LLC's Dodge Hill Mine #1 in Union County.

MSHA has also filed for a court-ordered shutdown of Massey Energy's Freedom Mine #1 in Pike County over ventilation problems, inadequate roof supports, coal dust build-up, and other dangers. In the past two years, the mine has been cited nearly 2,000 times.

An inspector for the region filed an affidavit November 3 after discovering a high concentration of unvented methane gas in an active section of the mine in what he described as the "most volatile range." Former MSHA official Tony Oppeward told the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, "You have a mine that is by all indications just as bad, or worse, than Upper Big Branch."

Massey has also been cited for creating an "imminent danger" after two explosions earlier this month at the Twilight surface mine in Boone County, West Virginia.

MSHA has been striving to appear more aggressive toward flagrant violators since the April 5 explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia, which took the lives of 29 miners. However, in its 33-year history, the agency has never once classified a mine as having a pattern of violations.

Wednesday 24 November 2010

NZ: Initial bore samples show toxic gas in mine

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

The initial samples of gas that escaped from a bore-hole drilled into the Pike River coal mine this morning have showed high levels of toxic gases.

The news comes as media were briefed on the last 24 hours of the operation at the Pike River mine, where 29 men have been trapped underground since Friday.

There has been no communication with the miners since the explosion in the mine 50km north east of Greymouth.

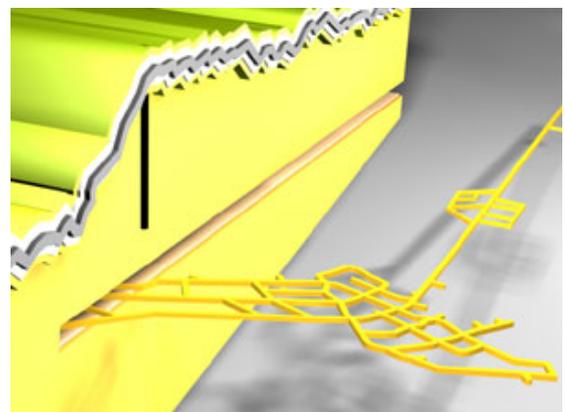
Pike River Coal chief executive Peter Whittall said drilling broke through into the mine tunnel this morning, and the first samples showed the air was high in carbon monoxide and methane. He said it was also very low in oxygen.

This was expected, but was not the news that families of the miners trapped there wanted to hear, he said.

Superintendent Gary Knowles said the samples were "off the limit."

"All I am going to say is that the information we received is that the samples are off the limit, the environment is still unstable, it is unsafe."

He said it was not appropriate to send rescue teams underground at this time.



Source: ONE News

Energy Minister Gerry Brownlee earlier said hot gas rushed out of the mine when the drill finally broke through the rock this morning.

"It had hot gas rushing up it and a lot of hot air as well," Brownlee said.

"It will give a very good picture of what the gas state is in the mine and also the heat state. They are looking for a heat source.

"It is very significant information to the rescue planning," he said.

Brownlee also confirmed fresh air had been confirmed along the 2.2km of mine portal tunnel which gives access to the coal seam and mine working area.

Brownlee said engineers were piecing together data from inside the mine.

"What they do know is if they have another explosion that is caused by anything they do stupid, any chance of survival is gone, and quite possibly those involved in rescue as well.

"What they know is there is breathable air up the top of the tunnel. Beyond that there is considerable gas."

Drilling into the mine tunnel has been going on since Sunday evening. The bore-hole should now enable better testing of air samples for toxic gases in the mine.

Whittall said samples would now be taken at 15 minute intervals and a more detailed analysis would commence.

A camera has been sent down the bore hole, but the images it is sending back are black and grainy.

It had been anticipated the bore-hole would be completed some time last night, however hard rock had made the drilling difficult.

Whittall said they would start drilling a second hole as soon as possible, however it had changed location slightly since yesterday.

The news comes as police confirmed that the first robot which yesterday broke down in the

Pike River mine was restarted this morning - but has since run out of battery power.

A second army robot is making its way into the mine.

