



Mining Accident News No.1118

2 to 9 June 2011

In this issue:

Another coal miner in Colombia killed.....	1
2 killed, 5 missing in China coal mine explosion	2
USA: Ex-Massey chair disputes MSHA in report on mine disaster	2
Quote of the week	4
NSW: Miner killed in underground mishap.....	4
21 miners in China confirmed as dead.....	4
Alaska: Fall kills worker at Fort Knox mine near Fairbanks	5
USA: Fatal Mine Accident Detailed.....	6
This week in mining accident history	6
USA: ODNR not investigating mining accident further	7
Canada: 'Wake-up call' not heeded: witness.....	8
Philippines: 2 dead in mine accident	9
USA: Official probe coal truck driver's death near Norton, Va., mine.....	9
Canada: 2 workers dead in Sudbury mining accident	10
Mining dictionary	12

Thursday 2 June 2011

Another coal miner in Colombia killed

Extract from www.marketwatch.com

BOGOTA -- A cave-in at an illegal coal mine in Colombia killed another miner Thursday, marking the second mining death in the past two days, and officials now say 63 miners have been killed so far in 2011 despite an increase in government regulations and safety inspections.

Rescue workers digging into the underground mine near the village of Lenguazaque in central Colombia found the body of the unnamed miner at around 3 a.m. local time Thursday, said Edgar Morales, the head of rescue operations for the

government's mining oversight institute Ingeominas.

"This mine was more than just illegal, it was extremely rudimentary and didn't meet any safety regulations," Morales said in a telephone interview.

Less than 24 hours earlier, on Wednesday, rescue workers responding to a report of a cave-in at a coal mine located a short drive from the Lenguazaque mine discovered the body of another unnamed miner. Ingeominas said that miner died from lack of oxygen.

The government has been ramping up mine inspections in 2011 and has shut down scores of unlicensed mines after 26 coal miners were killed from methane explosions in two accidents over a one-week span in late January. The government acknowledged that prior to the January accidents it only had 16 inspectors to oversee several thousand mines the dot the Colombian countryside.

Despite hiring more inspectors and bulking up regulations, deadly accidents remain common. "The industry, the mining companies, are making few attempts at self-monitoring of safety conditions. The culture of safety simply doesn't exist here in Colombia," Morales said.

Morales acknowledged Ingeominas doesn't send a press release each time there's an accident in which a miner is killed. This has made it difficult for the public to keep reliable tabs on how many miners have been killed.

But he said internal reports indicate Thursday's death in Lenguazaque brings to 63 the number of miners killed so far this year. He said this compared to 173 killed in all of 2010.

"We could say that for 2011 we're on track to have fewer deaths than in 2010, but in reality even one death is too much for us," Morales said.

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the NSW Department of Industry and Investment
Issue 18 of 2011

Colombia is the world's fifth-largest coal exporter and its production destined for abroad is controlled by foreign companies including Alabama-based Drummond Co., Glencore International AG (GLDLF, GLEN.LN), BHP Billiton Ltd. (BHP, BHP.AU) and Xstrata PLC (XTA.LN), which operate in open-pit coal mines.

But most of the deadly mining accidents in Colombia occur in small, underground coal mines operated by individuals or small local companies that have few safety procedures in place. The output from most of these mines is destined for the domestic market. The government has said it would pressure local coal buyers to only purchase minerals from mines that have passed the government's safety checks.

Friday 3 June 2011

2 killed, 5 missing in China coal mine explosion

Extract from [philSTAR.com](http://www.philSTAR.com)

CHANGSHA (Xinhua) – Two people were killed and five others are still missing following a gas outburst in a coal mine in south China's Hunan Province, local authorities said on Friday.

The accident happened at the Shuangqiao Coal Mine in Shuangfeng County at 2:20 a.m. Friday, when 28 miners were working underground. Twenty-one of them managed to escape or were rescued.

According to Zhou Gezhong, the chief engineer of the Hunan Provincial Administrative Bureau of Coal Mine Safety, bodies of two victims have already been found and rescuers are still searching for five missing miners.

"Two rescue teams have conducted blanket searches in the shaft," he said.

"We have made new plans and will go all-out to search for the missing," he said.

Mining safety has long been a problem for China, but the government is taking measures to tackle the issue.

