



Mining Accident News No.1120

1 to 10 July 2011

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Friday 1 July 2011

USA: Family remembers miner killed underground in Harlan County

Extract from wylmt tv, Ky, USA

The investigation continues into an underground mining accident that left a Bell County man dead.

The investigation continues into an underground mining accident that left a Bell County man dead.

Officials have finished their first round of interviews with witnesses, and Manalapan Mining Company's P1 mine in Harlan County will remain closed until further notice, as the family of 49 year-old David Partin is preparing for his funeral.

Partin's family said they are staying strong and remembering a man who was a fighter.

"He was pretty much the only father I ever knew. He raised me from the time I was six," said Matthew Russell, Partin's stepson.

Russell said Partin was a hard worker.

"He'd give you the shirt off his back if you asked him for it, would do anything for anybody," said Russell.

Partin was killed Wednesday in what investigators are calling a roof collapse at Manalapan Mining Company's P1 mine in Harlan County.

The 49-year old made his home in Bell County.

"He played football at Bell County High School - was a great football player," said Charles Hunter, Partin's cousin.

Partin served in the armed forces for six years.

"He didn't have a lazy bone about him. He was a worker," said Hunter.

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services
Issue 20 of 2011

Hunter said Partin had a heart of gold. And as the investigation continues into his death, family members said they will remember a man who was always helping others.

"He's humble, just an all around good hearted guy," said Russell.

Partin also leaves behind his wife Lisa and teenage daughter.

His funeral will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Arnett and Steele funeral home in Pineville. The family will receive friends Friday at 6 p.m.

Online MSHA records show Manalapan's P1 mine received a number of citations just last week.

Officials in Frankfort said the mine could be closed for some time as a lengthy investigation will be going on. Part of that includes interviewing those who were in the mine and saw the accident happen.

Turkey ranks first in world list of deadly mine accidents

Extract from Today's Zaman

The president of the Miners' Union (Maden-İş) has said Turkey ranks first in a list of countries with the highest number of fatal mine accidents and has vowed to push the government to ratify the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 176 on safety and health in mines.

Referring to recent data from the ILO, Maden-İş President Nurettin Akçul said Turkey even exceeds China and North Korea in the number of fatal mining accidents. He said 106 out of 100,000 mine workers are killed in mine accidents in China, but this figure is 133 in Turkey.

"This is a really saddening situation for a country that boasts being the 17th largest economy in the world and boasts its rapid growth and development. Turkey should take the necessary measures for this as soon as possible and eliminate this dark picture," said Akçul. To ensure safety in mines, Akçul encourages the

ratification of the ILO's Convention 176 by the Turkish Parliament.

The convention has so far been signed by 24 countries across the world. This convention grants miners the right to freely and without prejudice notify authorities and mine management of unsafe conditions. They have the right to call for expedited inspections or investigations and they have full access to all information and data concerning mine health and safety. They also have the right to leave a mining operation in the event of serious risk. And worker representation backing these rights is guaranteed.

Akçul said Maden-İş organized national campaigns with International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and applied to relevant authorities for the ratification of this convention.

"Unfortunately, this convention has not been ratified by Turkey, which ranks first in the world in deadly mine accidents," he complained.

The latest mine accident in Turkey occurred in February when nine workers went missing after a landslide in a coal mine in the southeastern province of Kahramanmaraş. The bodies of the miners have not still been retrieved from below ground. Turkey's worst mining disaster was a 1992 gas explosion that killed 270 workers near Zonguldak.

Miners' Union (Maden-İş) Deputy President Ahmet Levent Eşiyok, also expressed concern that technical inspectors at mines are linked to employers, which can put them in a difficult position of trying to carry out thorough inspections and reporting certain shortcomings while trying to avoid confrontation with their employers.

USA: Investigation into Fatal Wyoming County Mine Accident Released

Extract from www.cbs59.com

The accident happened in January.

NEW RICHMOND -- The investigation into a fatal Wyoming County mine accident is complete.

John C. Lester Jr., 19, was killed on Jan. 27 at the Jim's Branch No. 3B mine near New Richmond.

Investigators said it appears Lester, who had little mining experience, attempted to cross a moving conveyor belt where a suitable belt crossing facility was not provided.

