



Mining Accident News No.1103

16 to 27 January 2011

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Tuesday 18 January 2011

NZ: Mine bodies unlikely to be recovered

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The receiver for Pike River Coal says it is unlikely the remains of 29 men killed in the New Zealand mine disaster last year will ever be recovered.

Work will continue for between five and eight weeks to stabilise the gases in the site but there is no guarantee on the future of the mine.



Relatives of the 29 miners killed at Greymouth have been briefed on plans to seal the Pike River mine. (Reuters: Simon Baker/Pool)

Police last week said they were pulling out of the recovery operation and handing control of the mine back to the company and its receivers, a move that angered relatives of the deceased.

But documents released by the police show that a panel of mining experts advised that even a stable mine would not be safe enough to allow for a full recovery operation.

After the police announcement, Prime Minister John Key said the mine was too unsafe to enter and was likely to be sealed, but that a final decision rests with the receivers.

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

Today the receivers delivered their plans for the mine to the police, who briefed relatives at Greymouth.

Some of the relatives had been expecting an announcement the mine would be sealed.

Spokesman Bernie Monk had previously said the families would explore legal action to prevent that from happening.

He says it is important to get inside the mine, not just to recover any remains but to gather evidence for the coronial inquiry and royal commission.

NZ: Pike River families given new hope

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Relatives of the miners killed in New Zealand's Pike River disaster last year say they are excited to hear the mine will not be sealed immediately.

The receiver for the company says work to stabilise the mine will continue for five to eight more weeks.

A spokesman for the families, Bernie Monk, says the announcement has given relatives hope.

"It's given us a breathing space to get down there and find out how safe the mine is so we can get rescue teams down there to get our loved ones out," he said.

But the receiver says it is unlikely the remains of the miners will ever be recovered, even if the mine is stabilised.

Twenty-nine men were killed in the disaster, including two Australians.

Police last week said they were pulling out of the recovery operation and handing control of the mine back to the company and its receivers, a move that angered relatives of the dead.

But documents released by the police show a panel of mining experts advised that even a stable mine would not be safe enough to allow for a full recovery operation.

Mr Monk says he is realistic and will accept what recovery workers tell him.

"When they come back down and say 'Bernie we can't do any more', I'll be the first one up there with a shovel to seal it up," he said.

VIC: Man rescued from old mine shaft

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A 35-year-old man is in a serious condition after falling 10 metres down a disused mine shaft, north-east of Melbourne.

The man fell into the shaft in bushland at Warrandyte and was trapped for a short time.

He is being taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital with head injuries.

Wednesday 19 January 2011

Canada: Man rescued after industrial accident at Saskatchewan mill

Extract from The Gazette, Montreal, Canada

After spending nearly 10 hours trapped in an underground tunnel at a northern Saskatchewan gold mill, a 61-year-old man was released from hospital Wednesday, apparently having suffered no major injuries.



Emergency crews rescued a man who was trapped underground at a northern Saskatchewan mining site for nearly 10 hours on Tuesday, according to the RCMP. Photograph by: Supplied photo, courtesy Golden Band Resources

Emergency crews rescued Rocky Arsenault, 61, on Tuesday following an industrial accident at the Jolu gold mill, about 130 kilometres north of La Ronge, Sask.

The mill processes gold.

Arsenault had been trying to fix a jammed rock crusher when rocks shifted and pinned him against the equipment.

RCMP said emergency services were alerted to the accident Tuesday afternoon.

"They had to move slowly to prevent further consequences," said Corey Ecarnot of the local emergency medical service, La Ronge EMS.

At first, rescue crews struggled to make progress, he said.

"Whenever they would dig one pail of rock and sand out, two more fell in," said Ecarnot.

Ecarnot said rescuers were eventually able to free one of Arsenault's legs, which allowed them to attach a harness and pull him out.

He was still alert at the time, and worked to free himself while he was being pulled out.

"He extricated himself, to a large degree," said Rodney Orr, a spokesman for Golden Band Resources, the company that owns the site.

Paramedics said the man was suffering from hypothermia when he was rescued but that he suffered no major injuries.

Arsenault was kept in hospital for observation overnight, but was released Wednesday morning, Orr said.

Orr said Arsenault works for an subcontractor hired to take care of the operational services at the mill.

"He was tired and cold, but other than that, he said he wanted to go back to work this morning," Orr said.

That wasn't possible Wednesday as the mill was shut down until Gold Band Resources determines why and how the accident happened.

"We are looking to see what has to be done before we can start up the operation again."

Orr said this is the mill's first industrial accident.

Gold Band Resources spent most of 2010 refurbishing the mill and it poured its first gold bar at the location last Thursday.

La Ronge is about 380 kilometres north of Saskatoon.

USA: Inquiry into Upper Big Branch Mine disaster nears its end

Extract from Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

BECKLEY, W.Va -- Federal investigators are sifting through thousands of pieces of evidence and are 60 to 90 days from revealing a "comprehensive explanation" of what caused an explosion that killed 29 men inside a West Virginia mine, officials with the Mine Safety and Health Administration said last night.