According to official statistics, 1,403 coal mine accidents were recorded in China last year, down 13.2 percent from the previous year. These accidents claimed 2,433 lives last year, down 7.5 percent year-on-year.

USA: Ex-Massey chair disputes MSHA in report on mine disaster

Extract from www.platts.com

Arguing that a "natural disaster" caused the deadly April 2010 explosion at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch underground coal mine in West Virginia, the company's former chairman released a report Friday disputing the claims of the US Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The underground explosion at the now-closed metallurgical coal mine in Raleigh County killed 29 miners, making it the deadliest US coal mining accident in 40 years.

Bobby Inman, former Massey board chairman, led the company team investigating the accident. He no longer heads the board of Massey, which merged with Alpha Natural Resources on June 1, and the report and accompanying letter and press release are bereft of Massey's company logo.

But in a statement Friday afternoon, ANR said it "did not commission or authorize the release of this report or the letter and was not given the opportunity to review either this report or the letter before their public release."

"In Alpha's view, a view it had expressed to Massey prior to the consummation of their merger, it was not appropriate to release any report purporting to contain Massey's assessment of the cause of the Upper Big Branch explosion before Alpha had an opportunity to fully understand and assess the situation. Alpha will conduct its own review into the events at Massey's Upper Big Branch mine and intends to fully cooperate with pending government investigations," the company said in the statement.

The report released by Inman said that "[f]rom the moment that [Massey operating subsidiary Performance Coal] removed its last fallen members from the mine, it has devoted itself to learning the cause of this tragedy by conducting an open, independent and objective investigation that is worthy of the members it lost."

But MSHA, the summary stated, "has organized its investigation around a single principle: to find evidence in support of its claim that Performance caused the accident, an accusation that MSHA hastily levelled at the company within a week of the explosion and before any investigation had commenced.

"The government has ignored compelling evidence of a natural disaster and, instead, focused single-mindedly on any factors that were conceivably within Performance's control."

The report continued, "Consequently, MSHA has disregarded all scientific data demonstrating that a massive gas inundation caused the explosion, preferring instead to point to coal dust, which the government typically believes to be within an operator's scope of responsibility."

ROCK DUSTING CLAIMS ALSO DISPUTED

Massey has maintained since the early days of investigations started after the April 5, 2010, explosion that a crack in the mine floor allowed a massive inundation of deadly gases which ignited, causing the explosion.

Inman's report disputed MSHA's findings point by point. MSHA has not released its final report yet.

MSHA is reviewing Inman's report, agency spokeswoman Amy Louviere said in a Friday email.

"MSHA's own conclusions about the cause of the explosion at Upper Big Branch will be discussed in great detail at our public briefing June 29 in Beckley," Louviere said.

An independent report released in May -- the first official report released on the UBB accident

-- offered plenty of conclusions and placed plenty of blame on Massey's safety culture as well as inspection procedures at the MSHA and West Virginia's Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

Lead investigator J. Davitt McAteer -- a former MSHA chief appointed by then-West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin -- said that perhaps the most egregious circumstance was a lack of rock dusting to control explosive coal dust at the underground operation.

Inman's report disputed that assertion, too. "Rock dusting at UBB exceeded MSHA standards by a substantial factor. Even visual inspections throughout the mine after the accident have revealed a layer of rock dust immediately beneath the thin layer of matter deposited by the explosion."

McAteer was reviewing Inman's report Friday, but was not immediately available for comment, according to his assistant, Tricia Lollini.

Commenting on the McAteer-led independent report, Inman said in a letter accompanying the 169 pages of findings, "Through careful analysis and several months of investigative discovery based on sound scientific results, Massey Energy officials have significant disagreements with Mr. McAteer's report."

MHST REPORT DUE IN Q4; UMWA UNIMPRESSED BY INMAN'S ARGUMENT

Leslie Fitzwater, an MHST spokeswoman, responded in an email that it had not yet reviewed Inman's report, but said that "any investigation into an incident of this scope is an arduous task, and the company's completion of their investigation should be applauded. We look forward to reviewing Massey Energy's report and hope that the company's efforts will help make mining in West Virginia safer."

MHST expects to release its own accident investigation report in the last quarter of 2011, Fitzwater said.

The United Mine Workers of America, which is conducting its own investigation of the accident at the non-union mine, wasn't as complimentary.

