



Mining Accident News No.1104

28 January to 6 February 2011

In this issue:

Colombia: All bodies recovered from mine disaster	1
USA: Name Released of Man Killed in Wyoming County Coal Mine.....	1
UK: National Coal Mining Museum victim named as inquest into tragedy launched	2
USA: Mine Operator Says That Huge Seep Caused Blast	2
Quote of the week	3
This week in mining accident history (1)	3
USA: MSHA to propose mine safety rule Monday aimed at repeat offenders.....	4
Qld: Call to urgently pump water out of flooded mines	4
USA: Tighter Mine-Safety Rule Proposed by U.S. to Revamp Oversight.....	5
Another body found at Siberian mine months after blast.....	6
S.Africa: Gold Fields shuts Driefontein shafts after fatal accident	6
QLD: Xstrata workers get out as cyclone looms	7
S.Africa: Harmony Says Its Tshepong Mine Still Operating After Worker Dies.....	7
5 killed in Colombia coal mine blast	7
USA: Fatal Mine Accident Totally Preventable..	7
Tanzania: Four die as sand mine caves in.....	8
Ireland: Man dies in blast at Tipperary mine	8
Canada: Manitou Gold Reports Accident Resulting in Fatality.....	9
USA: Man Dead at McElroy Mine in Marshall County	9
This week in mining accident history (2)	9
Romania mine blast kills five	10
Mexico Closes Mine After 2 Deaths.....	11
Mining dictionary	11

Friday 28 January 2011

Colombia: All bodies recovered from mine disaster

Extract from Colombia Reports



Rescue workers have recovered the bodies of all 21 people killed in a north Colombian mining accident Wednesday morning, El Tiempo reported Thursday.

Mine official Luis Alfonso Solorzano told the newspaper that the work was encumbered by pockets of methane gas in the mine shafts.

Colombia's minister of mining and energy ordered the permanent closure of the La Preciosa after the explosion and President Juan Manuel Santos has cut his meetings in Davos, Switzerland, short in order to meet the families of the victims.

USA: Name Released of Man Killed in Wyoming County Coal Mine

Extract from 59WVNS, USA

The victim has been identified as John C. Lester Jr., 19, of Wyoming County.

PINEVILLE -- **UPDATE**

Officials have released the name of a man killed in an accident at a Wyoming County coal mine.

The victim has been identified as John C. Lester Jr., 19, of Wyoming County.

Officials with the West Virginia Department of Commerce said the accident happened on the belt line at the Baylor Mining Jim's Branch 3A Mine at about 12:30 p.m. Thursday.

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

The mine is located near Pineville.

Andrea Bond, with the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, said Lester was a red hat with more than 90 days of experience.

The mine is closed while the investigation is under way.

UK: National Coal Mining Museum victim named as inquest into tragedy launched

Extract from The Huddersfield Daily Examiner

THE victim of a tragic underground accident at the National Coal Mining Museum has been named as Michael Buckingham from Grimethorpe, Barnsley.

The 58-year-old died while working on new shafts at the popular museum.

An inquest into his death will open in Wakefield today.

It is expected to be a brief hearing and will then be adjourned in order for full inquiries into the tragedy to be carried out.

The 58-year-old man is thought to have been crushed by heavy equipment deep below ground at the former pit between Grange Moor and Middlestown.

Museum officials have closed underground sections of the site but facilities above the surface are all now open after Tuesday's tragedy.

The investigation into the man's death is being handled by the Health and Safety Executive.

USA: Mine Operator Says That Huge Seep Caused Blast

Extract from The New York Times, USA

WASHINGTON — The company that operates a West Virginia coal mine on Friday disputed a preliminary federal finding that poor mining practices and improper equipment maintenance led to an explosion that killed 29 miners last year.

Massey Energy, operator of the Upper Big Branch mine, said that the blast was fuelled by a seep of natural gas from the mine floor that might have been ignited by sparks from a coal-cutting tool in use on the mine's face. That conclusion contradicted the findings of federal investigators.

