



# Mining Accident News No.1112

9 to 19 April 2011

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Saturday 9 April 2011

## China: Family of Each Victim in Mine Gas Leak to get 680,000 yuan of Compensation

*Extract from Xinhua*

The family of each of the six workers who were killed in a coal mine gas leak in southwest China's Yunnan Province will get 680,000 yuan (about 104,039 U.S. dollars) of compensation from the mine owner, local authorities said Sunday.

The accident occurred at 10:20 a.m. Wednesday at a coal mine run by Yunnan Dongyuan Luoping Coal Mining Co. in Luoping County, Qujing City, the county publicity department said in a statement.

Investigation showed that all six workers were suffocated to death. The Yunnan Dongyuan Luoping Coal Mining Co. will pay the compensation to each victim's family, according to the statement.

## USA: 'Coal' TV - MSHA Cites West Virginia Mine after Watching Reality Show

*Extract from AP/The Huffington Post*

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. -- The first episode of a reality show filmed in a southern West Virginia coal mine had real-world results: Federal inspectors who watched the Spike TV series have cited Cobalt Coal Corp. for activities they say endangered the miners.

In the debut of "Coal," a worker at the Westchester mine in McDowell County used the wrong tool – a 12-inch pick hammer – to pull down loose roof rock for a dramatic collapse that was caught on camera. The Mine Safety and Health Administration said the tool was too small for the job and put workers at risk of being struck by falling rock.

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

MSHA also cited Cobalt for moving the continuous mining machine when it wasn't cutting coal and allowing a worker to walk alongside, creating the potential for a crushing injury.

It's the first time MSHA has written a violation based on TV footage, spokeswoman Amy Louviere told The Associated Press.

"However, this is the first time that a documentary like this has been taped underground, to our knowledge," she said. "If violations are obvious, they will be cited."

The show debuted March 30 and was seen by 6 million viewers in the first week. The second episode aired Wednesday night.

The violations were written April 5, on the first anniversary of a massive explosion that killed 29 miners at Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine, another southern West Virginia operation.

Cobalt Chief Executive Officer Mike Crowder said he won't judge the motives of MSHA inspectors, but the citations don't make him regret doing the show. Even mistakes, he said, can become teaching tools.

Coal companies today rely mainly on low-quality, "very boring" videos to train miners in safety, he said. If nothing else, the Spike footage can be used to create more vivid clips that can help workers identify and avoid hazards.

"Coal miners and companies and folks like myself, it's our responsibility to keep our miners safe," Crowder said. "We should take these situations – and mistakes, at times – and work together."

The state Officer of Miners' Health, Safety and Training, which had obtained an advance copy of the first episode, cited Cobalt for similar violations even before the show aired.

In a March 23 notice, a state inspector said the potential of the continuous miner to pin a man against a mine wall reflected "an extremely high degree of negligence."

State records show inspectors also cited Cobalt and some individual workers for failing to wear the proper reflective clothing, which ensures a miner can be seen from all directions, and for failing to wear proper eye protection.

The state also cited Cobalt's miners for failing to wear their air packs, called self-contained self-rescuers, and for failing to have a cache of the devices within reach. The air packs produce oxygen through a chemical reaction and are designed to give miners enough time to escape from a contaminated atmosphere.

Both the state and federal violations resulted in safety meetings with the workers.

To shoot in the mine, 10 videographers trained for 80 hours and were certified as apprentice coal miners.

During the filming, which ran from Nov. 9 to Jan. 21, federal inspectors also cited the Canadian-owned company for 19 health and safety violations. There were, however, no accidents or serious injuries.

Cobalt mines a highly valuable metallurgical coal used in steelmaking, but the seam is notoriously thin, forcing miners to work in a space just 42 inches high some 600 feet underground. The tight confines are dramatic but atypical: The U.S. industry is largely dominated by corporations with massive mines that often have hundreds of workers and mining machines larger than houses.

Crowder said reaction to the show has been overwhelming and "passionately positive."

"It's been phenomenal. I would never have imagined there would be such activity," he said.

That includes a surge in demand from coal buyers.

