



Mining Accident News No.1119

10 to 30 June 2011

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Friday 10 June 2011

Canada: Inquest into fatal mine accident may extend into next week

Extract from The Community Press, Ca

The inquest into the death of the Madoc miner could possibly extend into early next week.

With evidence already given by at least 10 former co-workers of Justin Rogers, the five member jury panel will now hear from several Ministry of Labour engineers, who spearheaded the investigation launched after the Aug. 20, 2008 incident.

Testimonies submitted throughout the last three days have raised a series of concerns including the possibility that the mining equipment at the Madoc-based Canada Talc Mine could have malfunctioned the night Rogers was buried by a sudden rush of muck.

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

The inquest is overseen by inquest coroner Dr. Don Cooke with Pardeep Bhachu acting as counsel to the coroner. The panel posing questions to the witnesses also includes Canada talc lawyers, representatives from the United

Steelworkers Union and Ross Rogers, the father of the deceased.

Canada Talc's parent company Sherritt International Corporation was fined \$285,000 in January 2010 for a violation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) after the death of the Madoc native.

The jury heard Rogers was killed by a flood of broken rock, sediment and water. He was operating equipment to fill bins with muck (containing rocks and fine ore) flowing down through a ore pass into the loading pocket. The bins were loaded by Rogers and sent up to the surface of the mine to be emptied.

A Ministry of Labour investigation found the worker's control station was located directly in front of the tunnel from which muck was flowing, putting the worker in danger. Water had also been added to the muck to make it flow faster.

Additionally, Rogers had not yet completed training specific to his task — he was working alone — and the mine's written procedures did not adequately address how to control a run of muck.

Sherritt International Corporation, operating as Canada Talc, pleaded guilty to failing to take the reasonable precaution of developing and implementing safety procedures and devices to protect the worker from a run of muck

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.

The operation was acquired by Sherritt International in 2007 as part of the assets of former owner Dynatec which had bought into Highwood Resources Ltd. in the late 1990s.

USA: Colorado Mine Closed After Worker Killed

Extract from KJCT8.com

GUNNISON, Colo. -- Federal inspectors have closed the West Elk Coal Mine near Somerset

after a 53-year-old man died from a fall. It happened around 3:00 p.m. Thursday.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration says the unidentified victim was a contract construction worker. The agency says he fell from a catwalk platform and struck a beam.

He was taken to Delta County Memorial Hospital, where he died.

An official who was conducting an inspection in another part of the mine at the time issued the order to close the mine.

NSW: Coalminer Peter Jones farewelled at funeral

Extract from Newcastle Herald, Aus

WHITEBRIDGE coalminer Peter Thomas Jones was farewelled yesterday in an emotional ceremony overlooking the ocean at Burwood Rotunda attended by more than 1000 grieving mourners.

Funeral celebrant Martin Allsopp told those gathered that Mr Jones - known as "Pete, PJ, Spider or Spide" - would have wanted people to "celebrate his life, not mourn his death".

But the sobs and tears that were evident throughout the ceremony showed that his premature death in a mining accident at Chain Valley underground mine last Friday was indeed at the front of many minds.

Mr Jones, 52, died after being struck by a large piece of coal that fell from the "rib" - or mine wall - behind him as he operated a mining machine by remote control during a pillar extraction.

The Lake Macquarie mine has reopened since the fatality but the area in which Mr Jones was killed remains off limits while an investigation continues.

Last weekend, Mr Jones's friends at Burwood Colliery Bowling Club had promised "the biggest funeral you've ever seen".

Mr Allsopp said the sheer scale of the gathering was a testament to Mr Jones's extraordinary popularity.

"Pete liked people and people loved him," Mr Allsopp said.



The service began and finished with a lone piper, Ian Bell Innes, who played as Mr Jones's coffin was farewelled through a guard of his colliery workmates.

At the same time, family and friends released black and white helium balloons - the colours of his beloved Dudley-Redhead United soccer club- and flew kites in the stiff westerly wind to one of Mr Jones's favourite tunes, the Mary Poppins number Let's Go Fly A Kite.

One of his brothers, Gary Jones, had the service in stitches as he recounted "Spider's" adventures through life.

Friends of his son, Kyle, spoke of a man "with the biggest heart".

Daughter Bonnie sang an ode to her father - a Sarah McLachlan song, Angel - while a tribute from his widow, Sue, described him simply as "the love of my life".

Canada: Ministry issues 9 work orders in deaths of 2 Sudbury miners

Extract from www.ctv.ca

SUDBURY, Ont. — The Ontario Labour Ministry has issued a total of nine work orders, including two work-stoppages, after two miners died underground in Sudbury, Ont.

Ministry spokesman William Lin says the work orders were issued to Vale to ensure the workplace is safe and workers aren't exposed to immediate dangers at its Stobie mine.

Several orders deal with excessive water around ore passes and travel ways, but Lin would not speculate if that's what led to the accident.

"Our investigators found an accumulation of water at the locations and our inspectors have issued orders to ensure the accumulation of water is removed and addressed," Lin said.

Jason Chenier, 35, and Jordan Fram, 26, both of Sudbury, died Wednesday night when they were overtaken by loose rock known as "muck."

It happened as the two men were working 900 metres underground in an ore pass -- a vertical opening where ore is dropped to a lower level for handling.

Lin said the inspectors will determine if health and safety regulations were followed and will ensure the workplace is safe during the investigation.