The first robot sent into the entrance tunnel has found a helmet belonging to injured loader driver Russell Smith.

The light on the helmet is still going almost six days after the explosion. This was heartening news, Whittall said.

The first robot travelled a distance of 1km up the mine tunnel, before stopping.

Whittall said experts are now reviewing footage from the first robot to establish exactly what has been seen.

Bobcat-sized robot

A third Bobcat-sized robot has arrived in Hokitika this morning from Australia.

That robot is purpose-built to traverse dangerous terrain, gather video and audio, detect dangerous gases and act as a two-way communication device.

It is being transported to the Pike River mine this morning.

Whittall said the Australian robot would be tested and then deployed later today.

A fourth robot, from America, will be shipped to Greymouth by Air New Zealand at 7.15am tomorrow morning.

Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn told TV ONE's Breakfast this morning that families and the West Coast community are hanging on to hope despite the grim situation for their loved ones.

He said families were subdued and in need of reassurance.

"It's starting to affect them now, they are losing their strength, but we're holding together. We just want someone to tell us if they are dead or alive.

"We know we are losing hope now, but unless someone shows us otherwise, we are hanging on to all hope."

Frustration

Whittall believes most families understand why it is too dangerous for rescuers to go in get the 29 trapped miners.

He said while there are still a number of families who are obviously frustrated and struggling to come to terms with the decision-making process from the Emergency Services.

But, he says there is a very large understanding amongst the group.

It has also been reported that a split is developing amongst the families.

Some have vented anger and frustration over the rescue operation, particularly in the wake of blast footage released yesterday.

Others, including the family of 21-year-old Benjamin Rockhouse, are keeping the faith.

His aunt Margo Mainwaring said the police and mine company have been amazing. She said she has seen locals abuse the media but stepped in herself to intervene.

Mainwaring said if the media keeps telling the story the focus will remain on the recovery.

Brother of Ben, Daniel Rockhouse, who walked out of the mine alive on Friday, told ONE News that he is happy with the way that things are progressing.

He said that he understands it is an extremely tough job and does not want to put other lives at risk, and knows that everyone is doing their best.

NZ: Carbon monoxide biggest danger for miners

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

An American air quality expert says carbon monoxide poisoning is the greatest danger facing the 29 miners trapped underground at the Pike River coal mine.

Dr David Penney told TV ONE's Breakfast that, although he does not have extensive knowledge of this particular situation, carbon monoxide is the "greatest concern" in that kind of mine.

"Carbon monoxide is certainly the most dangerous gas within the mixtures that are seen in mines ... It's odourless, colourless, tasteless, non-corrosive. Humans cannot detect it with unaided sensors," he said.



Dr David Penney - Source: ONE News

Penney said the affects of the gas mixture on the body are varying.

"It has many effects, the initial ones are headaches, nausea, problems thinking, weakness and that sort of thing. It goes on progressively to much more serious symptoms and signs where a person eventually becomes incapacitated and becomes then comatose and death can follow after that."

Footage from Friday's explosion was shown to the families of the miners and media yesterday. Penney said the blast would have been loud and hot.

"Methane, when it's in air, mixed with the oxygen, can produce a flammable mixture, or if it burns really fast it could be an explosion which produces a lot of heat and sound - and the component that comes out of such a combustion or explosion that would be most dangerous, besides the blast itself would be carbon monoxide."

He said methane gas explosions can be caused by a number of factors.

"Explosions of methane gas in mines can be triggered by electrical sparks, by electrical devices that spark, or by friction of something, metal on rock, by lightning in the atmosphere around the mine, any number of possibilities that would cause the gas to burn rapidly," he said.

The rescue effort has so far been slow and frustrating, but Penney said there is no quick fix.

"There's really two sides to the coin here. One, you could dilute out the carbon monoxide that's present, blow it out by pumping fresh air into the mine, but on the other hand if there's a fire going, if the coal is actually on fire in some place in the mine, then bringing more oxygen in could make the fire greater, produce more carbon monoxide, so really there's two sides to the story there."