The company, whose image and finances have been battered since the explosion, has welcomed takeover offers and is seeking to avoid liability for the April 5 accident. The Justice Department is conducting criminal and civil investigations to address questions of negligence and culpability.

Federal regulators said they found no evidence of a major leak of methane or natural gas inside the mine, and they attributed the explosion to a buildup of highly combustible coal dust that was ignited by a small methane flare-up.

Neither the company nor the government has identified the source of the spark that touched off the blast, which rippled through two miles of underground tunnels.

Officials of the Mine Safety and Health Administration said last week that their six-month investigation had concluded that the explosion was a preventable accident caused by poor coal dust control, inadequate ventilation and shoddy maintenance of the coal-cutting tool, known as a shearer. They noted that Massey had received hundreds of citations for violations of federal mine safety rules at Upper Big Branch.

The mine safety officials said that their inquiry was continuing and that they would have more definitive conclusions by April. Justice Department officials have given no timetable for the completion of their investigations.

Shane Harvey, Massey's vice president and general counsel, took issue with each of the government's primary findings in a conference call with reporters on Friday. Massey officials also presented their findings on Friday to the family members of those killed in the blast.

Mr. Harvey said the company believed that the explosion was caused by natural gas pouring into the mine, citing a sharp increase in the presence of a mixture of methane and ethane gas found both inside and outside the mine in the days after the accident. He said that there had been adequate air flow in the mine tunnels near the coal face but that the volume of natural gas had “overwhelmed” the ventilation system.

He said that the company had followed proper steps in controlling coal dust and that the buildup of black dust discovered after the accident was the residue of the explosion.

Mr. Harvey also said that the worn drill bits and broken water sprayers found by federal investigators had not contributed to the accident.

The federal mine safety agency reiterated on Friday that it had found no evidence of a big methane explosion and that its investigators believed that the heavy coating of coal dust found throughout the mine was typical of conditions before the explosion, and not caused by it.

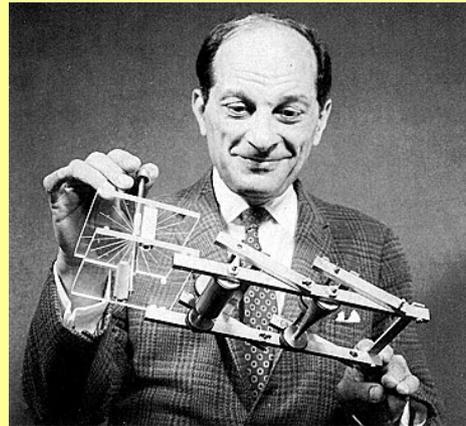
Officials also said that the water sprays on the coal-cutting machine were not in compliance with federal regulations and were incapable of extinguishing any sparks that might have been created by dull drill bits on the tool.

Asked why his findings were so different from the government’s, Mr. Harvey said, “We all have access to the same evidence, so I guess reasonable minds can disagree.”

“The government drew its conclusions — ours are different. I can’t tell you why,” he said. “I can just tell you they are.”

This week, West Virginia’s two senators, John D. Rockefeller IV and Joe Manchin III, both Democrats, introduced legislation to tighten federal mine safety laws. The bill, named for Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, who died in June, would provide greater protection for mine whistle-blowers, increase fines for companies that violate safety standards and open mine records to public scrutiny.

Quote of the week



“It is still an unending source of surprise for me how a few scribbles on a blackboard or on a piece of paper can change the course of human affairs.”

Stanislaw Ulam
(American mathematician of Polish-Jewish origin, who participated in the Manhattan Project and originated the Teller–Ulam design of thermonuclear weapons, 1909-1984)

This week in mining accident history (1)

23 January 1907

Primero Mine

Primero, Colorado, USA

Underground coal mine

20 killed, methane explosion

Source: www.3gendisasters.com/colorado

TWENTY LIVES GO OUT IN A MINE EXPLOSION OVER IN COLORADO

Trinidad, Colo., --Twenty miners, according to the authentic information available his evening, lost their lives as a result of an explosion which occurred at three o'clock this morning in the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's Coal mine near Primero, twenty miles west of this city.