"We also determine whether or not there have been contraventions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in the past, specifically anything in relation to this incident," he said.

Sudbury police, Vale and the Steelworkers union are also investigating.

Vale hasn't set a date for resuming full production at the mine. The company is making counselling available and employees have been told they can stay home if they wish. Other work will be found for those who report for duty.

USA: New book explores infamous 1968 W.Va. mine blast

Extract from Associated Press

The author of a new book about a 1968 explosion that killed 78 West Virginia coal miners contends the tragedy behind passage of the federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act was both preventable and poorly investigated, stripping the victims' families of the justice and compensation they deserved.

West Virginia University journalism professor Bonnie Stewart worked for five years on the forthcoming "No. 9: The 1968 Farmington Mine

Disaster," digging up records that revealed the victims might have been able to escape before the blast if a safety alarm on a ventilation fan had worked.

The veteran investigative reporter found a long-buried memo from a federal inspector who determined the alarm was deliberately disabled. That may have allowed explosive methane gas to build up for as long as 90 minutes before the 5:30 a.m. blast shook the mountain on Nov. 20, 1968.

The fact that the memo was hidden -- to the detriment of widows who later sued mine owner Consolidation Coal Co. -- was typical of an investigation that Stewart believes allowed the company to intimidate witnesses.

Consolidation Coal -- now Consol Energy, based in Canonsburg, Pa. -- has evolved in the decades since to become what is now widely viewed as an industry leader in safety.

"Safety is our core value. It is more than just a priority," spokeswoman Cathy St. Clair said Wednesday. "Priorities change; values do not. We empower every employee to stop any practice he or she feels is unsafe, and we work every day to reinforce our safety values to every employee, contractor and supplier."

"No. 9," a 288-page hardcover, will go on sale this fall but became available for pre-ordering through WVU Press and Amazon.com earlier this week.

Stewart found the critical fan memo among dozens of old U.S. Bureau of Mines documents. The author's supervisor had ordered that it be filed away, and for reasons Stewart couldn't determine, it remained out of the public record until she found it 40 years later.

The federal government's final report, issued in 1990, didn't mention either the memo or the disabled fan.

The U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration did not immediately comment on the investigation. But Stewart, who read countless

transcripts and depositions, questions why top Consolidation managers were allowed to be in the room, creating an intimidating presence as rank-and-file miners were questioned.

"In my opinion," she said, "the investigation was totally bogus."

Of the 99 men in the mine, only 21 escaped. Nineteen of the 78 who died remain entombed.

Though the mine was initially sealed 10 days after the blast, it was reopened in September 1969, and Consolidation continued the recovery efforts until April 1978. Some areas had caved in and couldn't be explored, but 59 bodies were brought out.

The mine was sealed for good later that year, but Joe Megna believes searchers had come within feet of finding his father. They'd already found some of his gear.

Emilio Megna is one of the book's key characters: He planned to retire and open a gas station. The day the mine blew up, he was working his last shift.

His then-teenage son had tried to talk him out of reporting to work.

"He told his son no," Stewart said. "He said he owed it to the company."

Stewart forged friendships with some families who became central to her story, including John W. Toothman II, whose father John died in the mine, and Harrison County Circuit Court Judge James Matish, whose father Frank was killed.

"It's going to be emotional to them to read the whole story," she said.

Stewart read the portions about David Mainella Sr. aloud to his son David, who suffers from Parkinson's disease. Mainella's father survived an explosion at the same mine in 1954 only to perish in the 1968 blast.

Federal safety laws and fatality rates have improved since Farmington.

The annual number of deaths in U.S. coal mines has plummeted from the hundreds in the early 20th century to a record low of 18 in 2009.

In 2010, however, the explosion of Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine in southern West Virginia killed 29 men and pushed the total to 48.

Consol says improvements are attributable to technology, better engineering, more focused training and legislation that furthers a culture of safety.

"What those advances have meant can be readily seen in the fact that injuries have fallen by nearly two-thirds in the past 25 years while at the same time, coal production nationwide has more than doubled," St. Clair said. "More than half of U.S. coal mines now operate annually without a single lost work time injury."

Still, Stewart believes the Farmington families were denied justice.

Their lawsuits were settled for \$10,000 per miner. They didn't get retirement benefits.

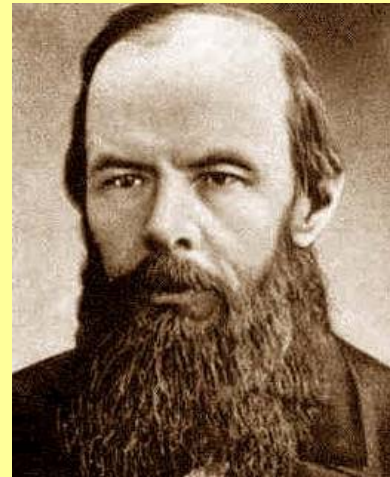
The day the company stopped the recovery effort, she said, was particularly well orchestrated: Consolidation sent someone, script in hand, to knock on each family's door while it simultaneously notified state and federal officials.

"And of course, they were already dumping rocks down the hole to close it," Stewart said.

Although the modern coal industry is safer, Stewart says much still hasn't changed: Too many companies still value the coal over men's lives.

"They know exactly what causes coal mine disasters, and yet they continue to take risks for production's sake," she said. "These are not acts of God. They know what to do. They just don't want to do it."