NZ: Mine media briefing gets heated

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

This morning's media briefing on the Pike River Mine rescue became tense when reporters and those heading the operation clashed over some of the reporters' lines of questioning.

An Australian reporter asked Pike River Coal chief executive Peter Whittall if he could imagine fire-fighters at the World Trade Centre during the September 11 attacks "waiting to be told whether they should go in or not" .

Whittall refused to answer, saying it was inappropriate.



Superintendent Gary Knowles - Source: ONE News

Superintendent Gary Knowles then intervened, saying a fire underground had "no relevance" to a burning building.

"It's a totally different environment.

"To have any cross-reference to 9/11 is not appropriate, sir."

Another reporter then asked Knowles why the "local country cop" was making all the decisions rather than technical experts.

"Where do I start...I'm a District Commander. I have responsibility policing three quarters of the South Island," Knowles replied.

Knowles said it was a multi-agency approach using the best people globally.

"Whilst I may be the spokesperson, I've got all those resources at my fingertips."

Media were briefed on the last 24 hours of the operation at the Pike River mine, where 29 men have been trapped underground since Friday.

Knowles confirmed the first bore-hole had been completed but that initial samples of gas from that bore-hole showed high levels of toxic gases.

NZ: No signs of life in mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Rescue teams say it is still not safe for them to enter the New Zealand mine where 29 men have been trapped for almost six days.

Hopes of rescuing the men are fading quickly, with New Zealand's top-ranking policeman saying the situation is "bleak".



Another robot has arrived in Greymouth from Western Australia to help in the operation. (Reuters: Tim Wimborne)

This morning, rescuers confirmed a robot in the mine had found a helmet lamp lying in the tunnel, but said it belonged to miner Russell Smith, who escaped after the explosion.

Police Superintendent Gary Knowles said footage from the robot's on-board camera was being analysed.

He said the robot, which had been restarted yesterday after breaking down, had now been pulled to the side of the tunnel about one kilometre into the mine to avoid blocking the way for other remote-operated devices.

Another New Zealand Defence Force robot was about 800 metres inside the mine and another from Western Australia had arrived and was being readied for action, he said.

Pike River CEO Peter Whittall said a drill bit had broken through into the mine tunnel overnight but said air samples had shown levels of poisonous gases in the mine were still dangerously high.

"As we expected, the air that came up was extremely high in carbon monoxide, very high in methane, and fairly low in oxygen," he said.

A tiny camera has been lowered into the mine's fresh air refuge, but there were no signs of life and the mine's management says the area had been "knocked about".

Mr Whittall has shown families, waiting for news, a map of where their loved ones might be trapped inside the mine, and a video of the explosion as it was recorded at the entrance to the mine.

He said it was a violent explosion and had probably originated about two kilometres away.

Mr Whittall was accompanied by New Zealand's Police Commissioner, Howard Broad, who said the situation was "bleak" for those underground and was getting "bleaker by the hour".

NZ: All miners dead, police confirm

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

All the miners trapped at Pike River coal mine near Greymouth are dead, it has been confirmed.

Superintendent Gary Knowles said there had been a second explosion this afternoon at 2.37pm.

He said there was no chance of survivors.

"Unfortunately I have to inform the public of New Zealand that at 2.37pm today there was another massive explosion underground and based on that explosion no one survived," Knowles said. "We are now going into recovery mode."

"It is our belief that no one has survived and everyone will have perished," he said. "This is one of the most tragic things I have had to do as a police officer."

"I was at the mine myself when this actually occurred and the blast was horrific, just as severe as the first blast and we're currently now moving into recovery phase."

There is no information as yet as to the cause of the second explosion and Knowles would not speculate on whether anyone else had been injured.

Grieving families left the afternoon briefing at Grey District Council and did not want to talk to the waiting media. An ambulance arrived to offer assistance to the family members.

The press conference due to be held in Greymouth at 5pm has been cancelled. Prime Minister John Key will hold a media briefing at 6.30pm.

ONE News presenter Peter Williams at the scene said the first member of the public he saw after the announcement was "ashen faced".