Twenty coffins have been ordered by the company from a local undertaking establishment.

Two of the dead are Frank Hobat, miner, and R. J. Lumbey, fire boss. The names of the other men killed have not been learned, as the shift boss, who had charge of the men who went into the mine last night, is missing. All the men

except Lumley were foreigners, most of them being Italians.

The explosion stopped the air fan, which was not repaired until late today, and there is little chance that any of the men in the mine at the time of the explosion are still alive.

District Superintendent Robert O'Neil is personally directing the work of rescue. Volunteers from adjacent mines are assisting. Rescuers have been divided into two hour shifts and work will be kept up continuously until the entire mine is explored.

During the entire day excitement ran high and relatives of the entombed miners stood waiting at the entrance to the mine for a sight of any of the victims that might be brought to the surface.

The damage to the mine cannot be learned tonight.

An attempt is being made to force air into the mine in the hope that some of the entombed men may be alive, and thus prevent their suffocating.

Late advices are that the mine is badly wrecked. The rescue party has penetrated three hundred feet and recovered four bodies, the names not being given.

Daily Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV 24 Jan 1907

Sunday 30 January 2011

USA: MSHA to propose mine safety rule Monday aimed at repeat offenders

Extract from Platts

The US Mine Safety and Health Administration will propose a rule Monday to strengthen regulators' ability to penalize and close mines that repeatedly run afoul of federal health and safety standards, multiple sources told Platts on Friday.

The rule will overhaul the agency's pattern of violation system, which has been criticized as

being an ineffective regulatory tool by lawmakers and agency officials, as well as industry and labor groups, according to people who have reviewed the proposal.

The rule is expected to closely resemble legislation by Representative George Miller, Democrat-California, that failed to clear the US House of Representatives during the last Congress, according to a person familiar with the rule's language. The agency placed the rule on its regulatory agenda after Republican lawmakers defeated the measure in both chambers of Congress.

The Miller bill, prompted by the deadly explosion at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch mine, would have allowed regulators to double the normal monetary penalties of citations and orders for mines that fell into pattern of violation or POV status. It also would have given MSHA additional authority to close down mines that did not improve their safety record after falling into a POV.

The bill was heavily backed by the United Mine Workers of America, which on Friday cheered the pending release of the rule, which will be published in the Federal Register.

"We are happy that MSHA is taking this step that will help the agency enhance its enforcement on consistently bad actors in the coal industry," Phil Smith, a spokesman, said. "We think this is an important step forward."

An MSHA spokeswoman declined to comment.

The National Mining Association had not seen the rule and declined to comment.

Monday 31 January 2011

Qld: Call to urgently pump water out of flooded mines

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Mine operators say they urgently need permission to pump water out of flooded sites to prevent environmental damage.

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) says about a dozen coal mines remain closed and about 30 others are operating at reduced capacity due to recent flooding.

It also says the severe weather conditions from Tropical Cyclone Anthony forced the closure of commercial shipping ports at Townsville, Mackay, Hay Point and Abbot Point.

QRC chief executive officer Michael Roche says it is an unwelcome disruption for many coal exporters who were just beginning to recover from flood losses.



Mr Roche says with more rain on the way, the mining industry needs government approval to pump water out of sites and into creeks. (ABC TV News - file image)

"These are ports which in total produce exports of 140 million tonnes of coal every year," he said.

"Every day that's out of action is the best part of a million tonnes of coal that are just simply not getting to market, so that's a disruption that we don't welcome."

Mr Roche says with more rain on the way, the industry needs government approval to pump water out of sites and into creeks.

"We're talking about mine dams that simply overflow, mine pits where the water might flow across the countryside and perhaps into local creeks," he said.

"We would much rather undertake controlled releases where we know what quality of water is going into the local environment and won't do long-term damage to the environment."

Mr Roche says rain associated with ex-Tropical Cyclone Anthony and the potential for a second cyclone, poses considerable problems for the coal industry.

He says many coal mines in central Queensland are still grappling with a bad start to the year.

"The bigger disruption facing coal mines is the amount of water they're holding already," he said.