Quote of the week



"It is not the brains that matter most, but that which guides them -- the character, the heart, generous qualities, progressive ideas."

Fyodor Dostoevsky
(Russian writer of realist fiction and essays;
1821-1881)

Monday 13 June 2011

USA: Court rules Massey can appeal US restrictions in mine disaster investigation

Extract from en.wikinews.org

In a unanimous decision, a US federal appeals court issued a ruling Friday against the federal government, in favor of Massey Energy Co, owner of the Upper Branch Mine in West Virginia, the location of last year's mine disaster that killed 29 workers. The court ruled the company may appeal the restrictions placed on it by a government order hindering the company's ability to conduct its own internal investigation of the disaster.

The order controlling Massey's investigations into the disaster was placed on Massey immediately after the incident by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) when it seized control of the coal mine six hours after the blast on April 5.

MSHA's controls prohibited Massey from "taking or retaining photographs, collecting and preserving mine dust samples, employing mine mapping technology, and participating in or

objecting to any destructive testing of materials gathered underground." Massey said MSHA's restrictions prevented the company from evaluating the accident site before it was altered by investigators, and denied Massey the chance to gather evidence to use in the company's defense.

Massey's appeal to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission (the commission that decides disputes over mining regulations) to void the order by MSHA was denied by the commission. It based its decision on its interpretation of the Mine Act that it had no authority to consider Massey's appeal. The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit set aside this decision, finding the commission's interpretation of the act was "simply untenable" and the government's actions had denied Massey the opportunity to gather "potentially important exculpatory evidence".

The court rejected the commission's position that the Mine Act's language was ambiguous, allowing the government flexibility in its implementation. Rather, the court said, "No matter how you parse it, [the act] is a model of near-perfect clarity. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a clearer expression of congressional language." It also rejected the commission's position that the case was moot: "This case is not moot. Indeed, even the [Labor] Secretary's counsel recognized the near-frivolity of this argument, an made only a half-hearted attempt to persuade us."

The court's ruling comes after a state government-commissioned report issued on May 19 by investigators found Massey Energy responsible for the deaths of the 29 workers. The workers were killed in an explosion that could have been avoided, the report said, if Massey had put in place standard safety procedures.

"The story of Upper Big Branch is a cautionary tale of hubris. A company that was a towering presence in the Appalachian coal fields operated its mines in a profoundly reckless manner, and

29 coal miners paid with their lives for the corporate risk taking," the report read. "The company's ventilation system did not adequately ventilate the mine. As a result, explosive gases were allowed to build up." The report detailed claims Massey threatened miners with termination if they stopped work in areas that lacked adequate oxygen levels and listed numerous other state and federal safety standards that Massey failed to follow. Also blamed in the report was MSHA for failing to enforce federal regulations.

The report was considered by the those in the mining industry as especially direct and "hard hitting". It firmly rejected conclusions reached by Massey officials that the incident was caused by an unexpected, massive, and uncontrollable methane bubble eruption, an occurrence that Massey said it could neither predict nor manage.

The company immediately challenged the report and issued its own report on June 3, blaming the blast on an act of nature and denying the company's safety culture was at fault. MSHA also have an as-yet unreleased report in the works.

Tuesday 14 June 2011

NSW: New mine safety schools planned for Hunter

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The Hunter Valley based New South Wales Mine Rescue Service says it is finalising its funding application for a new virtual reality mine safety school.

It will apply to mining organisation, Coal Services, to get its four simulated mine operator training modules established around the state, including Singleton and Argenton.

Earlier this year the Rescue Service launched another virtual training tool for helicopter rescues at open-cut mines.

Service General Manager, Paul Healy says the service is applying fo several million dollars.

"Coal Services also operates a health and safety trust fund and research funding is available for matters that improve the health and safety of mine workers in New South Wales," he said.

"That is where we'll be applying for these funds from."

Mr Healy says he should know soon if the application is successful.

"I'm preparing the grant funding application as we speak and we will be constructing those operator modules over the next six months and plan to launch those on January 1 next year," he said.

"We've been building modules steadily on a year by year basis, for about five years now.

"Each year we gradually increase our library of operating modules."

This week in mining accident history

8 June 1979

Belle Isle Salt Mine

Franklin, St.Mary Parish, Louisiana, USA

Underground salt mine

5 killed, methane outburst and explosion

Source: www.usmra.com/saxsewell/belle_isle_salt_79.htm

Shortly before 11:00 p.m. on June 8, 1979, a scheduled blast was initiated in the Belle Isle Mine, a salt mine. About ten minutes later a gas explosion occurred, sending intensely hot hurricane-like winds throughout the mine. These gales blew out ventilation controls, including stoppings and doors, and upended trucks and other heavy machinery. Standing at the surface when the explosion occurred, a general mine foreman compared the explosion's sound to that of a dozen freight trains.

Twenty-two miners were underground when the explosion occurred. One group of six miners successfully dialled the surface with a make-shift telephone improvised from two damaged telephones.

Surface workers responded by clearing obstructions from a nearby shaft, and then sending down a man cage, which hoisted the miners to safety. Meanwhile, another group of seventeen miners spent about an hour inching toward a shaft through pitch-dark, intensely hot, debris-filled corridors.

Upon reaching the shaft the survivors banged on its gate, signalling their location to surface workers. Surface workers then freed the shaft's man cage, which had been lodged in the headframe by the explosion's concussive winds, and sent it down to the survivors.