"There are thousands of pieces that we have on the table, (and) we're in the process now of sitting down and weeding through it," said Joe Main, MSHA's assistant secretary of Labor. "We are pressing our folks to put all these pieces together."

The April 5 explosion inside Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, W.Va., was the deadliest U.S. mine tragedy in 40 years.

Main and other federal officials briefed the dead miners' families on the status of their investigation at MSHA's Mining Academy on Airport Road.

Coal administrator Kevin Stricklin said investigators are nearly done. He said they have interviewed 261 people, and 18 potential witnesses refused to testify by invoking their Fifth Amendment rights.

Massey CEO Don Blankenship, who retired Dec. 31, was among those who refused to testify, MSHA officials said.

Investigators found evidence of two deployed self-rescuers inside the mine.

Stricklin said investigators are "well aware that people from (Massey) management went

underground shortly after the explosion. We have a good feel for who those people were."

He did not say what investigators believe they were doing in the mine. In the days after the blast, Stricklin said the men were not trained mine rescuers.

The cause of the blast is still under investigation, but investigators said a preliminary analysis suggests a "small methane ignition transitioned into a massive coal dust explosion." Samples taken inside the mine showed high levels of coal dust, which can fuel an explosion, they said.

Blankenship has suggested that the mine was flooded with methane gas through a crack in the mine floor, leading to the explosion.

The meeting was the first with families since September. It happened less than a week after MSHA agreed to delay public hearings and the release of transcripts of investigators' interviews with witnesses.

Department of Labor Solicitor Patricia Smith told the families the delay was accepted to avoid jeopardizing a separate criminal investigation by the Department of Justice.

"The DOJ has been very serious about their criminal investigation," Smith said. "If it would interfere with bringing some individuals to justice, we don't want to do that."

Smith said she has no knowledge of the status of the criminal investigation.

The officials asked the families for patience. They said they have encountered several delays, including unsafe conditions inside the mine that prevented them from going underground until late June. Flooding was an issue, as were legal challenges by Massey, which questioned MSHA's investigation methods.

"The president of the United States promised we would have a thorough investigation and we would have justice served," Main said. "We are continuing. We're not stopping the investigation process."

Smith and Main will hold a conference call for reporters today to discuss the investigation. An MSHA spokeswoman said they will discuss investigation timelines, the decision to delay public hearings and the release of transcripts, and offer a recap of what they told the families last night in Beckley.

USA: Feds Reveal Theory on Why W.Va. Mine Exploded

Extract from NPR

For four hours Tuesday night, investigators from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) laid out their working theory about what happened April 5, just before a West Virginia coal mine exploded and 29 miners were killed.

And they went through the explosion scenario step-by-step in an MSHA auditorium in Beckley, W.Va., filled with relatives of the victims, some weeping at times, at the painful implications of the evidence.

This was the first family briefing in four months and only family members and their attorneys were invited. Some participants spoke with NPR afterward on the condition they not be named.

Much of what investigators discussed was revealed or leaked out earlier. But it hadn't been pieced together and backed by evidence, participants said. And it pointed to a tragedy that could have been prevented if the Upper Big Branch coal mine complied with federal safety regulations.

MSHA investigators were careful to say that they have not reached final conclusions and noted their final report is still 60 to 90 days away. They deferred to a federal criminal investigation that is still underway. And they reserved the right to adjust their scenario as they continued to analyze their findings. But they presented specialist after specialist who discussed detailed evidence.

One thing they did not do is pinpoint the source of the methane gas that they believe set off the

chain of events that led to the nation's worst coal mine disaster in 40 years.

They noted that Upper Big Branch is a gassy mine with many possible sources of methane and they said they're still working to pinpoint a specific source.

But they seemed confident, meeting participants say, in what the methane set in motion.

The gas seeped into the "tailgate" area of the longwall mining machine working a coal seam deep inside the mine. The longwall's cutting tool, called a shearer, was cutting into both coal and sandstone and sparks were flying. The sparks were worse than usual, the investigators suggested, because some carbide-tipped teeth on the shearer were worn down to bare steel.

Those sparks would have been contained, cooled or extinguished by a system of water sprayers at the shearer but they were not working properly, as NPR has reported. The sprayers also help control coal dust, which is an accelerant when it ignites. So, the investigators said, the combination of sparks, coal dust and methane, and no water, formed a volatile mix.

One of the government's experts told the families most of the mine was lined with excessive coal dust.

So, when methane hit the sparking shearer, a small ignition began. An MSHA official told the crowd that these small methane ignitions are common, occurring somewhere underground as much as once a week, but they rarely evolve into massive explosions.

But at Upper Big Branch, without working water sprayers, the investigators said, the small methane ignition persisted. Floating coal dust fueled it and when it finally blew, the resulting blast was fed by coal dust spread throughout the mine, which explains an explosion that turned corners and killed along a two-mile path.