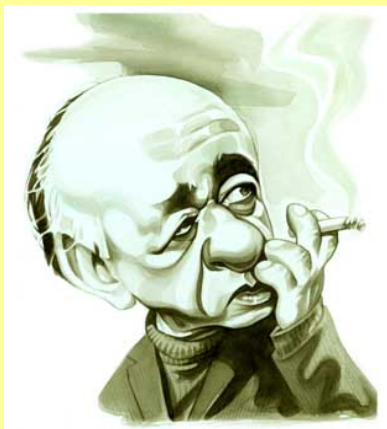
"A good part of business in any industry is your network connections, and our network connections have gone from bottom rung to top rung," he said. "People know who Cobalt Coal is now, and they'd like to do business with us."

People also want to work for him. Crowder said he's had nearly 80 resumes from would-be employees since the first episode.

The show has become a focal point for the industry, too. It was the topic of much discussion at this week's coal mining symposium in Charleston.

"There's so much pride," Crowder said. "There's never been an opportunity like this to tell the coal miners' story – what they do and how they do it and what coal miners do for America."

### Quote of the week



"It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question."

Eugene Ionesco  
(Romanian and French playwright, 1909-1994)

Tuesday 12 April 2011

## QLD: Mine worker hurt in rock mishap

*Extract from ABC News Online, Aus*

A contract worker has undergone surgery after being seriously injured at a mine in north-west Queensland.

The woman was working underground at Xstrata's Ernest Henry Mine near Cloncurry, east of Mount Isa.

The company says she suffered significant lacerations and her right hand was crushed by a rock during an accident about 4:30am (AEST) on Sunday.

She was flown to Townsville Base Hospital for treatment, where she remains in a stable condition.



Ernest Henry Mine, Qld

The company has not said what caused the accident.

## Workers buried alive in Vietnamese quarry disaster

*Extract from world socialist web site (wsws.org)*

In the latest in a long line of mining disasters in Vietnam, dozens of workers were buried under 5,000 cubic metres of limestone at a privately-owned quarry on April 1. Eighteen bodies, including those of 11 women, were later recovered. Six other workers were taken to a local hospital for emergency treatment, suffering severe wounds and broken bones.

When the landslide occurred at the Len Co quarry, in the coastal province of Nghe An, 40 workers were present, of whom 35 were buried. Hundreds of villagers and relatives gathered to look for their loved ones. The rescue operation was placed under the control of the military, however, and was poorly organised. Explosives, chainsaws and cranes were used to blast, cut up or move large blocks, endangering the miners still trapped alive.

The *VN Express* website posted horrific videos and pictures of the scene. One video clip showed military personnel using charges to blast a giant rock under which workers were believed to be buried. Workers who had survived could have been killed or injured by explosion,

underscoring the lack of proper emergency measures.

The *VN Express* also published the tragic stories of some of the quarry victims. Nguyen Thi Ngan, 33, one of the 11 women killed, left behind four small children. Her husband was working as a miner in a mountainous district. Her cousin explained: "My sister earned 50,000-70,000 dong (\$US2.40-\$US3.30) a day, and had not enough to eat during the day."

Tho Nguyen Phoung, who lost his two sons, Nguyen Tho Hoang, 28, and Nguyen Tho Vu, 21, said: "They were very young. Hoang was married and had one child. Vu was married as well. They provided meals to us with the money they earned from the quarry."

Nguyen Dang Tinh, a local resident, said of Tran Thi Sau, a 51-year-old woman buried under the rock: "Two years ago, her husband died with an illness. Her home is the poorest in the village. Her children are of school age, yet they are now orphaned again."

More than 300 police and military personnel were deployed, not just for the rescue operation but to prevent protests against the quarry owners, Chen Men Limited Company, and the authorities that have allowed the dangerous conditions that gave rise to the tragedy.

The next day, *Than Nien news.com* reported: "Initial investigations show that the owner of the Len Co mining site did not quarry rocks downwards as regulated, but mined at the foot of the mountain, triggering the rockslide."

On the same day, in order to placate mounting popular anger, Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) general secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, who is also the National Assembly chairman, personally sent "condolences" to the victims' families. "I am very sad to hear the news of the landslide in Nam Thanh commune," he stated.