Aerial photo of Belle Isle Salt Mine, circa-1961

By 2:45 p.m. the stranded miners were lifted to safety. Five other miners were killed in the explosion.

MSHA investigators determined that the scheduled, initial blast had triggered a massive "outburst" of about 15,750 tons of broken salt and flammable gases. Included in these gases were methane and minute quantities of other hydrocarbons, which were ignited by electric arcs, sparks, or burning electric cable insulation.

MSHA identified the causes of the disaster as a general lack of recognition by both MSHA and Cargill Incorporated of the seriousness of the "blow-out" phenomenon, and a lack of recognition of gas problems at Belle Isle - despite a long-standing understanding that positioning mine openings in salt structures that entrained high-pressure gases could trigger outbursts of noteworthy size at Belle Isle and neighbouring salt mines.

Editor's note: 21 miners died following a fire that broke out in the 1,200-foot shaft of Cargill salt mine on Belle Isle on March 5, 1968. One miner

died of head injuries, mostly likely from debris that struck him while fighting the shaft fire. The rest succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Cargill Inc. was fined \$45,000 for safety violations when an accident claimed the life of a miner in 1981.

By 1984 structural problems at the salt dome saw an end to Cargill's operations and the mine was flooded with water from the marsh in 1985.

Wednesday 15 June 2011

UK: Pair cleared in miner death trial

Extract from Horncastle News, UK

Two pit managers, including one from Nottinghamshire, have been cleared of safety breaches in relation to the death of a coal miner on the orders of a judge, court officials have confirmed.

A jury has been hearing how Trevor Steeples, 46, was overcome by methane gas 2,300ft (700m) underground at the Daw Mill colliery, near Coventry, in June 2006.



[Photo of Daw Mill deep mine](#)

John Alstead, 54, of Barlby, Selby, North Yorkshire, and Terry Davison, 53, of Edwinstowe, have been on trial at Sheffield Crown Court for more than three weeks. Both denied breaching safety regulations.

They have both been found not guilty on the orders of the judge, Mr Justice Macduff.

A spokesman for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said: "On legal advice, the Health and Safety Executive has decided to offer no further evidence in the prosecution of Terence Davison and John Alstead."

At the opening of the case last month, the jury was told Mr Alstead was the mine manager at the time of Mr Steeples' death.

Mr Davison was an assistant under-manager with particular responsibilities in district of the mine where the accident happened. Mr Steeples was a foreman, or deputy, in the pit and had worked in the industry for many years.

The jury was told about the brave efforts of his fellow mineworkers to get to him and then bring him out of the pit.

Daw Mill is one of the last deep coal mines still active in England. UK Coal, which owns and runs the pit, has already admitted safety breaches in relation to the death of Mr Steeples.

The firm has also admitted breaches in relation to the deaths of three other miners, two of whom also died at Daw Mill. UK Coal is expected to be sentenced later this year.

Five killed in Colombia by landslide inside gold mine

Extract from News One

Bogota, (IANS) At least five people – four men and a pregnant woman – were killed in Colombia when a gold mine collapsed in the Cauca province Tuesday, Xinhua reported early Wednesday.

The accident occurred due to a landslide inside a mine, located in the Lopez de Micay district of Cauca, said Angel Sigfrido Riascos, the director of the district government.

Riascos told the RCN radio station that the landslide buried five workers.

'This was an unfortunate situation, and the first time it has happened here,' Riascos said.

At least 216 people have been killed in mining accidents in Colombia over the past three years, according to official statistics

Friday 17 June 2011

Canada: Worker dies in vehicle mishap in Colonsay mine

Extract from The Star Phoenix, USA

A workplace accident deep underground at Mosaic Co.'s Colonsay mine killed a 35-year-old employee on Thursday.

Officials say the man was driving down a mine corridor when his vehicle flipped, causing severe injuries. He was declared dead shortly after paramedics arrived on the scene at about 11: 30 a.m.

The mine site shut down operations following the incident, but Mosaic had yet to decide if operations would restart today, company spokesperson Brad DeLorey said Thursday.

The company produces standard and granular potash at its Colonsay mine, which is about 65 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon.

Occupational health and safety (OHS) investigators were at the mine by 1 p.m. and then went underground for most of Thursday afternoon, said OHS executive director Glennis Bihun.



A 35-year-old man was killed Thursday in a vehicle rollover at the Mosaic potash mine in Colonsay
Photograph by: David Stobbe, Reuters

"The purpose of the investigation is to look into the root cause of the incident to ensure such tragedies can't happen again," Bihun said.

Investigators will also check to see if the employer and employees were following OHS legislation, Bihun said. More details of the death and the investigation are not available, she added. OHS policy says investigations should finish within three months of an incident, Bihun said. The provincial coroner is also assisting the investigation. The name of the worker has not been released.

Troy Davies of MD Ambulance said paramedics responded Thursday morning to a report of a patient who wasn't breathing following an accident at the mine. He said paramedics went underground, where they found the man had suffered a "multiple traumatic injury."

"He died from a significant amount of trauma," he said.

The United Steelworkers union will be assisting OHS officials with the investigation, said Stephen Hunt, union director for Western Canada.

"Our ambition is to find out what happened and make sure it never happens again," Hunt said in a phone interview from Vancouver.

"We're saddened. Our thoughts are with the family, the friends and co-workers. We're all too familiar with these tragedies. Workplace fatalities should be eliminated."