He became trapped in the structure.

The mine was required to provide additional training to its miners, as well as issue a safeguard notice to its employees.

USA: Greene County man charged with falsifying mine inspection reports and forging state mine foreman's certificate

Media Newswire (press release)

HARRISBURG - Agents from the Attorney General's Environmental Crimes Section have arrested a Greene County man accused of falsifying safety inspection reports at a coal mine in southwestern Pennsylvania and fabricating a bogus bituminous coal state mine foreman's certificate.

Attorney General Linda Kelly identified the defendant as Donald E. Forman, 55, of 189 Mudlick Road, Wind Ridge.

Kelly said the criminal investigation by the Attorney General's Office was based on a referral from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) following allegations by miners that safety inspection reports were being falsified at the Bailey Mine

Expansion (BMX Mine), located in Richhill Township, Greene County.

According to the criminal complaint, Forman is accused of improperly marking sections of the mine to indicate that they had been inspected within a required time period - fabricating information that miners rely on for safe operation of the mine. A review of records revealed that Forman allegedly falsified inspection reports approximately 178 times between May 2010 and August 2010, potentially jeopardizing the lives and safety of all the miners who entered the mine during those periods.

Additionally, Forman is accused of falsely claiming to be certified as a bituminous coal mine foreman, using a forged state certificate to support that assertion.

Kelly noted that DEP regulations require proper state certification for mine foreman, who oversee the inside workings of a mine and individuals who enter a mine.

Foreman is charged with two counts of tampering with public records, both third-degree felonies which are each punishable by up to seven years in prison and \$15,000 fines.

He is also charged with one count of recklessly endangering another person and two counts of unsworn falsifications to authorities, all second-degree misdemeanors which are each punishable by up to two years in prison and \$5,000 fines.

Additionally, Forman is charged with one count of unlawful conduct under Pennsylvania's Bituminous Coal Mine Safety Act, an ungraded misdemeanor punishable by up to three months in prison and a \$200 fine.

The charges were filed today before Waynesburg Magisterial District Judge Louis M. Dayich.

Forman was preliminarily arraigned today and released on \$10,000 unsecured bail. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 7th.

The case will be prosecuted in Greene County Court of Common Pleas by Deputy Attorney General Amy J. Carnicella of the Attorney General's Environmental Crimes Section.

Saturday 2 July 2011

NZ: World mining union watching Pike River

Extract from press.co.nz

The international mining community is closely watching the Pike River inquiry amid concerns about the mine's standards, a visiting union head says.

International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine & General Workers Unions (ICEM) general secretary Manfred Warda said the mining community was shocked such a tragedy could happen in New Zealand.

It would closely watch the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the mining disaster, due to start on July 11.

"There have been many questions outside of New Zealand," he said. "We are interested in whether there are lessons beyond New Zealand we have to take from this terrible accident."

Warda criticised Pike River's gas monitoring, saying he believed it was below standards used for decades in Europe.

The ventilation system was also "rather unusual" and deregulation of mining in the 1990s led to the loss of mine inspectors, he said.

Warda, whose father and many uncles were underground coalminers, said the ICEM backed an international boycott of the mine unless an acceptable plan to recover the bodies of the workers killed in the mine was in place.

"Mine workers are a special community with a very strong feeling of solidarity.

"You first need to recover the bodies."

The group, which represents 80 mining unions worldwide, also wanted to offer condolences to men's families.

Yesterday, Warda and two other ICEM officials met Greymouth Mayor Tony Kokshoorn and Bernie Monk, spokesman for families of the 29 men killed by explosions at the mine last November. They also met New Zealand Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union (EPMU) officials and would visit the West Coast mine today.

Before heading to Greymouth, the ICEM officials laid a wreath near the Canterbury Television site to commemorate Christchurch earthquake victim PhD student Didem Yaman, 31, the Turkish niece of an ICEM official.

Meanwhile, an airtight temporary seal 170 metres into the mine's tunnel to stop oxygen entering was due to be completed today.

PricewaterhouseCoopers receiver Malcolm Hollis said options to recover the 2.3km tunnel up to the rockfall would be considered at a meeting with the families' lawyers next week.

He hoped it would take about two or three months to recover the tunnel, once work to seal the mine was completed by the end of July.