"We are reviewing the full report, but it appears that Massey is still trying to go to great lengths to blame God for the 29 miners' deaths instead of taking responsibility for its own failures," UMWA spokesman Phil Smith said. "That is an insult to the memory of those miners."

Quote of the week



André Malraux (1934)

"Often the difference between a successful person and a failure is not one has better abilities or ideas, but the courage that one has to bet on one's ideas, to take a calculated risk - and to act."

Andre Malraux
(French adventurer, author and statesman;
1901-1976)

Saturday 4 June 2011

NSW: Miner killed in underground mishap

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A man has died in a mining accident at the Chain Valley Colliery on the New South Wales central coast.

The 52-year-old was working underground yesterday afternoon when a section of the mine wall fell on him.

It took more than 40 minutes to bring him to the surface and he was taken to Wyong Hospital, where he died.

United Mineworkers Union spokesman Grahame Kelly says several government authorities are working to find out what happened.

"New South Wales Police are putting together a report for the coroner, as well as the DII inspectors, and the DII investigation unit have been called in. And of course the district check inspectors who are the representatives of the union, as well as the workers in the industry," he said.

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends and of course his workmates.

"This is a tragic event and we'll do everything we can to assist the family and his workmates to get through this."

Monday 6 June 2011

21 miners in China confirmed as dead

Extract from China Daily/Asia News Network

BEIJING - 21 WORKERS trapped this past month in two flooded coal mines in Southwest China have been confirmed dead as more bodies were found on Sunday.



Rescuers found two bodies at the Fuhong coal mine near Guiyang, capital of Guizhou province, Sunday morning, Xinhua News Agency reported.

They were among 13 miners trapped in the mine when it was flooded on May 29. Rescuers had previously recovered three bodies. Experts confirmed that the eight people still inside had no chance of surviving, the report said.

According to previous reports, a preliminary investigation indicated that the accident might have resulted from the mine being built out of accordance with an approved design. Local authorities said the mine owner should be held responsible for the accident.

The second accident, which took place on May 31 on the border of Guizhou province and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, left eight people buried in a flooded coal mine. The bodies of all eight dead miners had been found by Saturday, and police have arrested four owners of the illegal mine.

Guizhou has been the scene of a spate of mine accidents in recent years. Before the two accidents in May, the most recent there happened in April, killing eight miners in Panxian county.

The provincial government formed a plan earlier this year to restructure the industry and consolidate the mining sector by merging the existing 1,660 local coal mines into fewer than 200 in three years.

The decision followed on a national campaign, started in 2008, to close small coal mines in the hope of better protecting safety and the environment.

The deadly coal mine accidents of recent years have prompted Chinese authorities to strengthen their supervision of the mines found in provinces where large amounts of coal are produced.

The Inner Mongolia autonomous region, which has 730 billion tonnes of coal reserve, has reduced the number of mines operating in the region from 1,378 in 2005 to 551 now in the aim of ensuring that mines are better supervised and the environment is better protected, China National Radio reported on Sunday, citing Bagatur, chairman of the regional government.

According to a new policy issued by provincial authorities in early May, mayors in will be fired if a coal mine accident kills more than 50 people under their watch. And if anyone dies in a mining

accident, the new policy will require the manager of the mine to step down and the mine to be sealed until safety checks can be conducted.

Also under the policy, mine leaders must accompany miners both underground and back up to the surface. If they do not and an accident occurs, the mine will have to pay a fine of as much as 5 million yuan, according to a regulation issued by the State Administration of Work Safety, which went into force on Oct 7, 2010.

Henan's output of coal reached 179 millions tonnes in 2010, the same year that 35 mining accidents in the province killed 266 miners.

As for all of China, 2, 433 people died in 1, 403 coal mine accidents last year, according to the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety.

Alaska: Fall kills worker at Fort Knox mine near Fairbanks

Extract from Anchorage Daily News

A worker at the Fort Knox gold mine near Fairbanks was killed Saturday evening after falling to his death near the end of his shift, according to Alaska State Troopers.

Michael J. Murray, 39, of Fairbanks was alone on the second floor of a crusher room cleaning up when he tripped and fell through an opening two stories to the floor below, troopers said. His shift was supposed to end at 7 p.m.

Murray was supposed to be harnessed to a safety line but wasn't wearing the harness for reasons unknown, said troopers spokeswoman Beth Ipsen. He usually wore one, troopers were told.