The deceased was a member of United Steelworkers Local 7656.

Hunt said mine deaths are happening at an alarming rate.

"It concerns us," he said. "We've lost five Steelworkers on the job in the last three weeks - two in forestry and three in mining. We know how to mine and we should know how to mine safely."

Coal mine accident in northern China kills six

Extract from channel6news, USA

HOHHOT, CHINA (BNO NEWS) -- Six people were killed on early Friday morning when a

vehicle overturned at a mine in northern China, state-run media reported. Several others were injured.

The state-run Xinhua news agency said in a brief dispatch that the accident happened at the Wusigedu coal mine in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, which is located in northern China. It happened on early Friday morning.

According to the report, a mine tram carrying fourteen miners crashed underground while turning, killing six people and injuring eight others. Their conditions were not immediately known.

Xinhua said the mine is owned by the Northern United Power Company of China Huangneng Group.

Safety conditions at mines in China have significantly improved in recent years, but they remain among the world's most dangerous with around 2,600 fatalities in 2009 alone.

One of the worst mining accidents in China in recent years happened in November 2009 when 104 workers were killed after several explosions at a coal mine in Heilongjiang province.

Canada: Rockwell reports fatality at Tirisano mine

Extract from www.sacbee.com

VANCOUVER, Rockwell Diamonds Inc. regrets to report that a fatal accident occurred at its Tirisano mine project on the morning of June 17, 2011 when an employee suffered fatal injuries at a conveyor belt installation on the mine.

Rockwell is committed to the highest safety standards at each of its operations and regrets that these efforts did not prevent this incident. All operations at Tirisano were immediately halted, the Mine, Health and Safety inspectorate of the Department of Mineral Resources was notified and has been on site. A full investigation will be conducted into the accident.

"We are deeply saddened by this terrible loss and our thoughts are with the employee's family and the local Magopa community," said James Campbell, CEO of Rockwell. "We will provide whatever support we can to help them through this very difficult time."

Six dead in Vietnam gold mine accident

Extract from Straits Times

HANOI - SIX people died when an illegal gold mine collapsed in central Vietnam, a government official said on Friday, in the latest incident of its kind.

The accident in Quang Nam province occurred during heavy rains last Sunday, said local official Pham Thi Nhu, who added that authorities had only now learned of it because the mine is in a remote forest.

Quang Nam is known for illegal gold extraction.

The official said the victims were members of an ethnic minority, a segment of the population which the United Nations says is far more likely to live in poverty.

'Sometimes, there were 200 to 300 people working in the gold mine. When we sent teams to chase them, they ran away into the forest. Then when we went home, they returned to the gold mine immediately.'

In early May local media reported that five people died when another illegal gold mine collapsed in Nghe An province of north-central Vietnam.

Saturday 18 June 2011

India: Three dead, seven rescued in Goa mining accident

Extract from www.hindustantimes.com

Three people were feared killed while seven others were rescued in a major mining accident in Goa's Sanvordem town, officials said on Saturday. The 10 people got trapped under debris when an unstable tailing stack -- a huge

heap of aluminium and silica impurities extracted along with iron ore - gave way due to heavy monsoon showers.

"The incident occurred at around 8.30pm (Friday). We managed to rescue seven people. But three others, including a minerals engineer, have been feared killed in the sludge," deputy collector Agnelo Fernandes.

Police and fire department officials were at the site, around 50 km from Panaji, but rescue operations were marred due to incessant rains.

"We are trying to locate the bodies of the three people. But the rains and the mining sludge are making things difficult," a fire department official said.

Monday 20 June 2011

USA: Authorities working to free 3 trapped miners in Kentucky

Extract from CNN

Three miners were trapped Monday in a Bell County, Kentucky, coal mine but were unhurt, according to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Communications were established with the miners, who were trapped behind water in the Jellico No. 1 mine, and emergency responders were speaking with them every 15 minutes, Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere said in a statement.

Responders were using four pumps to remove water from the mine, according to Louviere.

The trapped miners are in the highest location in the mine, and the water has stopped coming in, said Rachel Riddle, fiancée of trapped miner Pernell Witherspoon. The availability of food and supplies is unknown, but there is plenty of oxygen for the miners, Riddle said.

Riddle said she was waiting in an area church and receiving half-hour updates from the mine

safety agency, but she can't speak to Witherspoon directly.

Tuesday 21 June 2011

Key says NZ mining practices will change

Extract from The National Business Review, NZ

Prime Minister John Key has told an Australian newspaper there will be changes in New Zealand mine safety regulations.

Mr Key made the comments in an interview with The Australian newspaper when asked about Pike River, the West Coast mine where a series of explosions left 29 men dead last November.

A Royal Commission of Inquiry is to investigate the disaster at the West Coast mine, looking at whose responsibility it was, whether it could have been avoided and if there were systemic problems with implications for other underground mines.

While the Government has remained quiet on the issue of safety at Pike River, saying any comment would follow the inquiry, Mr Key acknowledged to The Australian serious deficiencies in New Zealand mine safety regulations.

Although he told the newspaper he was not in a position to "give a full response" on mining safety until after the royal commission's conclusion, he said "we do have to ask the question" about safety standards.

Mr Key said the Pike River mine, a single-entry uphill mine, "couldn't have been constructed in Australia" because it would have been "illegal".

"There will be changes in New Zealand," Mr Key said.