Three days later, the police arrested quarry owner Phan Cong Chin for "violating labour safety." Local police chief Thai Van Binh declared: "Despite being warned by local

authorities several times, he did not abide by labour safety regulations." While he undoubtedly bears a share of the responsibility for the disaster, the owner is simply a convenient scapegoat for the authorities.

Hundreds of quarries are permitted to operate in Vietnam without proper safety measures. Chin Men, a private firm that sells limestone for construction of roads and houses, is just one example. The quarry owners leased the mine from the provincial government in August 2007, and then outsourced the operations to sub-contractors. The quarry had been sanctioned twice for safety breaches, but nothing had improved.

In February 2010, Vietnam's state inspectorate recommended that the prime minister revoke permits for 241 poorly regulated mines and quarries in Nghe An province for violations such as having no contract to rent land or causing environmental damage. The inspectorate was responding to 12 accidents that killed 29 workers in the region during 2009.

The latest disaster underscored the fact that safety standards have continued to be flouted. Inspections, warnings or suspension of mining permits are largely cosmetic measures for public consumption.

On April 5, in another display of official concern, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung ordered cities and provinces to carry out inspections of mining operations producing construction materials, and to suspend any quarry that violated safety regulations.

The regime's actual indifference toward workers' safety can be gauged from the paltry compensation of \$239 paid to each victim's family, with even less, \$144, for each injured miner. Such is the worth of a worker's life in the misnamed "Socialist Republic of Vietnam," which has become a cheap labour platform for transnational corporations.

*TuoiTrenews.vn* on April 3 published photographs showing the primitive conditions at

some quarries. A shocking picture showed a miner, holding a single rope, climbing to the top of a quarry, probably hundreds of metres above the ground, to position dynamite to blow up the rock face.

Another photograph showed a miner on the top of a quarry, holding a rope to avoid slipping. A third picture showed two female miners, one wearing gloves and the other bare-handed, pushing a giant stone grinder under a dangerous rock face. Neither wore boots, just slippers, nor masks to protect them from inhaling dust, just pieces of cloth across their faces.

Such brutal conditions have resulted in many deadly accidents, and not only in Nghe An province. In October 2008, three workers died after the collapse of a stone quarry in the south-central province of Phu Yen. Another quarry landslide killed seven miners in October 2009, in the north-central province of Thach Ha province. Just two months later, a landslide killed nine workers in another north-central province, Ha Tinh.

Desperate poverty drives rural people into the stone quarries. According to *TuoiTrenews.vn*, stone miners in Nghe An received just 100,000-200,000 dong (\$4.8-\$9.6) a day, which was considered a relatively high income in the province. The web site reported: "Though they know only too well how dangerous their work is, local stone miners say they must continue doing it to support themselves and their families... Still devastated by the accident at the Len Co quarry, stone miners on nearby Bup Mang Mountain have courageously resumed their daily business." The report added: "An extra shift at noon gives stone miners an additional VDN20,000 (96 cents) a day."

Approximately 90 percent of Vietnam's poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, the Canadian Hunger Foundation estimates. As many as 70 percent of the poor are concentrated in the northern regions of Vietnam, which include Nghe An province. The province has 17 districts, of which 10 are

mountainous areas with poor infrastructure and high levels of unemployment, forcing impoverished farmers to accept any work they can find.

Vietnam's mining and quarrying industry is currently booming, literally on top of the bones of these workers. The sector accounted for more than 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product in 2008, and the total workforce reached 477,000 in 2009. The number of stone and mineral mining companies tripled from 362 in 2000 to 1,447 in 2008.

The unsafe conditions in the quarrying industry are just part of the broader social disaster facing the Vietnamese working class. Last July, the Labour Ministry estimated that about 12,000 people had died in 120,000 to 130,000 workplace accidents between 2005 and 2010.

### **USA: West Virginia operator cited in fatal accident**

*Extract from Bloomberg Businessweek, USA*

West Virginia says it has issued seven citations to the operator of a Wyoming County mine in connection with the industry's first fatality of 2011.

The Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training says it also cited two individuals in the death of 19-year-old apprentice miner John C. Lester Jr. Lester died in a conveyer belt accident at Baylor Mining's Jims Branch No. 3-A mine Jan. 27.