An investigation is under way by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration. The mine is owned by Canadian-based Kinross Inc. and is operated by Fairbanks Gold Mining, Inc., which said it is cooperating with the investigation and conducting its own internal review.

Murray had worked for the mine for more than a year, the company said.

Mine rescue and Steese Fire Department crews performed CPR but were unable to revive him.

Before Saturday's death, Fort Knox had gone 4½ years without a work-related accident or injury that prevented the person from working the next scheduled shift, the company said.

USA: Fatal Mine Accident Detailed

Extract from MetroNews, WV, USA

Federal mine investigators have released their final report into a deadly mining accident that took place in Fayette County last October.

Experienced roof bolter Bill Dooley, 56, was killed at the Kingstown No. 1 mine on October 11, 2010 when a large piece of the mine roof fell on top of him.

MSHA investigators say the roof was unstable after a change in mining height. Part of the area had been mined the Friday before and there had been a roof fall over the weekend. When Dooley and a co-worker arrived at the area Monday morning they were attempting to secure the roof when the accident occurred.

MSHA says the rock that killed Dooley was 30 inches high, by 66 inches long and was 4 to 7 inches thick.

MSHA says the Kingston mine, owned by Alpha Natural Resources, had a better than average safety record and all of its training records were up to date.

Two citations were issued in connection with the accident for the operator's failure to follow the approved Roof Control Plan.

Read report at

<http://www.msha.gov/FATALS/2010/FTL10c45.asp>



21 Mechanical engineering safety seminar

on 10-11 August 2011 at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush. Program on the department's website.

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/resources/seminars-and-conferences/mechanical-engineering-safety-seminar

This week in mining accident history

6 June 1972

Wankie Colliery

Wankie, Rhodesia (now-Zimbabwe)

Underground coal mine

427 killed, methane and coal-dust explosion

Source: www.rhodesiana.com/archives

The explosion happened in one of the high extraction panels situated directly underneath a Mountain called Madumabisa. The initial explosion was caused by a methane explosion followed by a coal-dust explosion.

By 1972, when the explosion occurred, the Wankie Colliery Company had become a tremendous mining and commercial venture, employing four hundred Whites and four thousand Blacks.

Extract from 'Four days in June' by G.J Livingstone-Blevins, the then General Manager of Wankie Colliery.

The Explosion

At approximately 1027 hrs on Monday the 6th of June, 1972, a violent explosion ripped through the entire extent of the underground workings of No.2 Colliery. Tremendous columns of smoke and gases poured out of all the shafts, mounting hundreds of feet into the atmosphere. The Kamandama fan was totally destroyed and the Bisa fan nearly so. The Kamandama incline shaft was completely blocked by falls of roof and twisted steel girders.

For nearly four days rescue teams made the most determined efforts to reach possible trapped survivors. The Kamandama incline shaft was sufficiently cleared to permit entry of proto teams and necessary equipment. Forty-one hours after the explosion the Bisa fan was brought back into operation and sluggish ventilation current established.

Brattices were erected in the splits along the Railway Main to direct the current of air towards

the areas where the workers were known to have been at the time.

The proto teams, working in relays, penetrated 2,000 metres into the mine among scenes of the most appalling devastation. Explosions were heard at frequent intervals and freely burning fires were encountered.

In the end the rescue attempt was abandoned and the teams withdrawn. It had become obvious that nobody had survived the holocaust – 427 persons had died in one of the greatest underground explosions ever known.



[Miners Memorial at Wankie, Zimbabwe](#)

Wednesday 8 June 2011

USA: ODNR not investigating mining accident further

Extract from Point Pleasant Register, WV, USA

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio Department of Natural Resources will not be conducting an extensive investigation into a mining accident in Racine, Ohio, coal mine where a miner lost portions of three fingers.

According to Heidi Hetzel-Evans, spokesperson with ODNR's Division of Mineral Resources Management, the agency regarded the incident as "unfortunate but not related to any reportable violation" at the Yellowbush Mine owned by Gatling, Ohio LLC.

Hetzel-Evans also said the miner, identified as James Hart, 33, did not lose his little finger as reported during the preliminary investigation.

However, Hetzel-Evans said Hart did lose portions of his three fingers.