Joanne Ufer, the mother of Josh Ufer, one of two Australians to die at Pike River, told the newspaper she was surprised to hear Mr Key's comments about safety at the mine.

"Why didn't it come out 12 months ago or two years ago when Pike first opened? They would

have kept getting away with it but for this tragedy," she said.

"If anything at all comes out of this, it should be a change in the safety standards."

USA: 3 men freed after being trapped in Kentucky mine

Extract from Associated Press

MIDDLESBORO, Ky. -- A state spokesman says three maintenance workers have been freed and appear to be in good health after being trapped for 14 hours in a southeastern Kentucky mine.

Dick Brown, spokesman for the state energy and environment cabinet, said the men were freed Monday about 8:30 p.m.

The three, identified as Parnell Witherspoon, Doug Warren and Russell Asher, had been on dry ground about 500 feet from the mine entrance since getting caught in the mine at 6:40 a.m. when officials say a collapse at the entrance sent water from a swollen drainage ditch gushing in.

The men were nearing the end of their shift when it happened, said Eddie Starks, an MSHA official. Starks said the men used their helmet-mounted headlamps one at a time to conserve power.

2 Dead, 5 Missing in Flooded Mine in C China

Extract from Xinhua

Two miners were confirmed dead and five others remain missing after a central China coal mine flood Monday afternoon, local authorities said Tuesday.

The coal mine, located in Sandu Township of Leiyang City in central China's Hunan Province, is privately run.

Nine people were initially trapped when Duxing Coal Mine flooded around 2:20 p.m. Monday. Two miners managed to escape.

Zhou Gezhong, chief engineer with the provincial Bureau of Coal Mine Safety, said a

provincial government safety work group had been sent to help the local government with the rescue.

The reason for the accident is under investigation.

Friday 24 June 2011

B2Gold says worker dies in Nicaragua mine flooding

Extract from Reuters

B2Gold Corp said a miner, who had remained unaccounted for in last week's flooding of its Limon mine in Nicaragua, had died.

The Canadian gold producer, which had to shut down underground operations at the mine last week because of heavy rains and mine flooding, had earlier said the worker had gone missing.

The company, which also runs the La Libertad mine in Nicaragua, said underground operations at Limon will remain suspended during the accident investigation and rehabilitation.

Limon, which has a mine life of five years and produced about 40,125 ounces of gold last year, was expected to produce about 42,000-46,000 ounces this year.

The Limon mill will continue to process ore from the existing stockpile and production schedules will be adjusted to include other sources of open pit ore during the suspension of underground mining, B2Gold said in a statement.

Saturday 25 June 2011

One killed, three hurt in Ukrainian mine explosion

Extract from Xinhua, China

One miner was killed and three others injured in a blast at the Novovolynsk No.1 mine in western Ukraine, the Ministry of Emergency reported Friday.

"Two miners were injured seriously and the health of another person is currently in satisfactory condition," the ministry said.

It said the explosion occurred more than 370 meters below the surface late Thursday night, and a special commission was investigating the case but had not yet concluded the causes.

Many miners have died in mining accidents in recent years in Ukraine. Eighty people were killed in an explosion at the Barakova coal mine in Luhansk in 2000, 101 miners died at the Zasyadko mine in Donetsk in 2007 and another 37 in 2008.

Sunday 26 June 2011

8 die in china mine accident

Extract from www.presstv.com

Eight people were killed and five others injured when an iron ore mine collapsed in China's southeastern province of Fujian.

The cave-in occurred at around 1:30 p.m. local time (0530 GMT) on Friday in Peifeng Township of Yongding County, the Xinhua news agency reported on Saturday.

Police said they had detained one of the mine's three owners, who had fled after having tried to cover up the accident.

Investigators said the mine was being operated illegally and a probe into the cause of the accident was under way.

Steep rises in iron ore prices over the past several years have encouraged the development of mines with marginal ore quality and minimal safety standards in China.

China's mining industry is the most dangerous in the world. According to official figures, more than 2,600 miners were killed in accidents in 2009.

But independent labor groups say the figure could be much higher, as accidents are covered up to prevent mine closures.

The Chinese government has shut down hundreds of mines this year as part of efforts to improve safety standards.

Mining safety rules have often been ignored in favour of profit, as the economy has boomed.

Tuesday 28 June 2011

USA: Glen Daniel man killed in coal mine accident

Extract from The Register-Herald.com

A miner was crushed to death when part of a wall collapsed Monday at a mine operation in Bolt.

State Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training spokesperson Leslie Fitzwater confirmed crew leader Joseph M. Cassell, 33, of Glen Daniel, was killed at Rhino Eastern's Eagle No. 1 mine.

The accident occurred around 1:50 a.m. when "the miner (Cassell) was cleaning/shoveling along the rib to set timbers," said Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration Spokesperson Amy Louviere. The brow, which was 32 feet long and measured 100 inches high and 37 inches thick, fell and crushed the miner, she said.

A joint investigation is under way by representatives from MSHA, the State Office of Miners' Health and the mining company, said Fitzwater. Representatives from each party were on site in Raleigh County. The investigation will continue Tuesday.

"We want to stay vigilant about mining safety and make sure everyone is working as safely as possible," Delegate Daniel Hall, D-W.Va., said.

Hall was affected by this death, knowing the miner was close to his own age.

"My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. It is one of those horrible tragedies," he said.

According to MSHA, this marks the seventh coal mining fatality for 2011.