Gas samples

Earlier today Knowles said initial samples of gas that escaped from a bore-hole drilled this

morning showed high levels of toxic gases. He warned they might never reach zero.

He added at a media conference this morning: "It is a very unstable environment and currently it is not safe to go underground. It may never reach that point, but if it does, rest assured we are ready."

Pike River Coal chief executive Peter Whittall said drilling broke through into the mine tunnel this morning, and the first samples showed the air was high in carbon monoxide and methane. He said it was also very low in oxygen.

He said then that it was not appropriate to send rescue teams underground at that time.

A camera put down the bore hole sent back images which are black and grainy.

A second army robot had gone into the mine.

The first robot sent into the entrance tunnel has found a helmet belonging to injured loader driver Russell Smith.

The light on the helmet is still going almost six days after the explosion.

Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn said this morning that families and the West Coast community were hanging on to hope despite the grim situation for their loved ones.

"We know we are losing hope now, but unless someone shows us otherwise, we are hanging on to all hope," he said at the time.

Thoughts with mine families: Bligh

Extract from AAP

Premier Anna Bligh says Queensland's thoughts are with the families of the men who have been lost in the Pike River Mine in New Zealand after a second explosion on Wednesday.

The 29 men were declared dead by police after the massive explosion occurred at 2.37pm (1137 AEST) and left little hope for the miners' families.

Ms Bligh spoke to reporters outside a Queensland Resources Council function of 900

miners and business people in related industries.

"Our thoughts are with the families, particularly of the Queenslanders," Ms Bligh said.

Two Queensland men are among those who died in the accident - Joshua Adam Ufer, 25, and William John Joynson, 49.

"What's happening in New Zealand is a reminder that mining - particularly coal mining - can be a very unsafe business and we've all got to make efforts to improve wherever we can," the premier said.

Toxic and potentially explosive gases had kept rescuers from entering the mine following the first explosion on Friday, frustrating the families of the miners.

Methane mine blasts kill nine in Colombia

Extract from the Herald Sun

UP to nine miners are feared dead in blasts at two separate coal mines in central Colombia, believed to be caused by methane gas explosions.

The Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining said two miners died at a mine in the municipality of Lenguazaque, where they were trapped in a tunnel and apparently suffered from a lack of oxygen and excessive amounts of carbon dioxide.

Rescuers recovered one body after a larger explosion at a nearby coal mine in the municipality of Guacheta, while the fate of another six miners remained unknown, said Cundinamarca department police chief Colonel Fabio Castaneda.

In June, 73 miners died at a northwestern coal mine following an explosion investigators said was also due to high methane gas levels.

It was the worst mining disaster in Colombia since July 1977 when 86 workers died in similar circumstances.

Yorkshire coal mine evacuated after explosion

Extract from Yorkshire Evening Post

A Yorkshire coal mine has been evacuated after an apparent explosion of methane gas underground.

Two hundred men were ordered out of Kellingley colliery at Knottingley, near Pontefract in West Yorkshire, in the early evening on Tuesday.

Production has been halted. The evacuation took about two hours.

Officials from the Government's Mines Inspectorate have been called in.

No-one was injured in the incident, which took place in a section of the mine where coal had been removed and the roof allowed to collapse.

Kellingley employs 600 men and is one of Britain's most modern coal mines.

Thursday 25 November 2010

NZ mourns as mine investigations begin

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

New Zealand is in mourning and flags are flying at half mast after the deaths of 29 miners in an underground explosion.

The men were declared dead yesterday afternoon after a second massive explosion tore through the underground tunnels of the Pike River mine.

Last night 200 people attended a church vigil and three helicopters flew overhead as a tribute to the men, who had been trapped underground.

More services are planned for today, as well as a special Mass to remember the dead tomorrow.

Prime Minister John Key will visit grieving families in Greymouth today.

He has described the news that no-one could have survived yesterday's blast as a "cruel blow", saying the whole nation is in mourning.



