



Mining Accident News No.1102

11 to 15 January 2011

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Tuesday 11 January 2011

Rwanda: One Dead in Mining Accident

Extract from allAfrica.com

Gakenke — One person was killed after a Castelite mine in Rukore Cell, Cyabingo Sector in Gakenke District caved in, local authorities have said.

The body of Cyprien Habarurema, 38, was retrieved 15 metres deep by local residents and taken to Nemba Hospital.

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

One of the survivors of the accident, Augustine Rutaburingoga, narrated that the earth first cracked before caving in.

"We arrived at the mine at 6am, we had a long day of mining but the debris fell after we had reached the precious stones (castalite). We had started removing it when the accident occurred," Rutaburingoga said.

Talking to The New Times, the Executive Secretary of Cyabingo, JMV Hategekimana, blamed the owners of the mining site for not protecting the miners.

"Local residents earn a living from here," he said.

"The owners had agreed to expropriate the residents and organize them into cooperatives but they claim to be waiting for full operational rights."

The Castelite and Coltan mine belongs to the former Internal Affairs Minister, Jean de Dieu Ntiruhungwa.

Canada: Work halts for probe into mining death

Extract from The Daily Press, Canada

Ministry spokesman confirms man suffered crushing chest injury

A stop-work order remains in effect in the area of Xstrata's Kidd Mine where a man was killed last week.



Richard Roy, 28, was "drilling into a wall support in a raise ... with a jackleg drill when he suffered a crushing injury to the chest," said Matt Blajer, spokesman with the Ontario Ministry of Labour told The Daily Press Monday.

The incident occurred Thursday shortly before midnight.

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Roy was drilling from a platform about 250 feet above the 8,200 level when the fatal accident occurred.

Roy, of Chelmsford, was an employee of J.S. Redpath Limited which is contracting firm providing drilling and other services at the Kidd Mine.

The stop-work order is one of several issued by the Ministry of Labour while the investigation into the accident continues.

"We issued orders to Xstrata to stop all production work in the area," Blajer said.

The stop-work order will remain in effect until it is cancelled by a ministry inspector.

"We also issued some orders to J.S. Redpath."

They have asked the company to provide training records for the raise climber and to provide a "written procedure for drilling with a jackleg drill in a raise from a platform."

Blajer said the investigation has been slow because the accident occurred in a "very remote part of the mine" and the Alimak raise climber being used to access the site can only carry one person other than the operator.

"We have investigators and engineers — a number of people involved in the investigation," explained Blajer. "If only one can go at a time, it makes for a slow inspection."

Roy, who had been employed by J.S. Redpath for more than two years, is survived by his son, Austin Roy, his mother, Lise Roy, his sister, Sylvie Dupras (Steve), grandparents Georgette Beaudry, Florence Gravelle and Jules Roy, and his nephew, Emerson Dupras. He is predeceased by his father, Fernand Roy, and grandfather, Leo Beaudry.

USA: Judge forbids Rosebud from warning about mine inspections

Extract from Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

A federal judge in Johnstown ordered Rosebud Mining Co. to stop warning employees when

federal mine inspectors enter one of the Kittanning company's 18 underground mines.

The Labor Department filed a federal lawsuit Dec. 30 after surface personnel at Rosebud's Mine 78 in Somerset County and Tracy Lynne mine in Armstrong County ignored orders not to signal underground workers about the inspectors' arrival and then laughed when caught doing so.

U.S. District Judge Kim Gibson ruled that giving the warnings violates federal mine safety laws. He scheduled a status conference for March 1 to determine whether the company obeys the order.

The two mines were among 111 "troubling" mines that the Mine Safety and Health Administration selected nationwide for extra inspections after an April 5 explosion killed 29 miners in Massey Energy Company's Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, W.Va.

MSHA picked the mines according to their track records of mine safety violations and several other factors, including high accident and injury rates.

Giving advance notice of a mine inspection is illegal and carries a penalty of up to \$1,000 in fines and six months in prison

NSW: Gas monitoring continues after Hunter mine fire

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Xstrata Coal says it could be months before its Blakefield South mine is reopened after a fire last week shut down the \$350 million operation.

Around 500 miners and contractors are to be redeployed while salvage teams pump coolant into the mine and monitor for gas.

Xstrata's James Rickards says it is too early to put a figure on the cost of the fire.

"With the mine out of action there would be costs in the millions to us," he said.

"But we're yet to effectively assess that and once we get underground and then we'll be able

to determine what sort of damage has been done."

The company says no one will go back underground until the mine is safe.

Mr Rickards says monitoring for gas is the key.

"Our teams know how to do that, they've been doing it well," he said.

"We've got an excellent drain gas system in place.