The agency says in a report issued Tuesday that Lester was asphyxiated after falling onto a conveyer belt, suffering a serious head injury and being buried under coal.

A working telephone number of Baylor could not be immediately located. The report says the company agreed to change its belt configuration and give all underground workers communication devices, among other things.

## S.Africa: Sixth fatality at Lonmin mine

*Extract from [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)*

A miner has died at the Marikana platinum mine in Rustenburg, in the North West, mining company Lonmin Plc said on Tuesday.

“Lonmin Plc regrets to announce that in the early hours of Tuesday April 12 the company suffered a fatality at its E1 shaft at its Marikana operations,” the company's chief executive officer Ian Farmer said.

In a statement he said the accident followed a fatality last week at K3 shaft and brings the total fatal accidents for this financial year to six.



“This performance is unacceptable and particularly upsetting since it follows the one day stoppage on March 30th that management declared for all Marikana operations to enable employees and the company collectively to review and re-affirm its commitment to zero harm.”

Farmer said management decided to cease production at its mining division on Thursday April 14 to conduct underground working place safety audits which would be lead by the Lonmin senior leadership team.

The audits would be followed by a memorial service for the deceased in the afternoon.

“Lonmin is committed to zero harm and will relentlessly continue to take whatever action is necessary in pursuit of this goal,” Farmer said.

Wednesday 13 April 2011

## Philippines: Mines bureau ordered to intensify safety measures in mining operations

*Extract from Philippine Information Agency*

MANILA, - The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is set to intensify environment and safety measures in mining operations throughout the country in order to minimize, if not prevent, mining accidents.

This directive, from Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary (DENR) Secretary Ramon Paje is in response to the recent accidents in mining operations. One of this was the recent accident in a mountain village in Tampakan town in South Cotabato, where three small-scale miners were reportedly trapped in mine tunnels that collapsed because of landslides.

The victims were allegedly involved in sluice mining or banlas. Sluice mining is a method of mining that involves the pouring of large amounts of water to wash off the mountain's surface and expose the rocks that contain the gold ore to be extracted, according to the report.

“I have directed the Mines Bureau and all its regional offices to make sure that mining companies religiously observe safety measures in their mining operations to prevent loss of lives and property, as well minimize adverse impacts on environment,” Paje said.

“We will continue to experience the effect of La Nina so that even with the onset of summer, heavy rains are expected in some parts of the country. With all the earthquakes occurring lately, we have to ensure that companies give priority to safety measures in their operations,” Paje said.

According to Paje, the DENR has long set strict safety rules and regulations on large-scale mining operation embodied in DENR Administrative Order No. 2000-98.

"This order specifically provides for the mine safety and health standards in mining operations.

It also provides for the creation of a multi-partite monitoring team composed of representatives from the MGB, concerned local government units, the operating mining company, Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) and other concerned agencies and entities, tasked to regularly conduct inspection to check on environment and safety measures in the mines site."

"Mining projects are likewise mandated to employ at least one full time safety engineer and safety inspector to oversee the implementation of safety measures in the mines site," Paje added.

## **USA: Ex-foreman at Massey W.Virginia mine pleads guilty**

*Extract from Reuters Africa*

### **Second person charged in probe**

### **Blast was worst coal mining disaster in 40 years**

WASHINGTON, - A former foreman at a West Virginia coal mine where an explosion killed 29 workers last year pleaded guilty on Wednesday to lying to investigators about his job qualifications, the first plea in a federal probe of the blast.

Thomas Harrah, 45, pleaded guilty to falsely claiming he was qualified to serve as a foreman at the Upper Big Branch mine between January 2008 and August 2009, about eight months before the explosion at the Massey Energy-owned mine.

"This case arose from our investigation into the explosion and is directed at preventing a similar tragedy from happening again," Booth Goodwin, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, said in a statement.

Investigators have been examining Massey's actions and the circumstances around the blast.

The mine had been cited for many safety violations in the past but company officials have denied the explosion was the result of "willful disregard" for safety.

Harrah was the second person charged as a result of the criminal investigation into the accident. The head of security at the facility, Hughie Stover, was charged with impeding investigators probing the explosion and lying to them as well.