Mourning: Candles burn at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Greymouth (Getty Images: Martin Hunter)

As New Zealand grapples with the scale of the disaster, inquiries are being set up into whether the tragedy was preventable.

Mr Key says he can assure the families of the men who died in the mine that everything that could have been done to save them, was done.

He says a commission of inquiry into the tragedy will be approved by the Cabinet on Monday.

The chief coroner has launched an inquiry and investigations will be undertaken by both the Police and the Labour Department.

Pike River Coal has confirmed the company will conduct its own review of the disaster.

It is still unclear when it will be safe enough to retrieve the bodies of the men.

Last night there were outbursts of grief and anger as the families of the 29 victims asked why more was not done to save their loved ones.

One grieving father says heads should roll if it is found emergency crews could have acted sooner and saved their sons soon after the first explosion on Friday.

Families are demanding to know if there were earlier opportunities to launch a rescue bid, and if so, why this was not done.

Miners offer help to New Zealand counterparts

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The union that represents coal miners - the CFMEU - is offering assistance to its New

Zealand equivalent in the wake of the tragic deaths of 29 mineworkers at Pike River colliery on the South Island.

The mineworkers were confirmed dead after a second massive blast through the mine workings yesterday.

CFMEU general secretary Andrew Vickers says it would have been unforgivable had rescue teams been sent in when there remained a risk of further explosions.

He said coal mining is different to mining for other metals as there is always methane present in underground coal mining.

"In Australia we had the experience at Queensland's Moura number four where there were several explosions and the mine had to be sealed leaving the bodies of miners inside," he said

He says the union can help its New Zealand counterparts.

"We have offered assistance to them, in terms of any technical expertise or legal expertise that we can provide", he said.

"They have a much smaller coal mining industry in New Zealand than we do in Australia, and we have unfortunately, a fair bit of experience in the sorts of things that confront them as various inquiries get under way."

Qld communities mourn local miners' deaths

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Two Queensland communities are grieving two local men killed in the New Zealand mine disaster, 49-year-old Willy Joynson and 25-year-old Josh Ufer.

New Zealand is in mourning and flags are flying at half mast after the deaths of 29 miners in an underground explosion.

All the men were declared dead yesterday afternoon after a second massive explosion tore through the underground tunnels of the Pike River mine.

Mr Joynson spent the past year in New Zealand with his wife and two sons, and was due to return home to Maryborough in southern Queensland in January.

Mr Ufer, from Townsville in north Queensland, also died in the mine.



Qld miners Joshua Ufer (left) and William Joynson (right) were among 29 miners killed in the Pike River Coal Mine explosion in Greymouth in New Zealand. (AAP: New Zealand Police)

Mr Joynson's family say they are still coming to terms with his death.

Cousin Russell Joynson says family members are with Mr Joynson's wife and two sons at Greymouth.

"They're all in a state of shock at the moment as you can imagine," he said.

"They're really hoping one thing they really do want is if Willy's body can be recovered and brought back to Australia so they can put some final closure on this chapter."

Last night, 200 people attended a church vigil and three helicopters flew overhead as a tribute to the men, who had been trapped underground.

More services are planned for today, as well as a special Mass to remember the dead tomorrow.

In southern Queensland, Fraser Coast Regional Council Mayor Mick Kruger says the local community will be deeply affected by Mr Joynson's death.

"Willy was well known at his home town, which was Howard just outside of Maryborough, but recently lived at the small suburb of Tinana," he said.

"I'm sure [his death] will ricochet right throughout the Fraser Coast because the Joynson family was very well known in the mining industry for many years.

"It's a sad loss when something like this which we all hope that will never happen, does occur and I'd like to express our condolences to Kim and the two children and also the family."

In north Queensland, Townsville Mayor Les Tyrell says the community is mourning the loss of Mr Ufer.

"I would just like to say to Josh's family please accept our sincerest regrets on what's happened," he said.

"Our prayers with you as the family as you go through the grieving process in this case."

Meanwhile, a team of Queensland mine managers and inspectors is on standby to relieve New Zealand officials.