Gas levels would be closely monitored next week and once the mine was deemed stable, the section could be ventilated to allow mine staff to erect two sets of double steel doors at the mine's entrance to properly seal it.

The receivers planned to put a "best endeavour" condition in the mine's sale and purchase agreement relating to retrieval of the bodies.

Potential buyers of the mine were well aware of the issues around body recovery, he said.

However, it was difficult to make body recovery a definite condition because it was unknown whether it was possible and safe, Hollis said.

"At the end of the day, safety is paramount."

The mine's sale had attracted "a good level of interest" from local and international organisations.

It was hoped its new owners could take over the mine by September or October.

China Accidents Trap 40 Miners

Extract from www.newser.com

A coal mine flood in southwestern China trapped 21 miners underground, while a cave-in at another mine today killed at least three workers and left 19 others sealed off, officials said. Rescuers scrambled to reach the miners at the Niupeng coal mine in the county of Pingtang in Guizhou province this morning, according to a staffer from the Pingtang work safety bureau.



A Chinese miner prepares to rescue survivors after a separate flood at the Shuanfeng coal mine in Shuangfeng county, Hunan province on June 3, 2011. Thousands die in China mining accidents every year. (Getty Images)

A spokeswoman confirmed rescuers were at the mine and the cause of the flood was under investigation, but did not have any details about the rescue. The official Xinhua News Agency said 29 miners were working in the mine when the flooding occurred and that eight made it out safely. In a separate coal mine accident also today, at least three miners died, leaving 19 others trapped when a portion of the mine collapsed in the city of Heshan in China's southern Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. China's coal mines are the world's deadliest. Thousands of miners are killed every year.

India: RTI activist complains against mining company

Extract from www.inewsone.com

Panaji, (IANS) A criminal complaint has been filed against the owner and officials of a mining company after three workers were killed in an accident at the mining site in Goa.

The complaint was filed before the Crime Branch Friday by right to information activist

(RTI) Kashinath Shetye. The accident took place last month at Cuddegal, 50 km from here.

The complaint accused the mining company officials of acting negligently, endangering the lives of mine workers and culpable homicide.

Three mine workers, including an engineer, were killed June 18 when an onsite canteen came down on them drowning them to death into the mining sludge.

The mining firm, Sociedade de Fomento Industrial Pvt Audut Timblo, admitted that the incident took place but called it a 'natural disaster in form of a landslide'.

Asked about the complaint, a company official declines to comment.

USA: Federal judge orders Ky. mine to stop giving miners advance warning

Extract from www.therepublic.com

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A federal judge has issued a temporary restraining order commanding an eastern Kentucky mine to stop giving coal miners advance warning about searches for cigarettes and lighters at a Pikeville mine with a history of methane gas leaks.

The U.S. Department of Labor and CAM Mining LLC jointly requested the order, which U.S. District Judge Amul Thapar signed Thursday.

The order comes a week after the Labor Department sued CAM Mining in federal court under a little-used provision in federal mine safety law that allows regulators to seek an injunction from a federal judge, bringing the mine under the jurisdiction of the judge to ensure the law is followed.

Federal inspectors had planned to search CAM Mining's No. 28 mine on June 17 after receiving a tip about smoking underground.

Typically, enforcement actions are handled by administrative law judges in less formal proceedings than a U.S. District Court.

The tougher provision was used by regulators for the first time last year against a Massey Energy-owned mine in Pike County. The company later voluntarily closed down the Freedom Energy No. 1 mine, which had repeated instances of methane gas leaks, venting problems and roof collapses.

Federal officials said since the federal Mine Safety and Health Act was passed in 1977, there have been four major mine explosions blamed on smoking. The blasts killed a total of 24 miners, including a 1981 explosion that killed 13 at a Grundy Mining Co. mine in Whitwell, Tenn., court documents said. It was ignited by a cigarette lighter.

Quote of the week



"Real excellence and humility are not incompatible one with the other; on the contrary they are twin sisters."

Jean Baptiste Lacordaire
(French ecclesiastic 1802-1861)

Sunday 3 July 2011

Rescuers rush to reach 19 trapped miners in S China

Extract from Xinhua

HESHAN, Guangxi - Rescuers are working to remove a buildup of sludge from the primary mineshaft of a coal mine in South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, hoping to reach 19 workers who were stranded in the mine after it became flooded and collapsed on Saturday.