The April 5, 2010, explosion at the mine in Montcoal, West Virginia, was the worst coal mining disaster in 40 years. Massey has since agreed to be acquired by Alpha Natural Resources Inc.

Harrah admitted he had failed the mine foreman's examination and used someone else's certification number on reports stating he inspected underground areas where miners were scheduled to work or travel.

He acknowledged he looked at one of the examination books that listed other foremen who had passed the test and changed digits on one of their numbers and began using it as his own to sign examination logs at the Upper Big Branch mine, prosecutors said.

Harrah also admitted he made false statements to investigators claiming he had been given a phone number by a mine officer to get a foreman's certificate number after he failed the exam and that he received one after calling.

Instead, he had talked to the mine officer about retaking the exam, prosecutors said. Harrah did not take the exam again.

He could face up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. He is due to be sentenced on Aug. 11.

Friday 15 April 2011

## **S.Africa: Harmony Gold reports fatality**

*Extract from BusinessReport*

Harmony Gold Mining Company (HAR) announced on Thursday that an employee had died early this morning following a locomotive accident at its Masimong mine in the central Free State.

"Operations have been stopped until such time as all investigations into the accident have been completed," the group said in a statement.



CEO of Harmony Gold Graham Briggs.

Harmony's Chief Executive, Graham Briggs and his management team, expressed their condolences to the families of the deceased and those affected by the incident.

Saturday 16 April 2011

## **USA: One Miner Missing Following Accident in Northern Idaho**

*Extract from Boise weekly*

Residents of the North Idaho mining town of Mullan are holding their collective breath today in the wake of a mining accident.

The Hecla Mining Company has confirmed that there was a ground fall break at the Lucky Friday Mine in Mullan late Friday. HMC is not confirming how many miners are involved or their condition but rescue operations are underway. The mine yields silver, lead and zinc.

Hecla officials are expected to update the public and press Saturday afternoon.

SUNDAY UPDATE: Hecla Mining Crews worked throughout the night in a desperate attempt to free a miner trapped more than a mile underground at the Lucky Friday Mine in Mullan, Idaho. The miner, identified as Larry Marek, was working with his brother on Friday evening when a cave-in occurred. Marek's brother escaped, but Marek was trapped.

The Lucky Friday Mine is one of North America's deepest hard-rock mines. Hecla had been sinking a new shaft into the mine, reaching depths of nearly 9,000 feet. The mine employs approximately 375 men and women.

**UPDATE:** A rescue operation is underway in the wake of a collapse at a North Idaho Mine.

Officials with the Hecla Mining Company told Citydesk that the collapse at the Lucky Friday Mine trapped two miners. One worker escaped. The other miner, who has not been identified, was still missing as of Saturday afternoon.

Rescue equipment has been brought to the Mullan mine from Montana and Washington to aide in the rescue operation. Hecla mines silver, lead and zinc from the Lucky Friday and Greens Creek mines in Idaho's so-called "silver valley." A ground floor collapse occurred at the site late Friday afternoon.

## **USA: MSHA schedules June briefing on W.Va. mine blast**

*Extract from Business Week*

The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration says it will hold a public briefing this summer on the Upper Big Branch mine explosion.

The agency said Tuesday that the briefing is set for June 29 at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver. The date coincides with the one-year anniversary of investigators entering the Raleigh County mine for the first time.



MSHA is still investigating the April 5, 2010, explosion, which killed 29 miners. The blast also is the subject of a federal criminal investigation.

The agency has blamed a methane ignition and coal-dust accumulations for the blast. Virginia-based owner Massey Energy Co. disputes that version.

MSHA says it hopes to release more information in June, but says it will withhold some details because of the criminal case.

Sunday 17 April 2011

## **USA: Remote digging machine sent to help trapped Idaho miner**

*Extract from Reuters, US Edition*

A drone digging machine arrived on Sunday at a silver mine in Idaho where a lone worker has been trapped by a cave-in more than a mile underground with no outside contact since late Friday.

The miner, Larry Marek, 53, a 30-year veteran of the industry, was tapping a vein of silver in a mine owned by Hecla Mining Company in northern Idaho when a section of tunnel collapsed for unknown reasons, according to the company.