"With two cyclones bearing down on Queensland and with so many coal mines already full of water, we really need the Queensland Government to lift the current restrictions on releases of water from coal mines."

Mr Roche fears some of the state's coal ports may remain closed for weeks as more bad weather batters the coast.

He says it is another blow for the state's coal industry, with ports to remain closed until all cyclone threats have passed.

"It could be at least a couple of weeks if it turns out that the second cyclone is in fact heading broadly in that same central to north Queensland zone," he said.

"We're still looking for more details on that, but that's the sort of disruption we'll have to deal with."

Tuesday 1 February 2011

USA: Tighter Mine-Safety Rule Proposed by U.S. to Revamp Oversight

Extract from Bloomberg.com

The Obama administration proposed tighter rules that will let regulators shut down and penalize coal mines with repeated safety violations after last year's fatal explosion at a Massey Energy Co. coal mine.

"This regulation is the next critical step in reforming the enforcement program," Joe Main, head of the Mine Safety and Health

Administration, said today on a conference call during which he said the “system is broken.” The regulation would “require mine operators to be much more proactive in monitoring their compliance performance.”

U.S. regulators are seeking to revamp a system under which Massey, owner of a West Virginia mine where 29 workers died last year, and other companies appeal violations to delay or avoid stricter safety-enforcement actions based on repeated citations for safety lapses.

Lawmakers and regulators are weighing steps to boost safety after the April 5 blast ripped Massey's Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, the worst U.S. mine accident in 40 years. The mine was cited for deficiencies in ventilation and a buildup of combustible coal dust before the explosion.

Stepped up inspections and penalties exacted a price from mining companies, including International Coal Group Inc. and Patriot Coal Corp. The coal industry lost about \$665 million in productivity last year, based on data from Wood Mackenzie Consultants Ltd. based in Edinburgh.

The U.S. proposal would specify the criteria MSHA would use when identifying mines with a pattern of violations, which would be subject to additional inspections. Regulators would review the operator's record of compliance, accidents, injuries and illnesses.

Alpha Natural Resources Inc., the third-biggest U.S. coal producer, said in a Jan. 29 statement that it agreed to buy Massey for about \$7.1 billion in cash and stock, gaining the third-largest coal company in the U.S. Central Appalachian region.

Another body found at Siberian mine months after blast

Extract from RIA Novosti

Rescuers have uncovered another body of a miner killed in a deadly methane blast at a

Siberian coalmine last year, local officials said on Tuesday.

So far, a total of 79 bodies have been discovered, while 12 others are still missing.

Last week, another two bodies were found at the Rospadskaya mine, located in the town of Mezhdurechensk in Siberia's Kemerovo region.

Kuzbass governor, Aman Tuleev, said the search operation would continue until the last body was found.

Rospadskaya, one of Russia's largest coalmines, was hit by two consecutive methane blasts in May, 2010, the second taking the lives of rescue workers sent in after the initial explosion.

S.Africa: Gold Fields shuts Driefontein shafts after fatal accident

Extract from miningweekly.com

JOHANNESBURG – JSE-listed Gold Fields on Tuesday confirmed a fatality at its Driefontein mine outside Carletonville.

Spokesperson Sven Lunsche told Mining Weekly Online that a worker died in a fall of ground accident early on Tuesday, after which Goldfields had closed the western section of the mine. Shafts 6, 7, 8 and 10 would remain closed until an inspection was completed.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said that 12 people have died in the country's mines in January alone, with the latest fatality bringing the figure to 13.

The NUM reiterated its call for company officials to be arrested when workers died in preventable accidents, said national secretary for health and safety, Erick Gcilitshana.

“We will forge ahead with the campaign to ensure the necessary amendments to the Mine, Health and Safety Act are put in place for the prosecution of mine bosses,” he added.

Wednesday 2 February 2011

QLD: Xstrata workers get out as cyclone looms

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Mining companies across Queensland's north are also preparing for severe weather as category five Cyclone Yasi approaches the coast.

Xstrata spokesman Myles Johnston says teams are working at the Ernest Henry mine site near Cloncurry to ensure the site is well prepared for any significant rain from the cyclone.