Officials stopped short of blaming Massey Energy directly but said that the mine was "non-compliant" in multiple ways. They suggested that

the initial ignition would have burned out or been extinguished by the water sprays in 15 seconds had the shearer and its associated equipment and safety systems been maintained as required.

Massey Energy is scheduled to brief the families about its own investigation and conclusions in Charleston, W.Va., Friday. In the past, the company has insisted that the blast was caused and fueled by an unpredictable and natural infusion of methane or natural gas from a crack in the mine floor.

But, an MSHA "flames and forces" expert told the crowd that blast residue and other evidence rule out Massey's theory completely, according to several participants in the meeting.

Some in the crowd suggested MSHA itself was negligent for allowing the mine to operate with deficiencies. But one federal official said the agency did what it could to cite Massey Energy for safety violations and shut down portions of the mine. As deficiencies were addressed, the official said, coal production resumed until new violations triggered additional citations and closures.

One participant said some family members were "reluctantly satisfied" with the presentation and the knowledge that a full and final explanation won't come until after the Justice Department concludes its criminal investigation.

Federal prosecutors have acknowledged the existence of that probe and a federal grand jury has taken testimony but little else is known about the investigation's scope or duration.

MSHA is planning to brief reporters on its investigation in a teleconference set for Wednesday morning.

West Virginia's mine safety agency is also assessing the evidence, as are the United Mine Workers of America and an independent investigative team led by former MSHA official Davitt McAteer, who has also investigated other mine disasters.

Yet another probe by the Labor Department is scrutinizing the federal mine safety agency itself.

Quote of the week



"I never practice; I always play."

Wanda Landowska
(Polish, later French, harpsichordist, 1879-1959)

Thursday 20 January 2011

Chile: Chilean Commission Finds Mines Owners Responsible for Collapse

Extract from MercoPress

The Chilean commission investigating the mining disaster in the Atacama desert last year, has found the owners of the San Jose mine and the National Service of Geology and Mines responsible for the accident and the Chilean government free of any blame.



Alejandro Bohn and Marcelo Kemeny the owners of the San Jose mine

The commission was set up by the Chilean Chamber of Deputies, five months ago, to investigate the accident in northern Chile, which

fortunately caused no deaths. Thirty three miners were trapped underground for 72-days whilst an intense and complex rescue operation was set up, attracting massive, worldwide media attention.

One of the main points of the commission's findings was that primarily responsible are the owners of the mine, Alejandro Bohn and Marcelo Kemeny because "they didn't have adequate safety measures in place, required by the authorities."

One of the members of the commission Deputy Felipe Harboe said "there has clearly been negligence on the part of the company; they offered better salaries, knowing the risks involved. They wanted to replace safety and increase their income, this is not only inhumane but it is unacceptable."

Deputy Carlos Vilches said "it is clear that it was Bohn and Kemeny's responsibility, they even told workers about the risks of working in the mine. They heard the noises, warning that there could be a collapse and didn't let the workers out."

The commission also outlined the responsibility of the National Service of Geology and Mines (Sernageomin), due to their lack of adequate inspections in the mine.

The president of the commission Alejandro Garcia Huidobro outlined "it is very important that we completely reorganise Sernageomin and pertinent authorities. The country needs this and it is what the country's top economic activity requires."

The deputies ruled out political responsibilities, claiming that "when there is an organism such as a public one, those responsible are the people in charge of it; therefore the relationship with the ministries was indirect. That is why we understand that the direct responsibility of anyone from the previous government or the current one does not exist and it is purely the responsibility of the administrative organisms in charge of controls."

This week in mining accident history

21 January 1886

Mountain Brook Mine

Newburg, Preston County, W.Va., USA

Underground coal mine

39 killed, firedamp (methane) explosion

Source: chelledge.wordpress.com

On 21 January 1886, 39 coal miners lost their lives at the Orrel Coal Company in Newburg, Preston Co. WV. At 2:45 that Thursday afternoon an explosion of a gas called fire damp, resulted in the worst disaster in Preston County history.

Ed: This was the first recorded mine disaster in West Virginia.

The following is an extraction of the names of the victims as well as other useful genealogical information taken from the Preston County Journal of January 28, February 4 and 11 of 1886. [These disasters were agonizing for families and whole communities but they brought the coal miners' plight into light and aroused public sympathy. Eventually they forced child labor laws into being and were instrumental in the successful rise of the unions as many who might not have supported unions for other reasons rallied to their cause to force mine owners to ensure safer conditions.]

Clinton ALBRIGHT of Newburg, age 23. Son of David ALBRIGHT and grandson of John ALBRIGHT who lives near Kingwood. Clinton was married 24 December 1885 and is buried at Newburg.