"The rescue work is moving along at a much quicker pace," said rescue worker Huang Xiangxiong.

However, a round of heavy rains that started at 3:30 pm Sunday may trigger more collapses or floods.



Two people check a huge pit after floods hit Heshan, South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, where three trapped miners were killed and another 19 are still underground, July 2, 2011. [Photo/Xinhua]

Huang and his colleagues have been working in the mineshaft on rotating 8-hour shifts.

"The density of the toxic gas in the mineshaft remains high, and we have to be wary of more collapses," Huang said.

Huang said that although he and his fellow rescue workers have been able to penetrate as far as 350 meters into the main shaft, they have not yet been able to reach the workers. The miners are believed to be stranded at a location 390 meters underground.

Huang and his colleagues met the surface of the mine's floodwaters when they hit 350 meters. "Our emergency rescue headquarters has laid out a network of 17 drainage pipes. We hope to remove the water soon," Huang said.

The collapse occurred around midday Saturday in the suburbs of the region's city of Heshan. Investigators said the collapse was caused by continuous heavy rains.

Recent downpours forced mining authorities to halt mine operations in the region between June 29 and July 1. Mining operations were resumed on Saturday.

Seventy-one miners were in the mine when the collapse occurred. Forty-nine managed to escape, while three others perished in the collapse. The bodies of the dead miners have been retrieved.

Saturday saw another major mine accident in Southwest China's Guizhou Province, where 23 people remain trapped in a flooded mine. Floodwaters continued to pour into the mine on Sunday, despite round-the-clock efforts to drain the water.



Rescuers prepare to start work hoping to reach workers trapped in the mine in Heshan, South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, July 2, 2011. [Photo/Xinhua]

Tuesday 5 July 2011

Canada: Worker sues Yukon mine over accident he claims caused brain injury

Extract from The Canadian Press

WHITEHORSE: An Edmonton worker who was injured while mining in the Yukon is suing his former employer and two other employees for damages.

A statement of claim filed in Yukon Supreme Court last week says Timothy Hansen was operating a Caterpillar 330 loader in July 2009 when rocks or other debris fell from above, striking his head and body. He was taken to hospital and diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and musculoskeletal injuries.

Hansen says he continues to suffer pain and dysfunction in his left hand and arm, as well as emotional distress.

In his suit, Hansen accuses two men of negligence leading to a lack of safety guards on the loader, a broken cab window, and lack of other safety equipment. He claims he told one of the individuals his concerns, yet alleges nothing was done to address them.

Hansen names Capstone Mining, the owner of Minto Mine, and Pelly Construction, the contractor that employed Hansen, as responsible parties. The claim does not clarify if the rocks fell from the man's own loader bucket or elsewhere.

According to his claim, the man is still receiving medical treatment for his injuries and continues to suffer the effects of the injury. He claims to have a reduced quality of life, a reduced ability to earn money, and an "impaired ability to engage in occupational, domestic, social and recreational activities."

He is asking the court to grant him regular and special damages, as well as claiming his insured benefits on behalf of the Yukon government.

USA: Utah names new coal safety chief

Extract from Desert News, Salt Lake City, USA

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah has a new head of mine safety. The Utah Labor Commission has named David "Kent" Houghton as the new director of the state Office of Coal Mine Safety.

The office was established in 2008 at the recommendation of the Utah Mine Safety Commission following the Crandall Canyon Mine disaster. In August 2007, six miners were trapped when an area of the mine collapsed.

Three rescuers died days later trying to reach the trapped miners. The mine has since been permanently shuttered, and their bodies were never recovered.

The office was created to maximize mine safety, prevent coal mine accidents and provide for effective accident response in Utah. Houghton replaces Garth Nielsen, who was appointed as the office's first director in July 2008.

Houghton has been employed in the coal mining industry in Utah for 36 years, according to a news release.

"The coal mining industry is of vital importance to the nation's energy needs and is equally important to the state and local communities for jobs and the economic development the industry brings," Houghton said. "The Office of Coal Mine Safety can best serve the state and the industry by providing leadership in the areas of safety, training, education, technical development and disaster planning."