"We manage our gas very efficiently, full credit to our team that they have the training and expertise to respond efficiently to an emergency situation, no one was injured or there was no event that caused any level of concern to our people."

Quote of the week



"Flattery is like chewing gum. Enjoy it but don't swallow it."

Hank Ketcham
(USA Cartoonist, who created the *Dennis the Menace* comic strip, 1920-2001)

QLD: Contractor injured in mine crash

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A contractor working at a central Queensland mine had to be freed from his truck after an accident on site yesterday afternoon.

A spokeswoman from Anglo Coal says two rear dump trucks collided at the Callide mine near Biloela just after 2:00pm, trapping the man.

He was flown to the Rockhampton Hospital while the driver of the other truck was treated on site.

An investigation into the accident is underway.

Wednesday 12 January 2011

NZ: Pike River families only want bodies back

Extract from TVNZ.co.nz

The families of the 29 men killed in the Pike River coal mine are more interested in recovering their loved ones' bodies than the millions of dollars donated to relief funds, a spokesman says.

Bernie Monk, father of mine contractor Michael Monk, said the families just wanted to recover the bodies.

"We just want closure...we want to get our loved ones back. I speak on behalf of all the families when I say that," he told The Press.

Police yesterday said rising gas levels had again stopped recovery efforts.

Workers were preparing to start pumping expanding foam sealant into the cracks around the slimline shaft about 1pm when the situation deteriorated, requiring the hillside to be evacuated.

Efforts to try and seal the cracks, to allow the GAG and Floxal machines - which were pumping water and nitrogen into the mine - to operate more efficiently, have repeatedly failed.

Police said the GAG machine, which is rested regularly to prolong its lifespan, had been shut down since 4pm on Monday.

Temperatures and methane gas levels inside the mine have continued to fluctuate, hindering attempts to get in and recover the bodies of the miners and contractors killed in a series of explosions since November 19.

Monk said the families were desperate to learn more about the blasts and were investigating the cause themselves.

A committee representing the families, along with its legal team, were interviewing people connected with the mine, he said.

"We are going right back to square one. We are interviewing anyone involved with the mine because we are trying to get to the truth."

The details of the relief fund were "not important", he said.

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn yesterday said accountants, lawyers and "men on the ground" had met to discuss the distribution of more than \$7 million to the workers' families.

This week in mining accident history

12 January 1925

Kames Pit

Muirkirk, Ayrshire, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

1 killed by fall of roof

Source: www.scotishmining.co.uk

Muirkirk Miner Severely Injured - At Kames Pit Muirkirk, belonging to Wm Baird & Co Ltd, yesterday afternoon, a serious accident befel George Thomson, miner, residing a Garrawhill, Muirkirk. While at work he was caught by an extensive fall from the roof, receiving severe injuries to the head and back, and his left leg is broken. Thomson was removed to Kilmarnock Infirmary. [Scotsman 13 Jan 1925]

Muirkirk Miners Fatal Injuries - George Thomson, miner, residing at Garronhill, Muirkirk, who met with a severe accident at Kames Pit, Muirkirk, on Monday, has succumbed to his injuries in Kilmarnock Infirmary. Thomson who was 24 was married recently. [Scotsman 14 Jan 1925]

Muirkirk - Miner Fatally Injured - At Kames Pit, Muirkirk, belonging to Wm. Baird and Co (Limited), on Monday afternoon, a serious accident befel George Thomson, miner, residing at Garrawhill, Muirkirk. While at work he was caught by an extensive fall from the roof, receiving severe injuries to the head and back,

and his left leg was broken. Thomson was removed to Kilmarnock Infirmary, where he died the same evening. He was 24 years of age and only recently married. [Hamilton Advertiser 17 January 1925]

Thursday 13 January 2011

S.Africa: Showdown seems likely on mine safety law review

Extract from The New Age

The government, trade unions and the mining industry seem to be heading for a collision over the suspension of two sections in the Mining Health and Safety Act.

The amendments of sections 50 (7), about the closing down of a mining accident scene by inspectors and 86 (A), about fining mining executives or jailing them if found to have acted negligently, were approved by Parliament in 2008, but suspended immediately after the industry approached government, pleading for time to consult.

Chamber of Mines senior executive Frans Barker said yesterday the industry was not comfortable with some of the language used in the two clauses and managers had since submitted alternative wordings to the Department of Mineral Resources.

"Looking at a history behind these two clauses, they are introducing very punitive measures in regard to health and safety in mining," he said. "They do not strike a right balance between punitive and preventative measures, and that could scare off managers from sharing information related to accidents."

Fred Gona, chairperson of the portfolio committee on mining, told *The New Age* earlier in the week the committee would "make noise" when Parliament reopened next month to gain support for the retention of the clauses. They were necessary for the department to curb shocking fatalities within the industry.