Richard BIRTLEY of Newburg, age 52. Father of Nicholas BIRTLEY, stepfather of Joseph, Harry and Thomas GUY, and stepfather-in-law of John BYER, Jr. The family came from the County Durham, England, some five years earlier and resided in Fairmont until about two months earlier, when they moved to Newburg. Richard leaves a wife and three small children. Nicholas, his son, was 15 years on age in November. Harry GUY, stepson, was 29 years

old, and leaves a wife and child in England. Joseph GUY, a brother of Harry, leaves a wife and was 25 years of age in October last. Thomas GUY, another brother, was 19 years old and unmarried. John BYER, Jr. was 24 on the 29th of last October, and leaves a widow, sister of the GUY brothers. They were all buried at one time at Fairmont on 25 January, 1886.

John CARROLL of Newburg, married. Buried at Newburg.

Michael CLARK of Newburg, not married. Had been in this country for two or three years, and was the only support of an aged father and six children still in Ireland. Buried at Newburg.

John CONAWAY, Jr. of Newburg, age 21. Brother-in-law of Morgan FREEMAN. [He was the son of John Coleman Conaway and Elizabeth Tennessee Metz.] Buried at Barrackville, Marion County. Morgan FREEMAN of Irontown, leaves a wife and one child. Buried at Newburg. [He was married to Cora Alice Conaway who lost her husband and her brother that terrible day.]

John EDWARDS of Newburg, not married. Son of Thomas EDWARDS and brother of Edward EDWARDS who drown in the mine shaft in February, 1884.

A. E. FORTNEY of Newburg, not married. Brother of the wife of Arther OGDEN and of Mrs. Fred BOONE, of Palatine. Buried at Union Church on 27 January, 1886. His parents reside near Shinnston.

Peter HANLEY of Newburg, not married. Brother of Miss Ella HANLEY, a teacher in the Newburg public schools, and the support for his widowed mother. Buried at the Catholic Cemetery, in Grafton, on 27 January, 1886.

John HORNBY of Newburg, not married. Has no relatives in this country. Buried at Newburg.

Joseph JOHNSON of Newburg, was married. Besides his own family, he supported his mother and two small brothers. Buried at Union.

Joseph Ross KELLY of Newburg, leaves a wife and three children in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, from where he came to Newburg. He said he left his wife and decided to stay away until she got a divorce. Buried at Newburg.

Michael J. KENNY of Newburg, not married. He was sole support for his widowed mother and sister. He was the brother of Timothy KENNY, proprietor of the Kenny House at Piedmont, and of Thomas F. KENNY, bookseller and stationer at Piedmont. Buried at Grafton, Taylor Co. in the Catholic cemetery on 27 January, 1886.

Henry LAMBERT of Newburg, brother of John, leaves a wife and one child. Henry and his brother were the only support for their widowed mother. Buried at Newburg. John LAMBERT of Newburg, leaves a wife and one child. Brother of Henry. Buried at Newburg.

William and Frank LAYMIRE Of near Independence. Bill and Frank were twin brothers and started work at the mine on the Monday before the explosion. Had brother who cut his throat in the Asylum at Weston.

James McGOWAN of Newburg, not married. Buried at Newburg.

Albert McWILLIAMS of Newburg, leaves a wife and four children. He was a laborer in the mine. Buried at Newburg.

Daniel MILLER of Newburg, leaves wife and four children. Cageman at bottom of mine shaft. Buried in Newburg cemetery. His 15 year old son J. Bird MILLER, age 15, was a driver of the mules. Buried at Newburg beside his father.

Frank MOON of Newburg, not married. The only support of his old widowed mother. Buried at Newburg. Newton MOORE of Newburg, leaves a wife, the sister of Frank MOON. Buried near Evansville.

Arthur OGDEN of Newburg, leaves a wife and two children. Buried at Union Church on 27 January, 1886. Parents reside near Shinnston.

George RIGGINS of Scotch Hill, leaves a wife and two children. Buried on Scotch Hill.

THE ORREL MINE DISASTER

Wheeling, West Va., Jan 28 – Coroner Jones, of Preston County, to-day began taking testimony in the investigation into the death of the 39 miners who lost their lives in the explosion in the Orrel coal mine at Newburg a week ago.

Superintendent Saxton admitted that the State Mine Inspector had ordered him to put weights on the air doors to prevent them being accidentally left open, which was not done. Mining Boss John Bratt testified that Saxton several times was rendered unfit for duty by intoxication. The inquest will not be concluded before Saturday.

Extract from *The New York Times*.

Published 29 Jan. 1886.

Friday 21 January 2011

S.Africa: Mine death at Bambanani

Extract from MiningReview.com

Johannesburg, South Africa - The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has revealed that a winch operator has died after a ground fall at Harmony Gold Mining Company's Bambanani mine in the Free State.

The fall happened almost 3 000m below the surface in a stope panel last night, and the miner's body was recovered in the early hours of the morning, it said. Harmony said that operations had been stopped until such time as all investigations into the accident had been completed.

"It took four hours for the body to be recovered as the deceased had been completely covered by rocks," said NUM national secretary for health and safety Erick Gcilitshana.