[Yellowbush Mine, Racine, Ohio](#)

The accident happened on Memorial Day and according to a preliminary report filed by the Mine Safety and Health Administration: "He (Hart) was operating a scoop tractor, and attempting to re-rail a rail car in the work area. He had the bucket/blade of the scoop down-pressed into the mine floor, which lifts the bucket-end wheels off of the ground. This lets the steering jacks slew the center frame and wheels of the machine sideways, one way or the other to reposition the wheels. The main frame of the car also moves, including the operator's cab and canopy. With the wheels in the air, the operator activated the steering to slew the car sideways, and had allegedly positioned his left hand on the outside edge of the operator's canopy. When the car frame went toward the rib as the steering was activated, the miner's hand was caught between the canopy and the rib."

Hart's injuries were not described as life threatening.

A message left with MSHA regarding the status of its investigation into the incident was not returned by press time.

Canada: 'Wake-up call' not heeded: witness

Extract from The Community Press, Ca

Madoc — A nearly fatal accident at the Canada Talc mine in 2006 should have served as a "wake-up call" for the Madoc facility at which a local worker was killed just two years later, says an Ontario Ministry of Labour engineer.

Justin Rogers was working at the Canada Talc mine for about six weeks before he died of injuries sustained while on the job, a jury heard during the first day of an inquest into his work-related death.

The inquest, aimed at examining the events surrounding the 22-years-old's death, also heard retired ministry engineer John Bergunst highlight a series of concerns he found at the site after the incident, along with testimony from Rogers' supervisor about what happened on Aug. 20, 2008.

At the conclusion of the hearing, which is expected later this week, the five-member jury panel is expected to make recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths.

During Monday's proceedings, the jury heard that Rogers worked in a confined space directly in front of where fast moving ore was released, limiting his ability to escape during a sudden flow of saturated ore.

Ministry experts also mentioned that staff at the mine used water as a method to improve the flow of blocked ore passes, which increased the possibility of a sudden flow of saturated ore spilling into the loading area where Rogers worked as a trainee skip tender.

Bergunst told the jury that parts on some of the mining machinery were not maintained properly.

The jury was also presented with a series of photo and video evidence that depicted the condition of the site after the incident.

Rogers was filling a skip with material when it began to slide on its own, engulfing him. The

incident happened about 200 metres below ground where talc is elevated to be crushed and refined.

Rogers worked from an operator platform in the loading pocket — a "tight space" located directly in-front of where the talc ore was released before being measured, loaded into a skip and elevated to the surface.

"It was bad to put the operator platform right in front the of the ore pass," were the ore from one of the two ore passes was directed right toward Rogers, Bergunsts said.

He said the ore being hauled by trucks, is dumped into a vertical opening called an ore pass through which it falls by gravity into the section where Rogers worked.

"They weren't controlling the amount of water going into the ore pass," he said

He called the water adding procedure dangerous before noting that saturated ore filled with rocks and sludge moving at a high velocity could break the control gate.

"Once it starts running you're not going to stop it," he said. "It's very dangerous. It can come out with tremendous force and velocity."

The jury heard that despite having a automated system that could be operated safely from the surface, the company had to assign a skip tender because the ore pass was prone to regular blockages and required human monitoring.

Gerald Bradley, the mine's lead hand, trained Rogers and was his supervisor the night he was killed. He testified that Rogers was skip tending within his first week of training. He said on the night in question Rogers was found under about five feet of sludge. It took the crew about 30 minutes to locate his body beneath the rubble.

"He was cold and clammy," Bradley said, sobbing.

He conceded that it was known among the workers that it wasn't recommended to use

water to clear the blockades. He said, in hindsight, Rogers was not standing in the most ideal position.

Coroner Dr. Don Cooke is overseeing the inquest. Pardeep Bhachu is acting as counsel to the coroner.

It is anticipated the inquest will include input from approximately 10 witnesses.

The Madoc operation was first established as a mine in 1896. The Marmora milling operation ground the raw talc mined north of Madoc into the finished product.

Sherritt International acquired the operation in 2007 as part of the assets of former owner Dynatec that had bought into Highwood Resources Ltd. in the late 1990s. Sherritt is a resource-based company that produces nickel, cobalt, thermal coal, oil, gas and electricity and has combined assets of close to \$9 billion.

Thursday 9 June 2011

Philippines: 2 dead in mine accident

Extract from Tempo, Philippines

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union, Philippines – Two miners died and another one was critically injured when they were hit Monday morning by falling stones inside the tunnel of Philex Mining Company mining site in Tuba, Benguet, police reported Wednesday.