This week, the Chamber of Mines announced that the number of fatalities was down from 168 in 2009 to 128 last year.

Frans Baleni, the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, said they were in support of the contested sections in the act. "Our view is that there is nothing wrong with these clauses.

"It is about preventing accidents and reducing the carnage of deaths we are experiencing within the industry. They pose no threats either to the industry or our members."

Barker said the chamber was not totally against the clauses. "If an accident does happen and managers are found to have acted negligently, the chamber will support any punitive measures.

"What we are saying is that managers cannot be held responsible for everything that happens in the mines."

The Department of Mineral Resources spokesperson, Zingaphi Jakuja, confirmed that the department was reviewing the Act and a look at the two sections would form part of the exercise.

Nambia: Namdeb suffers first fatality in 20 years

Extract from www.informante.web.na

Namdeb (Namdeb Diamond Corporation (Pty) Limited) a diamond mining company owned in equal shares by De Beers Centenary AG and the Government of the Republic of Namibia, located 890 kilometres from the capital city of Namibia, in the southwestern corner of the country, suffered the first fatality in 20 years after a mining accident claimed the life of 32-year old production operator, Klemens Klemens. Klemens was pronounced dead in the early morning hours of Tuesday, according to Namdeb's Communications Manager, Francis Milomo. Klemens reportedly drove into a flooded area. "An area that management was supposed to have cordoned off and never did," a source privy to the accident told Informanté.

"He drove into the flooded area... the car fell into the water and he was knocked unconscious, causing his drowning" said the source who preferred anonymity.

"That place where he died should have been sealed off and the necessary warning signs put up. Why was he driving a car with no airbags... how many vehicles in the mining area have airbags,?" the source demanded to know.

The source claimed that Namdeb is too busy focusing on recovering losses from recession and it could be too late if more lives are lost due to lax safety measures.

Speaking from Oranjemund, Milomo could not confirm the exact causes to the casualty but said, "We are busy piecing together all the necessary evidence to establish the exact causes to his death."

He said the parents of the deceased had been informed but "we can't comment much on it at this stage".

NZ: Pike River Mine Recovery Operation to End, Police Say

Extract from Bloomberg

New Zealand Police will hand control of Pike River Coal Co.'s mine to its outside managers after ceasing operations to recover the bodies of 29 miners who were killed after underground explosions in November.

"The likelihood of getting into the mine safely is unrealistic," Police Commissioner Howard Broad said today at a televised news conference from Greymouth on the west coast of the South Island, where he met families of the dead miners. "It is, in my view, impractical to extend much hope on this prospect. I have decided that the recovery phase of this operation will come to a conclusion."

The incident is the country's worst mining disaster in 96 years, prompting the government to appoint an inquiry into the blasts and the need for new rules. Receivers were appointed to the Wellington-based Pike River last month after it

told major creditors it was unlikely to be able to repay loans.

The mine will be handled back to the receivers, and their responsibility will be to secure the mine safely, Broad said.

Rescue teams have been unable to enter the mine, part of which has been burning underground, because of dangerous gases and the risk of further blasts. The first blast at the mine, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Greymouth, occurred on Nov. 19, followed by a larger explosion on Nov. 24 that prompted police to say no one would have survived.

USA: Explosion at Warrior Coal near Manitou

Extract from iSurfHopkins.com

HOPKINS COUNTY, KY – iSurf News has just received word that there has been an accident concerning an explosion and a fire at Warrior Coal on Wolf Hollow Road near Manitou just outside of Madisonville, Warrior Coal is a subsidiary of Alliance Coal, LLC.

According to mine officials, a drilling operation was underway when an underground gas pocket was tapped into, causing an explosion.

Kenny Murray of Alliance Coal said "A drill rig was in the process of drilling a hole from the surface to intersect a worked out area within Warrior Mine when a pocket of gas was encountered at a depth of approximately 420 feet (300 feet above the mine workings). The gas was ignited and the resulting fire subsequently burned the drill rig. The underground mine workings were not affected by the fire.

The two drillers were taken to a local hospital for treatment one driller has been released and the other is kept for observation."

As of right now we have received reports of minor injuries. We have a reporter on the scene and will be updating as new information is received.

USA: Mining Fatalities More Than Doubled in 2010

Extract from The Wall Street Journal, US

WASHINGTON—The number of miners who died on the job in the U.S. more than doubled in 2010, with 29 of the fatalities occurring at a Massey Energy Co. coal mine in West Virginia, the Labor Department said Thursday.

Seventy-one miners died last year, compared with 34 miners in 2009. The department said that more than half the workers died in coal mines, while the remainder died in metal and nonmetal operations. The miners died from explosions, roof falls and powered haulage accidents.