USA: Feds to brief families of W.Va. mine blast victims

Extract from Associated Press

Federal investigators are preparing to release their latest findings about the Upper Big Branch mine explosion to the families of the 29 coal miners killed in the April 2010 tragedy in southern West Virginia.

Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere says the private meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening at the agency's academy in Beaver. A public briefing is set for Wednesday.

MSHA is still investigating, but officials believe the explosion started with a small methane gas ignition fueled by coal dust. An independent investigation commissioned by former Gov. Joe Manchin reached the same conclusion last month.

Investigators have rejected former owner Massey Energy's theory that an uncontrollable flood of methane overwhelmed safety systems.

The explosion was the deadliest at a U.S. coal mine since 1970.

NZ: Recovery team enters Pike River mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A New Zealand recovery team has entered the main tunnel of the Pike River mine for the first time since a series of explosions killed 29 men last year.



Rescue workers wearing breathing apparatus entered the main tunnel this morning. (TV NZ)

Work began this morning clearing sandbags from a shipping container which has been

embedded into the entrance of the West Coast mine as a temporary airlock.

Mines Rescue staff wearing breathing apparatus entered the container late this morning and travelled up to 300 metres into the mine on a reconnaissance mission.

The underground shaft has been closed since an initial November 19 blast triggered the country's worst mining disaster in almost a century.

Steve Ellis, the manager of the mine, says the first human foray into the tunnel has gone very well.

He says the plan is to install gas monitoring equipment before installing a temporary seal about 170 metres from the entrance of the 2.3-kilometre main tunnel.

Mr Ellis says it is hard work in full breathing apparatus.

"The communication has to be by sign language and written boards. It's similar to working underwater if you like," he said.

Mr Ellis says it is likely to take five weeks to finish the first phase of the re-entry process and it may then be months before the mine is deemed stable enough to proceed further along the tunnel.

Mines Rescue teams aim to get to a rockfall behind which it is believed the miners were working.

The miners' remains are still entombed in the mine and their families have called for them to be recovered so they can receive a proper burial.

Until now, however, experts have warned that levels of methane gas within the mine, which set off the explosions in November, remained too high.

Grey District mayor Tony Kokshoorn says today's entry raises hopes that the bodies can eventually be brought to the surface.

"This is a big step forward, we've been waiting now with the families for seven months and it's been a hard, hard seven months," he said.

"We are finally on the journey and this journey won't end until we recover the bodies to the families so we can have final closure."

Bernie Monk, who lost his son Michael in the disaster, has welcomed today's re-entry, but says victims' families realise the recovery process could take two years.

"We're excited but we realise that it's a long way to go yet," he told Radio New Zealand.

New Zealand prime minister John Key says he understands that the wait to re-enter the Pike River mine has been very tough on local mining families.

"We understand the very strong desire they have for recovery of their loved ones," he said.

"My view's always been that we couldn't put at risk the lives of those who were going to undertake the recovery effort.

"But that's a matter for others to determine this is the appropriate time, therefore, we ultimately and fully support them doing that."

A Royal Commission - the most powerful inquiry available under New Zealand law - will hold hearings next month into the disaster, which claimed the lives of 24 New Zealanders, two Australians, two Britons and a South African.

NSW: Kronic banned as mine testing starts

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The New South Wales Minerals Council says it will soon be able to test Hunter region miners for a synthetic version of cannabis, which has just been banned by the state government.

The drugs are currently sold legally under names such as Kronic and Northern Lights, but from July it will be illegal to buy or use them.

The mining industry has been calling for a ban after concerns miners could be using synthetic

cannabis, which couldn't be detected by standard drug testing at mine sites.

But the Chief Executive of the New South Wales Minerals Council, Dr Nikki Williams says a test has been developed and will be available for on-site use in the next few weeks.



The New South Wales Minerals Council says it will soon be able to test Hunter region miners for a synthetic version of cannabis. (ABC News: David Hudspeth)

"The mining industry is concerned about any substance, whether it's legal or otherwise, that can affect someone's ability to do the job safely," she said.

"It's why we support the government's ban and why we as an industry have ensured that we can test for Kronic."

Psychiatrists say the products can be ten times stronger than marijuana and sideeffects can include hallucinations and paranoia.

South Australia and Western Australia have already banned the products, but they are widely available for purchase on the internet.

New South Wales Deputy Commissioner Dave Owens says police will work hard to target mail order synthetic cannabis.

"We'll work with customs, we'll work with the AFP and we'll put solutions in place for that issue," he said.

Retailers who stock the products have been ordered to destroy them before the ban comes into effect.

Wednesday 29 June 2011

Czech Republic: New World Resources confirms fatality at Darkov mine

Extract from www.stockmarket.wire.com

New World Resources Plc has announced a fatality at the Darkov mine of OKD, its Czech subsidiary.

A 49-year-old employee was fatally injured in a rail accident approximately 750 meters below ground on the afternoon of 28 June.

NWR expresses its deepest condolences to the family, relatives and friends of the deceased miner.

An investigative committee comprising members of the Ostrava Mining Authority, the local police, Darkov Mine management, OKD company and the OKD trade union is now conducting an enquiry into the accident.

The incident had no immediate impact on production.

China's coal mine safety record improves this year, says official

Extract from Xinhua

China has made new headway in coal mine work safety with fewer accidents and deaths since the start of this year, said Zhao Tiechui, head of the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety (SACMS), on Tuesday.