Senior Superintendent Benjamin M. Lusad, Benguet police provincial director, identified the fatalities as Mardy Dulay Andiso, 31, and Jonardo Ringor, 21.

The critically injured victim – Conrado Ritumalta Tullao, 51, project supervisor of mining operations development, of Barangay Palguyod, Pozorrubio, Pangasinan – is now confined at Saint Louis Hospital in Baguio City.

Lusad said the victims were all regular employees of Philex Mining Company based in Tuba, Benguet. Police learned that the three victims were preparing the site for routine

blasting at about 3 a.m. Monday when boulders suddenly fell on the tunnel and hit them.

The victims were rushed to Sto. Niño Hospital in Tuba, Benguet where Andiso was declared dead on arrival, while Ringor succumbed to his wounds when he was transferred to Saint Louis Hospital.

USA: Official probe coal truck driver's death near Norton, Va., mine

Extract from TriCities.com

NORTON, Va. -- Mine officials are still investigating the death of a man who was killed when his coal truck rolled off a steep grade and overturned, pinning him.

Lacy Ellard Trent, of Norton, died at about 10:10 a.m. Monday, according to the preliminary report of the accident released by the Mine Safety and Health Administration Tuesday.

According to the report, Trent, 71, a contract coal truck driver, died when his loaded Mack truck flipped over at Humphreys Enterprises' No. 5 strip surface mine. The 1975 model tandem coal truck struck the berm on the outer ridge of the roadway on an 18 percent grade, and overturned, trapping him in the cab, the report states.

According to an email from Mike Abbott, public relations manager for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, the DMME received notification of the accident about an hour after it happened.

Trent was "removed from the scene and was taken to Lonesome Pine Hospital in Big Stone Gap," Abbott said.

A DMME mine inspector, supervisor, and emergency response team, as well as MSHA personnel and Virginia State Police officers were at the scene, and a joint investigation by DMME and MSHA started immediately, Abbott said.

"Preliminary findings indicate the truck ... was traveling down a steep grade at a high rate of speed," Abbott said.

Trent had worked as a contract coal truck driver for Presley Trucking in Norton for about six years. He had been working at the surface mine site all of that time, according to the accident report, and had about 25 total years of trucking experience. According to Abbott, Trent had a total of more than 40 years experience in the mining business.

Red River Coal Co. holds the reclamation permit issued by DMME for the mine, Abbott said, and Humphreys Enterprises is mining there.

Both DMME and MSHA issued closure orders for that portion of the road where Trent was killed, Abbott said.

"DMME's order was issued to preserve the scene of the accident and applies to that portion of the haul road only," he said. "Mine operations have not been shut down."

Mine personnel were interviewed Tuesday morning at the MSHA office in Norton as part of the ongoing investigation.

The mine, which employs about 25 people and 15 contracted employees, has not had an accident since 1983, according to MSHA records.

Abbott said Trent's death was the first Virginia coal mine fatality this year, and the first since Aug. 20, 2009, when a miner was killed in an underground mine by falling rock and coal, also in Wise County. It was the fifth death in the national coal industry this year.

Canada: 2 workers dead in Sudbury mining accident

Extract from Global Edmonton & Toronto Sun, Ca

Two workers have been killed following a mining accident in Sudbury, Ont.

The incident took place around 10pm ET Wednesday night at Vale's Stobie Mine, according to Vale general manager Jon Treen.

The miners were working 900 metres underground when the accident happened. They were both pronounced dead at the scene.



Vale's Stobie Mine in Sudbury, Ont.

Treen issued a statement on Thursday, saying the incident "is a devastating loss."

A local Sudbury radio station, @TheNewHot935 sent out condolences over Twitter early Thursday morning, tweeting "Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the 2 miners that died late last while working at the Stobie Mine in Sudbury."

The names of the workers and the circumstances of their deaths have not yet been released.

The two men died 3,000 feet underground, according to the union, at about 10 p.m.

"They were working near an ore pass," Vale spokesman Cory McPhee said Thursday morning. "It appears they were overwhelmed by a run of muck."

Both the day and afternoon shifts at the mine were cancelled for Thursday.

Rick Bertrand, president of United Steelworkers of America Local 6500, said union officials will also be meeting to discuss the accident.