"As a site base response, we've got a recovery and response team that have already assembled and we do a fair bit of preparation for wet season events every year," he said.

"We've been through that process and in response to Cyclone Yasi we've made efforts for our workforce, our fly-in, fly-out workforce, to return home to their families and prepare for the cyclone."

S.Africa: Harmony Says Its Tshepong Mine Still Operating After Worker Dies

Extract from Bloomberg Businessweek

Harmony Gold Mining Ltd. said operations at its Tshepong mine in South Africa's Free State province are continuing after a worker collapsed and died.

"There is no immediate evidence of an accident and investigations are taking place," spokeswoman Henrika Basterfield said in an e-mailed response to questions today. "The operations are still continuing and have not been stopped."

5 killed in Colombia coal mine blast

Extract from PressTV,

An explosion in a coal mine in Colombia has killed at least five miners, a few days after the government promised to overhaul

workplace safety measures following a string of similar incidents.



The blast took place at La Escondida coal mine in the central province of Cundinamarca on Tuesday, Reuters reported.

Local authorities have blamed the blast on the concentration of methane deep inside the mine.

This comes less than a week after a similar disaster in another mine in northeast Colombia which left 21 miners dead, prompting the government to call for a mine safety review.

"We must massively reinforce mine safety measures... I am going to give instructions for a detailed review of all the regulations and their enforcement," Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said after the accident.

Colombia's Mines Minister Carlos Rodado pointed to a glaring lack of resources, saying the government must thoroughly rethink its oversight of the industry.

A total of 173 people lost their lives in more than 80 mining-related accidents last year in Colombia, which is the world's fifth largest exporter of coal, and a big producer of gold, oil and gas.

Colombia produced 75 million tons of coal last year, being the fifth in rank after Indonesia, Australia, Russia and South Africa.

USA: Fatal Mine Accident Totally Preventable

Comment from MetroNews, W.Va, USA

It never should have happened. That's state Mine Health, Safety and Training Acting Director

C.A. Phillips take on last week's accident at a Wyoming County mine that claimed the life of a red hat miner with just a few months on the job.

"When a 19-year-old coal miner loses his life in the coal mines, it's hard to take. I've been around this business for 41 years and it's very hard," Phillips told MetroNews Wednesday at the West Virginia Mining Symposium taking place in Charleston.

Last week's accident at Baylor Mining's Jim's Branch operation claimed the life of John C. Lester, Jr., 19.

Phillips says the accident was entirely preventable.

"We're uncertain as to what happened but we know he got on the belt line and lost his life. That should have never happened," Phillips said.

Investigators with the state Mine Safety Office are re-interviewing several co-workers this week to get more details about the incident.

Phillips says this tragedy is a perfect example of why an old practice in the mining industry needs to change.

"Our law allows a red hat to be working by himself. I really think we need to work to try and change that law," he said.

A red hat miner has less than six months training and has not yet completed 80 hours of underground mining instruction and successfully taken a test given by the state Mine Safety office.

Phillips says red hats often don't have the knowledge and experience to handle situations they face on their own.

"A red hat should be with a black hat until such time as he becomes a black hat himself," Phillips said.

Thursday 3 February 2011

Tanzania: Four die as sand mine caves in

Extract from IPPmedia.com

Eight people have died in separate incidents which occurred in different locations over the past week, including four who were buried in a sand mine.

Lindi regional police commander Sifuel Shirima named the four small-scale miners, all from Lipota Village in Nachingwea, as Hassani Huseni (35), Rajabu Kalyelye (25), Shabani Yassini (30) and Mohamedi Juma (26).

Shirima said two small-scale miners cheated death in the accident and were admitted to Lindi District Hospital. They are Mohamedi Abdallah (28) and Bakari Salehe (24).

The RPC said the miners died after inhaling poisonous air from a water machine they used for the mining activity.

Ireland: Man dies in blast at Tipperary mine

Extract from RTE.ie

TIPPERARY MAN has died in an explosion at a mine in the county. The man in his 40s, confirmed by fellow employees at Lisheen Mine to be Joe Fallon from Twomileborris, died in the accident which happened yesterday evening at around 6.30pm. It is understood that Fallon was the line manager on the job.