A second miner he was working with escaped without injury, but rescuers have had no contact with Marek since the accident on Friday evening. His condition was unknown.

Commercial operations at the Lucky Friday Mine were immediately suspended, and the mine was in "full rescue operation," company officials said.

"We are in communications with the family and have been keeping them up to date," Melanie Hennessey, a Helca executive, said in a statement on Sunday. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends."

As of Sunday morning, 10-person rescue teams working around the clock had cleared about 25 feet of an estimated 75-foot blockage in a

collapsed corridor separating crews from the trapped miner, securing the ground as they advanced.

The company flew in a special excavation machine known as a mucker that can be operated by remote control. The drone digger arrived on Sunday morning and had to be disassembled to be taken a mile down into the mine and put back together.

Mine officials said the mucker would accelerate the pace of digging since the time-consuming practice of securing the tunnel roof as digging proceeded was unnecessary for a drone.

Hennessey, Helca's vice president for investor relations, said they company was focused entirely on the rescue and has not yet "focused on why and how this occurred."

The accident comes as Hecla is seeking to expand the depth of the Lucky Friday to 8,000 feet. It occurred the same day the U.S. Department of Labor released a report faulting federal mining inspectors who oversee safety for failing in some instances last year to "properly evaluate the gravity and negligence in certain citations."

Hecla employs 275 workers and 100 contractors at Lucky Friday, a hard-rock mine in an historic silver-mining district east of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, near the Idaho-Montana border.

The operation uses a mining method known as cut-and-fill, where cuts into silver-bearing ore are back-filled with waste rock before a new section of the vein is tapped. The ore is hauled to the surface, where it is milled into a concentrate shipped to British Columbia for smelting.

The mine, which has been in production for nearly 70 years, yielded 3.4 million ounces of silver in 2009.

Lucky Friday is one of three active mines in the United States owned by Hecla, which is based in Coeur d'Alene.

Monday 18 April 2011

## **QLD: Mine worker to pay fine for 2009 accident**

*Extract from Australian Mining*

A miner with 40 years experience who accidentally ran over a co-worker three years ago will have to pay a fine, after already losing his career.

In 2009, Adrian Morrissey was working at Anglo Coal's Bundoora Mine near Middlemount, driving a 32-tonne shuttle car when he accidentally reversed over Ian Girle, aged 51, the Mackay Daily Mercury reports.



Image: [The Mackay Daily Mercury](#)

Girle had approached Morrissey on foot and asked him to move the shuttle car he was driving, conveying mud from a sump in the mine surface, backwards.

Girle then walked to the back of the shuttle car and stayed within a metre of the side, which Morrissey did not expect.

Morrissey accidentally ran over him and has pleaded guilty in the Industrial Magistrates Court yesterday to failing in his workplace, safety and obligations by causing grievous bodily harm.

Girle sustained compound fractures of his left leg and both sides of his pelvis in the accident and lost a large amount of skin.

He was in Rockhampton Base Hospital for a month and required a pin inserted into his leg, and still needs painkillers and may need more surgery.

He has also been limited to administration duties.

Up until the accident, Morrissey had been a highly regarded employee with over 40 years experience in mines and numerous licences and tickets and his solicitor Patrick Heilmer said Morrissey has already lost his successful career from the incident.

He was also an active member of the local community with service to schools, sports clubs and the elderly, Heilmer said.

He said there was no intentional disregard of safety and his client was not attempting to drive over an 11 000 volt cable, which would have been extremely dangerous if broken.

A fine between \$10 000 and \$15 000 has been requested by the prosecution, but his Morrissey's solicitor said his client could not afford to pay such a sum and has instead requested a penalty of around \$1000.

Sentencing has been adjourned until 13 May for more submissions to be prepared regarding the penalty.

In 2007, a similar accident with a shuttle car occurred at the mine, killing 33-year-old Jason Blee.

## **Colliery Gas Outburst Death Toll Rises to 12 in SW China**

*Extract from Xinhua*

Twelve people are now known to have died in a colliery gas outburst on Friday after the discovery of four deaths previously covered up by the coal mine in southwest China's Yunnan Province, local authorities said Monday.