The union pointed to fatalities already reported in 2011, including the death of a continuous miner operator at Sigma Colliery in the Free State after a ground fall on 6 January; the death of a miner at Northam Platinum at Four Level following a mud rush on 9 January; and the

death of a winch operator on 13 January after an explosion during cleaning operations at Rustenburg Platinum Mines' Dishaba mine.

On 17 January, a worker died at Xstrata Wonderkop, after being caught between a motor and a handrail when a skip broke, while on 18 January a miner fell from the stage to the bottom of a shaft (about 70m) and died at Goldfields' South Deep mine.

The NUM said it was disappointed by the figures "and angry that the captains of the mining industry, as represented by the Chamber of Mines, refer to all these deaths as 'improvement'.

Saturday 22 January 2011

One killed, four injured in mine blast in Georgia

Extract from RIA Novosti

One miner was killed and another four received injuries as a blast struck a coal mine in western Georgia on early Saturday, the Imedi TV channel said.

The explosion occurred in the Mindeli mine of the city of Tkibuli at 00.10 a.m. local time and, according to preliminary data, was caused by gas leak.

The injured miners were transferred to hospital in Tbilisi.

The Mindeli mine has been operating since 1973. In 2010, two explosions took place there. All the incidents were caused by violation of safety rules.

Monday 24 January 2011

QLD: Inquiry into flooding of underground coal mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Mining company Anglo American says it is investigating what caused water to inundate part of an underground coal mine near Middlemount,

north-west of Rockhampton in central Queensland.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) says an on-site dam storing water at the Grasree mine broke its bank on Thursday, allowing water to gush into the mine.

The CFMEU says three employees had to climb onto machinery in the mine to avoid being swept away.

An Anglo American spokeswoman says no-one was injured and the Mines Inspectorate has been notified.

Tuesday 25 January 2011

S.Africa: Two killed in North West mine accidents

Extract from Sowetan Live

TWO miners were killed at mines in Rustenburg, North West, at the weekend, prompting the National Union of Mine-workers to label the mining industry the new killing fields for its workers.

The deaths, on Saturday and Sunday, bring to nine the number of workers killed while working underground in the first few weeks of this year.

NUM spokesperson Lesiba Seshoka said yesterday that the trade union was pinning its hopes on the amendment of the Mine Health and Safety Act, which would be promulgated this year.

The act would make industry chief executives and their managers criminally liable if found guilty of negligence, causing serious injuries or death.

"Such a high number of deaths in the mines reflects a new culture in which mines have become killing fields in this country.

"We hope the amendment of the Mine Health and Safety Act will solve this problem because it will bring punitive measures in case of serious injuries or death if found that the mine had been negligent," said Seshoka.

A worker died at Samancor Millsell Chrome mine on Saturday, in what is reported to be a fall of ground. The miner died while trying to prevent a rock that had dislodged from falling. Instead it fell on him.

Samancor spokesperson Sunel Pretorius promised to talk to Sowetan later about the details of the incident, but did not, despite numerous attempts to reach her.

In another incident on Sunday, DJ Drotsky, 29, a surveyor at Anglo Platinum's Thembelani 1, died in an ore-pass shaft while clearing an obstruction.

Mine spokesperson Thabisile Phumo said a full investigation was being conducted to establish what could have caused the accident.

Zambia: Vedanta Resources worker injured Konkola Copper Mine

Extract from www.steelguru.com

A contractor working for Vedanta Resources Plc owned Konkola Copper Mine in Zambia sustained serious injuries on January 21 while on duty at Nchanga Smelter in Chingola, a mining town in the Southern African nation.

KCM spokesperson Jacqueline Kabeta said in a statement that the contractor; Arnold Malama was severely injured at Nchanga smelter around 11.30 local time while working at the operative on that day.

The accident happened when Malama's safety harness got caught in the electrical hammer, trapping him as he was working at the Electrostatic Precipitator.

His right leg was severed just under the knee and he suffered multiple fractures to the right arm. He is currently hospitalised at the Nchanga South Hospital.

KCM, recently recognized by a British safety company for its high standard of safety, regretted the incident and pledged to continue upholding safety measures to ensure employees

were protected in future in accordance to its set rules and regulations.

Zambia's leading copper producer aims to be a world-leading producer and supplier of Copper and the by-products; Cobalt alloy and Sulphuric acid and intermediate products: concentrates of Copper, Cobalt, Pyrite and Copper anodes of quality, to meet the contractual requirements of all customers in every respect and to restore and sustain profitability in the operations.

It also aims to maintain a system that complies with the requirements of OHSAS 18001-Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems, ISO 14001 - Environmental Management System and ISO 9001 - Quality Management System and to continually improve the effectiveness by regular reviews of the systems Konkola Copper Mines plc will uphold the values of good corporate citizenship and seek to contribute to the wider economic, social and environmental well being of Zambia.