This year 512 coal mine accidents have been reported, down 21.2 percent from last year, Zhao said.

Up to now, the number of people who died or were missing in those coal mine accidents stood at 807, down 35 percent year-on-year, he said.

The death ratio per million tonne of coal output fell to 0.502 in the first five months in 2011, down 39.2 percent over the same period last year.

According to the administration's figures, 2,433 miners were killed in coal mine accidents in

China in 2010, compared with 2,631 deaths in 2009.

USA: W. Va. Mine Operator Kept Two Sets of Safety Records

Extract from NPR

Federal mine disaster investigators disclosed a few pieces of new information Tuesday night from their year-long look at the April 2010 deadly Upper Big Branch mine explosion. They said that:

— Mine owner Massey Energy kept two sets of records that chronicled safety problems. One internal set of production reports detailed those problems and how they delayed coal production. But the other records, which are reviewed by federal mine safety inspectors and required by federal law, failed to mention the same safety hazards. Some of the hazards that were not disclosed are identical to those believed to have contributed to the explosion.

— Portions of the Upper Big Branch mine hit by the explosion were not treated for excessive and explosive coal dust because the entryways or tunnels in those areas were too small to accommodate the machine used to spray the material that neutralizes coal dust.

— Gas readings taken shortly after the explosion showed too little methane to support Massey Energy's claim that a massive, naturally-occurring and unpredictable inundation of gas caused the disaster.

— The path of the fiery blast that accompanied the explosion traveled in more complicated and convoluted ways than reported earlier.

Those details come from a private briefing in Beckley, W.Va., held last night for the families of the 29 mine workers killed in the disaster. Six participants provided those details to NPR.

The participants said the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHSA) presented findings that support its earlier, preliminary conclusions, as well as those of an independent team of

investigators, who issued their final report last month.

Massey Energy was recently absorbed by Alpha Natural Resources in a friendly takeover. An Alpha spokesman told NPR before last night's private briefing that the company would have no comment on any new information until after a public briefing set for 10 am ET today.

MSHA told the families that its final report should be ready this Fall.

Canada: Steelworkers, Vale to investigate mine accident separately

Extract from Northern Life.ca

Steelworkers Local 6500 has decided to do its own investigation of the accident which claimed the lives of two miners at Vale's Stobie Mine earlier this month.

On June 8, 35-year-old Jason Chenier and 26-year-old Jordan Fram were killed when a run of muck overtook them at the mine's 3,000 foot level.

The union's president, Rick Bertrand, said he doesn't agree with how Vale wanted the two parties to conduct a joint investigation of the accident.

The mining company and union normally investigate workplace accidents together.

A press release from the union said Vale is "deviating from a defined and structured process that has worked successfully in the past."

Bertrand said union investigators have helped Vale officials collect information.

However, the company wants to "own" this information, and control whether the Ministry of Labour or the police see it, he said.

He also said the company wants to limit the scope of the investigation to Stobie Mine.

The union has met with Vale on several occasions, but was unable to come to an agreement about how the joint investigation should be conducted, Bertrand said.

"As Steelworkers, we wanted to be part (of the investigation), we wanted full disclosure, we wanted transparency," he said.

"By us doing it independently, we'll be able to do that...We want to get to the bottom of it. We want to get to the root cause of what made this tragic accident happen."

Vale spokesperson Cory McPhee said he finds the Steelworkers' media statements about the investigation "very unfortunate."

"They're taking a tragic situation and attempting to use it for political gain, which is distasteful," he said.

McPhee said changes were made in January to the way Vale investigates workplace accidents in all of its base metal operations to "bring consistency and quality" to the process.

The union was aware of these changes, he said. The same process was used to investigate an accident at the Copper Cliff Smelter earlier this year, McPhee said.

As for the control of investigation documents, McPhee said Vale is storing them in a central location so that they're not leaked by e-mail or on a website.

Both union and company investigators have had access to these documents, he said.

McPhee said the company has limited the investigation to just Stobie Mine. These limitations are appropriate, he said.

"You can get to the point where you investigate everything, and investigate nothing," McPhee said.

"The Steelworkers were doing this to cast a very broad net."

The Ministry of Labour and Greater Sudbury Police are also still investigating the incident.

Ministry of Labour spokesperson Matt Blajer said there are still several stop work orders in effect in the area of Stobie Mine where the accident occurred.

Thursday 30 June 2011

USA: Miner dies in accident in Harlan

Extract from Kentucky.com

The Kentucky Office of Mine Safety and Licensing is investigating a mining fatality in Harlan County, the second in the state in 2011, according to Dick Brown, a spokesman for the state Energy and Environment Cabinet.

The accident occurred at the Manalapan P1 mine at Pathfork, about 11:50 a.m. Wednesday.

The miner's name has not been released, Brown said.

Preliminary reports indicate that the miner was killed in a roof fall. The mine has been closed, pending the investigation, Brown said.

On March 25, Robert L. Cook of Inez was killed when he was pinned between a continuous-miner boom and a mine wall.



Rear dumper rolled

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AUGER

A rotary drill for soft materials that uses a screw device to penetrate, break and then transport the drilled material. Auger-type devices are popular in soft coal. To aid penetration and decrease wear on the auger rods, a hard-faced bit is used at the contact between drill and fresh material.



Vertical dozer

Mine incident photos

A short collection of mine incidents



Flattened light vehicle



Underground rollover

-Ed