The company told *TheJournal.ie* that another man, Chris Barlow, is in a "satisfactory condition" in Cork University Hospital after he was injured in the incident in which father-of-three Joe Fallon died. The company added:

"Our sincere condolences go to the family of the deceased."

Around 370 local people and 120 contractors are employed at the lead and zinc mine, below and above ground, according to the company. Processing and mining tasks is divided into shift work and it was during an evening shift yesterday that the explosion happened in one of

the mine shafts. Gardai and the HSA (Health and Safety Authority) are at the scene. The mine has ceased production while the investigation into the cause of the explosion is being carried out.



Lisheen Mine (www.lisheenmine.ie)

The Lisheen Mine extracts zinc on a site between Moyne and Templetuohy, in the heart of the Irish Midlands, in Co Tipperary and is owned by Vedanta Resources.

Canada: Manitou Gold Reports Accident Resulting in Fatality

Extract from www.marketwire.com

SUDBURY, ONTARIO - Manitou Gold Inc. (TSX VENTURE:MTU) is saddened to announce that on February 3, 2011, a vehicle broke through the ice near the Company's exploration project located in Northwestern Ontario, resulting in the death of a service provider to the Company.

Manitou Gold deeply regrets the loss and offers its sincerest sympathies to the family.

Authorities were notified immediately and representatives of the Ontario Provincial Police and the Ontario Ministry of Labour arrived quickly at the site.

About Manitou Gold

Manitou Gold Inc. is a gold exploration company focused on the Gold Rock Mining Camp, located in the Kenora Mining District, in Northwestern Ontario.

USA: Man Dead at McElroy Mine in Marshall County

Extract from [Wheeling Intelligencer, USA](#)

A bulldozer driver died Thursday after an accident at a Consol Energy mine in Marshall County, the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration said.

The victim was pinned between a bulldozer and a water truck at Consol's McElroy Mine in Marshall County at about 9:45 a.m., MSHA spokeswoman Amy Louviere said. The man's name was not immediately released.

He was attaching a tow chain to the truck when the bulldozer rolled backward and pinned him, Louviere said. The bulldozer blade had been left in the air, allowing the machine to move. The man was alive when freed, but died before he could be flown to a hospital, Louviere said.

McElroy is an underground mine, but the accident occurred on the surface at the site of a gas well that was being plugged. The vehicles involved in the accident belong to separate contractors, not Consol.

The victim worked for an Eighty Four, Pa.-based company called 18 Karat, according to Consol. A woman who answered the telephone there Thursday declined to comment.

West Virginia's first mining fatality of 2011 occurred last week at an underground mine in Wyoming County. Just two miners have been killed on the job in the nation this year, according to MSHA.

This week in mining accident history (2)

4 February 1930

Kames Pit

Muirkirk, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

1 killed, fall of roof

Source: www.scottishmining.co.uk

While at work on Tuesday night in Kames Pit, Muirkirk belonging to Wm Baird & Co Ltd, two road repairers were buried in a heavy fall from the roof, and it took 3 hours before they were liberated. One of the men, John McCulloch (62) residing at 27 Kames Row, Muirkirk, was dead when extricated. The other man, William Kay Gorvan (55), Garden View, Main St, Muirkirk, had a miraculous escape, but was very severely bruised about the head, body, legs and ankles. He was removed home in the works ambulance after medical attention. [Scotsman 6 February 1930]

Saturday 5 February 2011

Romania mine blast kills five

BUCHAREST — An explosion on Saturday killed five workers in the Uricani mine in southwest Romania, in the latest fatal accident in the country's ageing mines.



An explosion on Saturday killed five workers in the Uricani mine in southwest Romania

"There are no survivors, five people are dead," the mine's spokeswoman Oana Stoicuta told AFP.

"It's a tragedy down there," the mayor of Uricani, Danut Buhaescu, told Mediafax news agency.