According to data, KCM, in its quest to give practical expression to the Vision of the company and to measure its progress, the company devised among other measures, achieve Zero Fatality and Zero Lost Time Injuries status through continuation of Near miss capturing and closure management and RAMP K for all critical jobs. Benchmark our Safety Management Systems against international best practice.

Other objectives include identifying eliminating or controlling safety risks in the workplace and the environment. Others are identifying training needs and fulfillment of scheduled training programs to ensure all jobs are performed by qualified and competent personnel.

Ensure compliance to all relevant Mining and Explosives Regulations and all KCM safe operating procedures, rules, through identification and implementation of all relevant legal and domestic standards/directives.

Ensure continuous Sustainability of the OHSAS 18001 standard and attain a five star certification from the current three stars rating at all IBUs.

UK: Mineworker killed at National Coal Mining Museum

Extract from BBC News Bradford, UK

A man has died while working underground at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield.



The museum will remain closed until Thursday

The museum said the mineworker was employed by contractors extending an underground roadway when it is believed he became trapped by machinery.

An investigation is under way by the Health and Safety Executive's Mines Inspectorate and West Yorkshire Police.

A statement from the former Caphouse Colliery at Overton said the museum was "very saddened" by the incident.

The museum was closed on Tuesday and will remain shut on Wednesday "as a mark of respect".

NZ: Pike families hopeful after being shown more mine footage

Extract from TVNZ

Video shown to the families of the 29 men who died in the Pike River mine explosion has offered them new hope that the remains of the men could still be recovered.

The footage from deep inside the mine was shown to family members last night. It shows parts of the mine were not damaged in the explosions.

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn says the new film, shot by a camera down a bore hole, gives the families some renewed hope.

"There is definitely a good chance that a lot of the bodies in there are still in a better condition than what we thought originally," he said.

Kokshoorn said some parts of the ceiling have collapsed onto the floor, and ladders can be seen flipped over.

He said the cement paper-type coating on dust bags was still intact.

Families spokesman Bernie Monk, whose son Michael was among the victims, said that the area looked untouched.

"It showed no explosion sort of burning or anything like that so obviously the explosion didn't reach that part of the mine.

"You could see grating on the floor that was still intact and in another part you could see a ladder on the ground," he said.

Kokshoorn says it was hard for the families not to make their own decisions on whether the mine was safe to enter after viewing the new footage.

"I think the conclusions the families are drawing from that video is that there is hope of recovering the remains of their loved ones down that mine."

More video footage is expected to come from three new bore holes being drilled by the receivers.

Tools for monitoring gas and heat levels will also be lowered into the mine.

"We want to be able to also see what's happened down there so the cameras will assist in determining what the state of the mine is," receiver John Fisk said.

Although the footage gave the families something new to hold onto, it will be at least a month before a recovery team could even consider going in.

Because of the ongoing police investigation and the Royal Commission of Inquiry, police say the video footage cannot be released to the public at this stage.

Meanwhile a song written and sung by Tracy Cameron, the fiancée of Neville Rockhouse, whose son Ben died in the mine but whose elder son Daniel survived, is going viral on the internet.

Neville Rockhouse was the Pike River Mine safety manager and the song is his tribute to Ben. It was sent into More FM with an email that implored authorities to continue to work towards bringing Ben and the other 28 miners out of the mine.

Wednesday 26 January 2011

Colombia coal mine blast kills 20

Extract from Reuters

An explosion at an underground coal mine in northeast Colombia killed 20 workers on Wednesday, officials said, in the latest accident to hit the mining industry in Latin America.

Colombia is the world's No. 5 coal exporter, with an industry dominated by open-pit thermal players, but smaller mines in the center of the Andean nation usually work underground where methane gas buildups can cause accidents.

An official at the mining regulator Ingeominas said the latest blast, in Norte de Santander province, was probably caused by methane.

"They've just told me there are 20 dead and six wounded," Marisa Fernandez told Reuters by telephone.

Local officials and Colombia's Red Cross said five bodies had been recovered.

Yamile Rangel, mayor of Sardinata municipality, said 16 people were still trapped in the mine but Red Cross officials said there was little chance of them being alive.

The explosion was the latest in a series of mine accidents round South America, including a collapse in Chile in August that buried 33 workers until they were rescued to international jubilation after two months underground.

In June, a blast killed 70 miners in Colombia and, in November, nine people died at two small coal mines in Colombia's Cundinamarca province.

Despite the recent run of accidents, conditions for workers in Latin America's mines have improved radically in recent decades from the nightmarish conditions of past centuries after Spanish conquistadors began a hunt for gold.

The modern-day industry has helped fuel an economic boom in some nations, including Colombia, where mining is one of the main generators of foreign exchange.

Thursday 27 January 2011

Trinidad: A working life spent keeping miners safe

Extract from The Trinidad Times

The deep, dark places far underground where coal is found can be truly scary. The possibility of deadly accidents is a constant threat, and one Trinidad man has devoted much of his working life to ensuring the safety of miners.