Last night, the state sent extra rescue staff and equipment to Greymouth, to help with the recovery effort.

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh says a team of senior managers could also be sent over.

"Obviously the mine management and staff have been working around the clock in New Zealand and they need a team to relieve them and we're standing by to do that as well," she said.

Queen leads condolences from around the world

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

Condolences are coming in from around the world over the deaths of the 29 West Coast miners.

The Queen sent a message to Prime Minister John Key saying: "I am deeply saddened by today's news that there is now no hope for the men trapped in the Pike River mine.

"My heart goes out to the families and friends of these 29 brave miners and to all who have been touched by this national disaster."

Pete Rodger, 40, from Perthshire, and Malcolm Campbell, 25, from St Andrews, Fife, were among the men missing following Friday's initial blast at the mine.



Source: Reuters

The Queen sent her "deep appreciation" to everyone who had worked so hard to attempt a rescue and said her "thoughts and prayers" are with all New Zealanders "at this sad and difficult time".

Prince Charles has also expressed his condolences.

"There are so many people (who) mind deeply for what the New Zealand people and the families are having to go through. We just want them to know that we are with them at this terrible time of anguish," he said.

His son, Prince William, issued the following statement after hearing yesterday's news:

"It was with profound sadness that I heard the news this morning of the second explosion at the Pike River mine, and that there is now no hope for the survival of the 29 men trapped there.

"I send to the families and friends of these courageous miners my deepest and most heartfelt sympathy. To the people of New Zealand I would say how much you are in my thoughts and prayers at this time of national tragedy."

Sir Anand Satyanand and his wife Susan have also offered their support.

The Governor General said the collective strength of the community will be vital in facing this event and dealing with the enormous sense of grief that will be felt for many years to come.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has sent her condolences on behalf of the people of the United States.

"New Zealand has lost 29 brave and hard-working men who will be mourned around the world. Earlier this month I visited New Zealand and I saw the famous Kiwi strength and spirit for myself. You have come through adversity before, and I know you will do so again. Today, our thoughts and prayers are with you," she said in a statement.

At a service for the men last night at the Holy Trinity Anglican church in Greymouth, Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn read a message from the Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, saying he has the miners' families in his prayers.

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard has extended her nation's condolences and called it "tragic news".

Two of the miners were Australian - Joshua Adam Ufer, 25, and William John Joynson, 49, both from Queensland.

Victoria's Premier confirmed the state's flags would fly at half-mast as a sign of respect. Flags in New South Wales will also be at halfmast.

Condolences online

Twitter and Facebook have been flooded with expressions of sadness and disbelief at the scope of the disaster and many users have changed their profile pictures to an image of candles as a sign of solidarity with the miners.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague tweeted his "immense sadness" at the deaths while America's Sarah Palin wrote this: "So very sorry for the loss of 29 lives in New Zealand's Pike River Mine. May prayers comfort the families & loved ones who will never forget."

Pike River Coal's CEO Peter Whittall is attracting tremendous support online for his handling of the crisis.

Facebook groups like "Support Peter Whittall" already have thousands of members with many posting positive messages, thanking the mine boss for his emotional honesty and giving hope in such tough times.

People living overseas are posting their condolences on TVNZ's messageboards with many messages originating from the UK, including from the mining communities there.

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"I send to the families and friends of these courageous miners my deepest and most heartfelt sympathy. To the people of New Zealand I would say how much you are in my thoughts and prayers at this time of national tragedy."

TO DONATE: People can make a donation to the fund at any ANZ branch or branch of The National Bank. The account number: 01 1841 0052483 00

Pike CEO: Bringing bodies home our absolute focus

Extract from tvnz.co.nz

Pike River Coal CEO Peter Whittall says the company is absolutely focused on returning the bodies of 29 miners to their families, following a second explosion at the mine yesterday.

Whittall told TV ONE's Breakfast that although it was too soon to enter the mine to begin the recovery process, the police and search teams were committed to the mission.



Pike River CEO Peter Whittall and Chairman John Dow - Source: NZPA

"That's our intention, but there is a lot of work to do, there's a lot of planning to do, but it's absolutely possible, at this stage anyway, that's what we're planning.