Four more deaths were discovered after inconsistencies were found between the list of miners written before they went underground and the name list of 17 miners provided after the

Friday afternoon accident by the Meishan Coal Mine owner in Haidai Town of Xuanwei City, said Ou Guangcai, vice mayor in a press conference.

The gas outburst has so far killed 12, including one who died on the way to the hospital and one in hospital. Three others were injured in the accident while six miners were lifted to the ground safely, said Ou.

The mine owner has been taken into police custody. The owner's bank account has been frozen.

### This week in mining accident history

**19 April 1898**  
**Whitwick Colliery**  
**Whitwick, Leicestershire, England, UK**  
**Underground coal mine**  
**35 killed, methane explosion caused by fire**  
Source: [www.whitwick.org.uk](http://www.whitwick.org.uk)

**Whitwick Colliery** was opened on the outskirts of the parish by the engineer William Stenson near Long Lane in 1824, precipitating a massive expansion and development of this industry across the north west of Leicestershire.



#### Thirty five killed in an explosion caused by a gob fire

In the early hours of 19th April 1898 a fire broke out in No. 5 pit of Whitwick Colliery. There were a total of 42 men working down the mine at the time. 39 men were beyond the fire, and it was Deputy Joseph Limb, while making his rounds, who discovered it. Two other men were in safety

nearer to the pit bottom. Joseph limb escaped through the return airway. 5 others came out under the fire on the main roadway.



That left 34 cut off. But the number of deaths increased by one to 35 because Charles Clamp (pictured left) returned to the fumes & smoke to help his fellow colliers and perished himself.

Shaft No 5 at Whitwick Colliery had been sunk in 1838 although it had not been continually worked in the intervening period. In 1898 it was fully operational working the Upper Main Seam at a depth of 249 yards with a 5 feet 56 inches seam.

No 5 was a dry and dusty pit with much timber along the sides of the main road. The working districts were about one and a half miles inbye and the Main Intake Road went for a mile to an area where work had been ceased in the early 1890s because of the poor quality of the coal. At this point the Main Intake Road was only ten to twelve feet wide and six feet high. When working the mines the long wall system was used. This involved working a long face of the seam and allowing sections of the roof behind the workings to collapse. This effect could be felt on the surface in the form of subsidence, in fact the dip in Church Lane is the result of subsidence. The areas left after the coal had been extracted were called the gobs and these were packed with waste material to support the area still being worked. Unfortunately although these were tightly packed sufficient air pockets were often left which could support spontaneous combustion. Every deep mine had at least two shafts as both an escape route and a means by which fresh air was circulated underground. in the area where work had been abandoned in the early 1890s the uptake and intake shafts passed within 100 feet of each other and it was in this area where the fire broke out in the gob.

Patrick O'Mara, one of those killed, was found on his knees with his rosary beads still in his hands. The youngest victim was John Albert Gee of Thringstone, who was aged just thirteen years. A memorial tablet to those killed can be found in the parish church at Coalville.

The pit was closed in the 1980s and the site is now occupied by a Morrisons store. An old winding wheel can still be seen at the foot of Leicester Road, erected as a monument to Whitwick's mining past following the closure of the colliery.

Tuesday 19 April 2011

## **Freeport Says 1 Dead, 1 Missing in Mining Accident**

*Extract from The Jakarta Globe*

PT Freeport Indonesia said one worker was killed and another remains missing following an "industrial accident" at its copper and gold mine in Papua at about 11 p.m. local time on Monday.

Freeport's rescue team is trying to locate the missing victim in the so-called Deep Ore Zone underground mining area, Ramdani Sirait, a company spokesman, said in a mobile-phone text message on Tuesday.

"Mining operations at DOZ have been stopped for cleanup process and investigation by inspectors from the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry," Sirait said, referring to the underground mining site by its initials.

The men were working in the underground mine late on Monday when the roof collapsed, pinning them beneath earth and rocks, Mimika district deputy police chief Mada Aksanta said.

"Our speculation is that mine blasting had caused the ceiling to collapse. We're still investigating," he added.

Rescuers have pulled out one body and are still searching for the other, Aksanta said, adding that police are also checking whether there were others working in the mine.