Florie Massarotti's job was to train those laboring in the mining industry about using proper safety equipment and procedures to lessen the dangers of working to extract coal and other minerals from their locations under the surface of the earth. He has a vast collection of safety equipment at his home, using them as visual aids in presentations to groups of miners around Colorado. Safety training videos, along with articles and books are other means of teaching miners about the hazards of their perilous jobs.



Blowing into an anemometer, Florie Massarotti demonstrates how the device measures air circulation. He uses this and many other devices as part of his job as a safety trainer and mine safety inspector.

He began working at the Allen Mine west of Trinidad in September 1968. He worked as a junior engineer, drilling holes in the mine's roof with a hand-powered jack. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1969. He asked the mine's superintendent if he could work in the safety department four years later, and spent a year as a safety inspector. On June 1, 1974, he was named chief mine inspector for the Allen Mine, which at that time was owned by Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I). He was later transferred to the Maxwell mine, three miles east of the Allen mine, becoming safety director for both mines. He had worked at the Maxwell mine site in the early 1950's, helping get the operation up and running.

"They were what were called captive mines. All the coal mined there went to the steel mills in Pueblo, which were also owned by CF&I. My job was to help prevent injuries and fatalities. Then I got a call and they told me they were going to send me down to the Maxwell mine as assistant mine foreman. I really didn't want to do that. The place was really a mess. When you first start to mine, there's water up to here all the time. We got things straightened out at the mine and then in 1980 I got another phone call. They wanted me to be the assistant mine superintendent at the Maxwell mine, so I did that. Then in 1983 we couldn't sell our coal anymore. The mine was sold to Wyoming Fuel. This is a very high grade

of coal. Everybody wants the coal. That's why they are mining out there right now. The ash and sulphur contents are very low. They built a wash plant at the Allen mine, which further reduces the ash content. The problem was that the cement plants, which use a lot of coal, wanted a high ash content and we didn't have that."

The 1977 law updating mining safety laws, called the amendments act, is an excellent system for protecting miners on the job. Massarotti said the problem comes with implementing and enforcing the law.

"When I worked for CF&I, I had absolute authority when it came to safety issues. If I saw someone working in an unsafe manner, I could suspend them on my own authority. The company wanted me to do that. I tried to do that in a professional way. I told them that they might not understand the law. They might be violating the law and not even know it. I explained things. Training, training is the key to everything. I was very strict. The last guy I pulled out of the Maxwell mine had his whole arm torn off, and I stopped the bleeding. I never want to have to do that again."

If he saw a miner working in a dangerous way, he would give them a verbal warning, followed by a written warning if the problem persisted. Finally, he would dismiss miners whose work habits endangered their own safety and the safety of their co-workers.

Underground mines are required by law to have exhaust shafts equipped with exhaust fans, which move air contaminated with methane or other gases to the surface. Fresh air then rushes in to replace the bad air. The fresh air is always supposed to be at the miner's back, which limits the amount of coal dust absorbed by the miners working at the coalface. Some mines use a pressure system, which forces fresh air in the direction of the coalface. A steady stream of water is also critical to safe mining. The water is sprayed onto the coal as it is broken loose from the coalface, preventing coal dust from getting into the air and damaging the respiratory

systems of the miners. Massarotti said he quit working for the mining companies when he realized that some of them were not as committed to miner safety as CF&I.

He began working for Trinidad State Junior College as the head of the school's mining technology program and was also on the state board of examiners, whose primary concern was miner safety. The board conducted tests on air circulation in mines using various equipment, including anemometers, which measure air-flow. Detailed maps show the entire pattern of the underground system, including exhaust shafts, return shafts and water lines.

"I was very fortunate in that I got to work with the old mine foremen and the coalface bosses. You didn't have to know a whole hell of a lot, because the men knew what they were doing. The generations have changed and now if you have a face boss who doesn't know what he's doing, then the men aren't going to know what they're doing."

The danger of the roof of a mineshaft collapsing is one of the most hazardous aspects of working below ground. Massarotti displayed an instrument with a bar that drops down when it feels a certain level of vibration, warning miners that the surface above their heads has become unstable. Modern methods of preventing mine collapses include a roof drill, which uses a turnbuckle to drive a shaft into the roof at a 45-degree angle, thus relieving pressure on mineshaft's roof. Detailed plans have to be submitted to the federal Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA) before mining companies can go ahead with their operations. Still, accidents continue to happen, and Massarotti said he wonders why. He cited the recent example of an explosion at a Utah mine that cost several miners their lives.