Earlier, an official, Horia Radu, had said the four electricians and an engineer had been working on an electrical installation when the blast happened.

It occurred at a depth of around 400 metres (1,300 feet), mine officials said.

"At 14:30 (12:30 GMT) the workers said they had finished their job but some ten minutes later

we smelt smoke coming out of the ventilation system," Stoicuta said.

A rescue team found the bodies five hours later.

The death toll could have been higher but for the fact that the maintenance work had been scheduled for the weekend, when mining operations were halted.

"There was a new explosion but the 15 rescue workers had all come back up to the surface and are safe and sound," Stoicuta added.

"The bodies of the five people killed have also been brought back to the surface," she added.

Local prosecutor Augustin Lazar said the local health and safety inspectorate had opened an investigation and their initial conclusions should be released within days.

The most likely theory was that the blast had been caused by a build up of methane, he added.

Constantin Jujan, director of the National Mining Company (CNH), said Saturday that the Uricani mine had acquired modern gas detection equipment in 2009 and 2010.

Interior Minister Traian Irgas arrived at the mine soon after the blast and met the relatives of the victims.

Irgas said it was too early to know what had caused the explosion but added that an investigation was under way.

The Uricani coal mine is situated in the Jiu Valley, the most important mining area still operating in Romania. The mine employs some 800 people and is one of the oldest in the country.

Economy ministry official Florin Staicu said Saturday the mine would be closed down by 2018 as part of a mining sector restructuring plan overseen by the World Bank.

Since this programme Bank started in the late 1990s, the number of Jiu Valley miners has been slashed from 60,000 to 8,800 currently, according to trade unions.

Saturday's accident is the most serious since two blasts in the Petrila mine, also in the Jui Valley region, in November 2008, killed 13 people.

Three of that mine's former directors were jailed last November for breaches of the safety laws.

Trade unions regularly complain of poor working and safety conditions in Romanian coal mines and have called on the authorities to invest more in the sector to improve the situation.

Sunday 6 February 2011

Mexico Closes Mine After 2 Deaths

Extract from The Latin Herald Tribune, Mexico

MEXICO CITY – The Mexican government has shuttered a coal mine in the northern state of Coahuila after two workers died earlier this week in an accident, the labour ministry said Friday.

The Lulu mine “already had a work-related accident on Aug. 6, 2009, in which two (other) miners died,” the ministry said in a statement.

Authorities inspected the mine, owned by Minera Siderurgica de Coahuila, on more than 10 occasions and imposed a series of fines but the “irregularities” continued, the statement said.

In addition to closing the mine, the labour ministry urged the economy ministry's general directorate of mines to cancel the company's concession to exploit the deposit.

The ministry said it took the decision “so the lack of safety conditions at that mine do not claim more lives, considering the risk inherent in that branch of industry and the company's repeated incompliance with measures ordered by the labour authority.”

Government inspectors had previously detected 134 violations of mining regulations at Lulu and ordered its owners to comply with 86 safety measures, but they failed to comply with 27 of them.

Nine fines totalling 1.96 million pesos (\$160,655) have been imposed on the company to date.

If its concession is not cancelled, Minera Siderurgica de Coahuila must implement a series of changes before it is allowed to operate the mine again.

Among them, management must conduct a risk assessment to “identify areas susceptible to methane gas and coal outbursts” and implement training and safety actions to prevent those potential risks.

It also must provide miners with adequate safety equipment.

The labour ministry expressed its deepest regret over Tuesday's deaths of Daniel Vaquera Contreras and Juan Manuel Gomez Gaytan and pledged to provide their surviving family members with free legal counselling and representation.

“The proven irresponsibility of the Lulu mine's management is unacceptable,” it said.

Finally, the ministry said it will provide the Coahuila state Attorney General's Office with complete information on the mine with an eye toward criminal prosecutions.

Mexico's worst mining tragedy in recent years took place in February 2006 at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in Coahuila, where 65 workers were buried alive after a gas explosion sealed off one shaft.

Their bodies were never recovered.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

ALLIGATOR Wheeled skip running on a steep incline - self-unloading on surface.

-Ed