## **USA: Idaho rescuers alter search operation for miner**

BOISE, Idaho — Rescuers trying to reach a trapped Idaho silver miner on Tuesday were forced by unstable conditions to alter their operation and are now attempting to reach him from a new direction that more than quadruples the distance they must dig to reach him.

The changes were necessary due to dangerous conditions inside the Lucky Friday Mine, said Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere. Before, workers needed to clear through about 50 feet of the collapsed area; from the new, safer set-off point more than a mile underground, there are 225 feet left.

Larry "Pete" Marek, a 53-year-old employee of Hecla Mining Co., was trapped last Friday by the collapse and hasn't been heard from since the collapse.

It's unclear just how this change of plans will impact the duration of the rescue or the time needed to reach the area where Marek might be. Company officials said the conditions underground are unstable, as rescue workers encountered a debris field laden with boulders, twisted wires, mesh and broken concrete that had been used to shore up the tunnel before it caved in.

"It changes every shift," said Stephany Bales, a Hecla spokeswoman. "It's a long tedious, process. What they're dealing with, under there, boulders, cement and wires, it isn't an easy task, by any stretch. It is unstable."

Louviere, whose agency has set up a command center at the Lucky Friday Mine, said a separate effort using a diamond drill to bore a 2-inch hole from another tunnel inside the mine continues.

Officials at the Lucky Friday Mine, tucked into the forested mountains of the Idaho Panhandle's Silver Valley, hope to find an open area that could have provided Marek refuge behind the cave-in. The distance to drill is 184 feet; as of

early Tuesday, about 110 feet had already been penetrated, Louviere said.

Before Tuesday's change in plans, workers had been using a remote-controlled digging machine called a mucker, advancing a total of 39 feet into the collapsed area, estimated at as long as 75 feet.

The process of shoring up the caved-in tunnel behind the excavation, to make it safe for rescuers to advance, had been consuming valuable time, with supports placed in only about four more feet of tunnel over a span of about 12 hours. Rescuers on Monday more than doubled their estimate on the volume of the collapse: from 10 feet high to 25 feet high.

In the end, however, they could go no further without risking their own lives.

"Rescue operations have been suspended from the west side ... due to worsening ground conditions," Louviere said in a press release. "Further mucking will not be taking place in the caved area at this time."

It's unclear if Marek, a 12-year Hecla employee, had communication equipment with him at the time of the accident. It could have been left in a vehicle he was using at the time.

Marek and his brother, another mine worker, had just finished watering down blasted-out rock and ore on existing mining areas when the collapse occurred about 75 feet from the end of the 6,150-foot deep tunnel, according to the company. His brother was able to escape.

The family has not commented. Federal officials said many of the family's members work at the mine.

All mining activity has been halted for the rescue effort, Hecla said. Officials said they will focus on how the collapse occurred once the rescue is complete.

The mine in Mullan employs roughly 275 workers, about 50 of whom were underground in various parts of the mine when the collapse occurred, Hennessey said.

On its website, Hecla describes itself as the oldest U.S.-based precious metals mining company in North America and the largest silver producer in the U.S. The Coeur d'Alene company currently produces silver from two mines, Greens Creek and Lucky Friday, which has been operational since 1942.

Silver prices have soared about 38 percent this year, and Hecla is spending \$200 million to increase its production of the metal by about 60 percent. The upgrades will extend the life of the Lucky Friday mine beyond 2030.

Hecla appears to have a good record of health and safety at Lucky Friday.

The mine has reported no fatalities dating back to 2000, according to a Mine Safety and Health Administration database. The federal regulator has cited the mine for violations but none in the last year specifically tied to the kind of accident that occurred Friday.

Like mining areas around the world, northern Idaho is not immune to accidents, some of them tragic. Last June, a miner was killed in the Galena Mine in nearby Silverton after a rock slab fell on him.

In 1972, 91 miners were killed in a fire about 3,700 feet underground inside the Sunshine Mine between Kellogg and Wallace.

## Mining dictionary

### A guide to coal mining terminology

#### A

**APPARATUS** A self-contained supply of oxygen used during rescue work from coal mine fires and explosions. Sometimes called self-contained self rescuer (SCSR).

**Happy & safe Easter**

-Ed