In April, 29 miners died after an explosion at Massey's Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, W.Va.

The 2010 fatalities were the highest since 2006, when 73 workers died, department statistics showed.

Mining companies are studying accident trends and trying to determine whether incidents that were once nearly eliminated are reappearing, said National Mining Association spokeswoman Carol Raulston. Company executives are also reviewing safety practices and training.

"Following 2009, which was the safest year in U.S. mining history, 2010 has prompted deep concern," Ms. Raulston said.

The Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration said it is working to reduce deaths with more aggressive inspections and standards.

"No miners should have to die on the job just to earn a paycheck," said Joseph Main, assistant secretary of Labor for mine safety and health.

Saturday 15 January 2011

USA: Attorney seeks hold on UBB blast hearings

Extract from The Register-Herald.com

A federal prosecutor has advised the Department of Labor that it should hold off public hearings into Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch disaster so as not to hinder potential criminal prosecution.

U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin said the Mine Safety and Health Administration, a division of the Department of Labor, advised his office it has substantially completed interviews and would be moving forward with public hearings. Goodwin advised MSHA that it would hinder criminal investigations into the incident if public hearings were held.

"It would also be inappropriate to release only a portion of the transcripts or hold hearings where only select testimony is taken because it is not possible to determine at this time the bearing that information may have on the ongoing criminal investigation as it progresses," Goodwin said in a news release. "Therefore, after careful consideration, we have asked the Department of Labor not to release the transcripts or conduct public hearings that would elicit testimony at this time."

According to a May release from MSHA, the hearings were planned "so that the victims' families, the mining community and the general public can learn what happened."

"Shortly after the explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine, the Department of Labor, through the Mine Safety and Health Administration announced that it would, at some point in its investigation, release all transcripts of witness interviews and conduct public hearings, unless those steps would hinder the ongoing criminal investigation," Goodwin said.

Criminal investigations are likely to be pursued in the UBB investigation, the Raleigh County coal mining incident that resulted in the deaths

of 29 underground miners. Information from the MSHA investigation of the incident has not been widely available since the April 5 disaster.

Joe Main, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Health and Safety, told The Charleston Gazette in December that public hearings could be stalled due to the ongoing criminal investigation of the accident. He said then that federal criminal authorities have gotten involved "in a much more dramatic way" than he's seen in other mining accidents.

Mine operators can be found liable for criminal misconduct if it is found that health and safety standards were willfully violated or authorized.

The Solicitor of Labor M. Patricia Smith released a statement through MSHA shortly after Goodwin's office released their own.

"The Department of Justice requested this week that the Mine Safety and Health Administration postpone any plans to hold public hearings and, in a prior request, asked that we not release transcripts of witness testimony gathered thus far in the Upper Big Branch Mine accident investigation."

She further explained the letter from Booth said any public disclosure at this time "poses a serious risk of hindering the criminal investigation into events at UBB."

"From the very beginning, we have exercised extreme caution to ensure that DOJ has had every opportunity to run its own investigation. We have no intention of jeopardizing those efforts," Smith said. "Therefore, we've agreed to honor that department's request. We remain committed to holding public hearings and making the transcripts available once we are assured by the criminal prosecutors that doing so will not impede their ability to bring any wrongdoers to justice."

Federal and state officials have been examining the potential cause of the blast, and have run into numerous stalls in the course of the investigation, including attempts by Massey to conduct their own investigation.

A prior letter from the U.S. Attorney's office requested information on mine violations dating back to 2007. The letter states that the prosecutor is seeking information to determine if directors, officers and/or agents of Massey's Performance Coal engaged in "willful criminal activity at UBB."

The request was for information sought as a result of multiple cases Massey had before the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

In the aftermath of the explosion inside the sprawling, 5-mile long complex, Raleigh County Prosecutor Kristen Keller said in an interview that her office could pursue criminal charges if evidence supported them.

Keller said she would likely defer to the Department of Justice if federal charges were filed.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AIR SPLIT The division of a current of air into two or more parts.

QLD Mine flood photos



A coal mine is seen surrounded by floodwaters in Baralaba in Australia's state of Queensland in this January 2, 2011



Machinery is seen in a coal mine



ROCKHAMPTON: Mining equipment and trucks sit partially submerged in flooded waters. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen
Source: The Australian



INUNDATED: Machinery abandoned in floodwaters at Cockatoo Coal's Baralaba mine west of Rockhampton in eastern Queensland. Picture: Lyndon Mechielsen



SINKING FEELING: Rain which has caused flooding in mines and contributed to a train stoppage may cause the industry losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Source: The Courier-Mail

-Ed