"Now it's all about making the mine safe, safe for re-entry, so we can get in there, get our boys out and bring them home to their families," he said.

He would not commit to a timeframe, saying the process is complex.

"It's too early to say when. There's a whole panel of experts that need to look at that, there's a whole lot of people that need to give advice to the police about what their process will be and that's something we still need to work on," he said.

Prime Minister John Key said he had not yet received any official advice on when the bodies could be recovered, saying it was an issue of stabilisation and safety.

"We know that there are a number of options that are being explored to allow the bodies to be removed from the mine. Of course the most important thing at this point now is to stable the environment so it's safe for the rescue teams to go in and take the bodies out."

He said it would be an important part of giving closure to the families.

"For family members, they will want to get their loved ones back soon, obviously, to be able to hold their own services in a way that dignifies the lives of those miners."

Testing of the mine gases was on hold for a time last night, with Whittall releasing many of his men from their overnight duties.

"Last night I actually gave most of my guys the night off. There wasn't a lot we could do, we had to stop monitoring for the safety of the guys doing the testing, they were hoping to re-establish that during the night.

"Today we will start looking at what our options are. For most of the team it was a pretty quiet night up at the mine. We had skeleton crew on to keep an eye on the site, and we will get back in there this morning," he said.

He said that this did not mean the team had given up on recovering the bodies.

"The only reason we gave them the night off last night is so they could start fresh again today and that's the order of the day, that's the task of the day. I'm meeting with the general manager today and we are starting to go over those plans and procedures," he said.

While recovery efforts continue at the Pike River mine site today, Whittall said his staff are working hard to ensure the families have everything they need.

"The focus is not changing at all. If anything it is intensifying what we need to do. We'll be working with those families ... talking to them, telling them what we are up to, what our options are and just being there in support. Our families are still our first priority."

Key said ACC will have a part to play in financial support or compensation, but anything beyond that will have to be looked at.

"Stream of support continues"

Despite reports of widespread anger and frustration, Whittall said he has had nothing but love and support from the families.

"I get a lot of support from the families ... and that really buoys me up and gives me the energy to do what I'm doing.

"I just hope I can be strong for the families and also my other employees. There's a lot of other people involved in this process. They are relying on me," he said.

Pike River chairman John Dow said any anger and frustration being felt by the family will take a while to pass.

"I think the anger and the grief and the anguish that we've seen has been a combination of a lot things - the frustration of the slowness of the process, which we all know why it was slow, and the explosion yesterday vindicated the cautious nature of the miners' rescue and I think a lot of the anger has been because of the frustration of not being able to go in.

"I don't think it will be easing, I've never seen so much raw emotion as I saw yesterday when we gave the families the unfortunate news. They'll be hurting, they'll be grieving," he said.

Dow said he was aware there are a lot of unanswered questions

"I'm aware there is a lot of anger out there. I know people are saying 'How could something like this happen?', but we will find out in due course.

"This morning the Prime Minister said he was thinking of instigating a commission of inquiry and we will absolutely co-operate with that process. We want to know just as much as any other Kiwi what happened.

Meanwhile, Whittall is encouraging people to keep sending their messages of support.

"Keep them coming, the more people that are supportive of us the more it's shared," he said.

"Looking to the Future"

Dow said the Pike River board will meet today as they have a lot to discuss.

"We have a lot of things we've got to talk about, but the focus at the moment is very much on the families, making the mine safe so we can bring our boys home. We will worry about the business things later," he said.

He was certain that there was still a future for Pike River mine.

"Oh yes, there is. There's a future, I'm not quite sure that that future looks like. It's too early to talk about details. We absolutely need to focus on the families, we will talk about the business issues in the coming days," he said.

In memory...Pike River Mine, NZ



A combination of undated pictures released by the New Zealand Police shows 27 of the 29 miners who died inside the Pike River Coal mine

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AFTERDAMP Atmospheric pollution following fire or explosion (usually lethal).

-Ed