"If any trace of methane is detected at a mine, it is classified as a gassy mine. That means you are supposed to run your exhaust fans constantly, even on the weekends when no mining is going on. The only time the fans are

supposed to be shut off is for a planned event, where there isn't going to be anybody in the mine. They are going to check it, service it, or whatever. That didn't happen at the mine in Utah. They shut the fans off over the weekend, and the methane gas began to build up. It takes three hours for the air to stabilize after the fans are turned back on. They started mining early in the morning and that's when the accident happened, before the air in the mine was cleared. Twelve men lost their lives and I have to wonder why. I don't blame the miners or even the mining companies, really. They had to have submitted a plan that included them shutting off the fans over the weekend, or they never could have operated that way. Who could possibly have approved that plan? The government, okay? They had a mobile rescue unit in that mine, it cost them \$38,000. But it was too far back, away from the coalface, and they couldn't get to it when they needed it. They used to laugh at me, you know? We had a mobile rescue unit long before anybody had ever heard of such a thing. The problem is that the government bureaucrats who oversee mining are not miners themselves. They don't know much about what actually goes on in a mine."

Mining companies come under fire from environmentalists, labor unions and other groups, who claim they are careless when it comes to safety issues and environmental concerns. Massarotti said most of the mining companies he has worked with have an excellent track record on these issues.

"A lot of people criticized CF&I, but you won't hear that from me. The people who owned the York Canyon mine were very good as well. I actually was asked by the management of the York Canyon mine to go down into the mine, at the Cimarron seam, and help train their miners on how to recognize potential hazards. The company had me do that because they wanted their people to work safely, and they didn't want to get cited by MSHA for violations. People say the companies don't give a damn, and that's not true. Some are bad, that's true, but mostly they

run good operations. There are a lot good people working in the mines, and they just want to work. Most of these miners aren't asking for too much. They want a safe environment, good working conditions and a chance to make a decent living. That's really all they want."

NZ: Pike River disaster inquest begins today

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The inquest into the death of 29 men in New Zealand's Pike River Coal mine gets underway today.

Two Australians were among those who died after a series of explosions rocked the west coast mine in November.

The country's chief coroner will preside over the inquest, which he says will be limited so as not to prejudice a royal commission into the disaster.

The coroner's office says the inquest will confirm the identity of the men and determine the time and cause of death so that death certificates can be issued.

The coroner is expected to hear from medical and mine experts as well as the general manager of Pike River Coal and police Superintendent Gary Knowles, who ran the rescue and recovery operation.

The inquest may run into tomorrow.

An operation to recover the miners' remains continues.

Millions pledged for NSW asbestos mine clean-up

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The New South Wales Government has pledged \$6.3 million for remediation work at the Woodsreef asbestos mine, in the state's north west.

The promise comes three months after the state's Ombudsman released a scathing report

highlighting the threat the site posed to the nearby township of Barraba.



Piles of asbestos and rusting equipment at the abandoned Woodsreef mine. (NSW Ombudsman)

The report outlined the dangers of 75-metre tall silo towers of asbestos tailings, open cut pits filled with water and an eight-storey building still full of asbestos.

The promised funds would pay to remove the silos, demolish the building and establish air monitoring.



A public road runs beside the abandoned asbestos mine (NSW Ombudsman)



Broken bags of asbestos lie in an abandoned mine (NSW Ombudsman)

Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan says the funding would also restrict access to the mine.

"Even though there was good signage and gates and things, unfortunately people were still accessing the site and in some cases were vandalising or just tampering with remains of asbestos produces in the area or buildings," Mr Whan said.

"We want to see the works done. They certainly won't be stopped for lack of money."

The Local MP for Tamworth, Independent Peter Draper, says he is pleased the government has finally decided to act, 30 years after the mine was abandoned.

"While I thank the minister for releasing \$6.3 million, we do have an election coming up in March," Mr Draper said.

"So I'm looking for both sides of politics to put this issue above political point scoring.

"Both sides, should more money need to be committed to the project, should make that commitment prior to the election because the people of Barraba most certainly deserve it."

The Opposition has already promised to spend \$5.5 million on the site if it wins government.

NZ: Pike River miners likely dead within minutes

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

An inquest into the deaths of 29 miners in New Zealand's Pike River coal mine disaster has been told they probably died within minutes of the first explosion.

Two Australians were among those killed when a series of explosions rocked the west coast mine in November.

The opening day of the inquest into their deaths heard the police officer who led the rescue and recovery operation read out evidence from medical and mine experts.

Police Superintendent Gary Knowles said a group of experts went to the mine five days after

the first blast to determine if any miners could have survived.

They reported the miners would possibly have been subject to asphyxiation, poisoning by carbon monoxide, burns due to temperatures up to 2,000 degrees Celsius, and trauma from blast waves and flying debris.

Dr Robin Griffiths, the director of occupational and aviation medicine at the University of Otago, found that if oxygen levels were less than 8 per cent - and possibly as low as 1 per cent - the men would have lost consciousness immediately and died within five minutes.

New Zealand's chief coroner is presiding over the inquest, which is being limited so as not to prejudice a royal commission into the disaster.

The inquest will confirm the identity of the men and determine the time and cause of death so that death certificates can be issued.

An operation to recover the miners' remains continues.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AIRWAY

Underground passageway along which air passes.



Testing for gas in airway, mine cave-in, 1798

-Ed