Rick Bertrand, president of United Steelworkers Local 6500, speaks with CTV News, Thursday, June 9, 2011.

This is the first fatality at a Sudbury Vale mine, formerly Inco, since 2006.

"If it's 20 years ago, it's too recent," added Bertrand. "It doesn't matter how long ago it was."

UPDATE: One miner had 11 years experience with Vale, while the other had six years of service with the company.

"Both individuals were skilled employees and wonderful people," Vale Ontario Operations general manager Jon Treen said at a press conference in Copper Cliff Thursday morning.



Vale Ontario Operations manager Jon Treen speaks at a June 9 press conference about the deaths of two miners at Stobie Mine. Photo by Marg Seregelyi.

"They were loved and respected by their co-workers. The incident is being investigated by the Ministry of Labour, Sudbury Regional police services, Vale representatives and (Steelworkers Local 6500).

"The individuals were working in an area of an ore pass at approximately 10 p.m. when a run of material we call 'muck' occurred (and) overtook both individuals.

"Mine rescue was dispatched. However both individuals were found with no vitals and pronounced dead at the scene. This is a devastating loss. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families, friends and co-workers of these employees. We're all feeling the loss deeply."

The two miners were the only individuals working in the area at the time of the tragedy. Some 60 employees, who were working

underground at the time of the incident at Stobie Mine, were immediately evacuated to the surface and all were accounted for.

The day and night shift at Stobie Mine has been cancelled for Thursday. Vale officials will decide over the next 24 hours when to resume operations at the mine site. All other Vale operations will continue to operate.

A total of 16 mine rescue team members were dispatched to the 3,000-level to perform their duties.

Mine rescue members assembled at Stobie Mine and went underground within an hour and 20 minutes of the incident. They reportedly encountered a lot of muck.

The muck material goes through ore passes underground, from one level to another, to a conveyor belt to be lifted to the surface. At the time the miners were killed, there was no scheduled run of muck for that area.

"We aren't fully aware of the circumstances," Treen said. "There was no scheduled run of muck. We had 16 tremendous individuals put in a valiant and strong effort. It took us a while to recover the one individual. The mine rescue team did a tremendous job."

The incident is now under investigation by Vale officials, Steelworkers officials, Sudbury police and the Ministry of Labour.

There was no clear time-line given by Treen as to when the investigations will conclude and the cause of the incident determined.

"We have a good investigation team ... they will do an excellent job," he said. "We're concentrating our efforts on understanding exactly what happened and what we can do to prevent this from happening in the future."

Greater Sudbury Police are heavily involved in the investigation at this time.

"Any time there is a mining fatality or industrial accident, the police play a critical role in the investigation," Staff Sgt. Rick Waugh said.

"In fact, we take the lead position in the investigation until the circumstances can be determined there is no criminal act that lead to the accident or death.

"Although we take the lead role in the early stages, once it has been determined there has been no criminal act that lead to this tragedy, the leads role turns to the Ministry of Labour."

The incident had members of the Vale workforce rattled to the core.

"On behalf of the Steelworkers, we would like to extend our deepest condolences to the two families involved, and until the investigation is complete we really can't comment on the particulars," Joe Guido, Steelworkers recording secretary for health and safety environment committee, said.

"It would be unfair to do."

Greater Sudbury mayor Marianne Matichuk attended the press conference. Matichuk stated the community is here to help the families and friends affected by the tragedy.

"We're here to support you," she said. "It is a sad day for our community. My thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends. It is emotional. It is a very sad day."



Ore loading underground at Vale's Stobie Mine

Nickel Belt MPP France Gélinas was woken from her sleep late Wednesday night when she was told the news.

"I was sleeping and my Blackberry started going off," Gélinas said.

"After a while my husband said 'You better go see what is happening.' Then the phone calls started to come."

Gélinas said she expects the citizens of Greater Sudbury to unite and help with the healing process.

"Sudbury is a big city, but at the same time, it has this small community feel. We all know someone who works for the mines...It's time to rally together and support one another."

On Thursday, Sudbury police identified the victims as Jason Chenier, 35, and Jordan Fram, 26. Autopsies were scheduled for Thursday and Friday.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

ASH ANALYSIS Expresses the composition of ash in terms of its oxides.

Mining funny

What do you get when you throw a piano down a mine?

A flat minor!



"Bob, I was just trying to get you on the phone to see what all that noise outside was about."

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-Ed