As director, Houghton will be responsible for monitoring coal mine safety and act as Utah liaison to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

"This will help the coal mine industry meet their safety objectives and provide for the safety of the coal miners," Houghton said.

Wednesday 6 July 2011

Zambia's Konkola Copper Mines Accident Kills 1

Extract from Fox Business, UK

Konkola Copper Mines, Zambia's second-largest mining company by output, said Tuesday that one miner died after an accident during maintenance at its Konkola Mine division, located in Chililabombwe.

The miner, who was working for a company contracted by KCM to repair the mine's concentrator, died Monday, spokesman Shapi Sachinda said in a statement.

"KCM has launched investigations into the cause of the incident," he said, without providing details on the cause of the accident or any impact it will likely have on output.

"The company would like to assure that it will take corrective measures to prevent similar incidents from reoccurring," he added.

Konkola Copper Mines is a unit of London-listed Vedanta Resources PLC (VED.LN).

Awards Offered for Rescue of 19 Miners Trapped in S China Mine

Extract from Xinhua

Rescuers have been offered 2 million yuan (309,143 U.S. dollars) for each miner they pull out alive from a collapsed colliery in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, local authorities said Wednesday.

Six of the 19 trapped miners were believed to be 320 meters underground and had the highest chance of survival, "so they are our priority now," said Zhou Changqing, deputy commander of the rescue command center.

Guangxi Heshan Coal Mining Company, which runs the mine located in the suburbs of Heshan City, has sent a representative to the scene.

"We are very sorry for what has happened and our company is under unprecedented mental and moral pressure. We will do our utmost to rescue them," said Yang Yaodong, director of the company.

Yang said the company will adopt advanced mining technologies and improve miners' working environment so as to avoid such tragedies in the future.

More than 80 rescuers are working around the clock to dig through a sludge-flooded tunnel to reach the miners.

The collapse occurred midday Saturday after rain-saturated earth on the surface collapsed into a shaft.

Forty-nine of 71 miners managed to escape soon after the collapse, and rescuers have retrieved three bodies of dead miners.

The families of the three dead have signed compensation deals with the mining company with each family being expected to get 400,000 to 600,000 yuan in compensation. The miner's bodies have been cremated.

Thursday 7 July 2011

WA: Driverless mine trucks spark safety fears

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) says it is concerned driverless truck technology in the mining industry could create hazards.

Fortescue Metals Group yesterday announced it will roll out 12 driverless haul trucks at its Solomon iron ore project in the Pilbara by 2012 and expand the fleet to 45 by 2015.

Rio Tinto last month announced it would double its fleet of the machines to 10 in the Pilbara by April next year.

Gary Wood from the CFMEU's mining and energy division says he is yet to be convinced the technology is safe.

"You would have unmanned equipment being expected to work in the areas where there is manned equipment, light vehicles etc," he said.

Mr Wood says long-term, the technology is also likely to result in fewer job opportunities for truck drivers and operators.

Africa: Mining on hold after worker's death

Extract from www.iol.co.za

Underground operations at Northam Platinum's Zondereinde division were suspended on Thursday following the death of a worker in an underground locomotive accident, said the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

A worker died when two locomotives collided on Wednesday, said NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka.

"Operations at the mine have been suspended for investigations to take place," he said.

Investigations normally take a week.

Northam Platinum spokeswoman Marion Brower confirmed that a ministerial inquiry was taking place.

"We will only resume underground operations once the underground area is rehabilitated and remedial plans are presented to the minerals and energy department," she said.

NSW: Hunter miner loses injury appeal

Extract from Australian Mining

Wambo coal mine has lost its appeal against a payout for a worker injured on site.

Roche Mining, the operators of Wambo, was ordered to pay casual worker Graeme Jeffs \$1.2 million after he fell 2.5 metres from the cabin of a 50 tonne truck in 2003, according to The Herald.



The mining company appealed against the payout, but lost the appeal yesterday.

Jeffs was reportedly unable to work after the fall, after fractures in his pelvis were found.

The Supreme Court ruled that the method for entering the truck was dangerous and the incident was avoidable.

However, Roche stated that they did not breach their duty of care and there were no reports of falls similar to Jeffs prior to the accident.

The judges "concluded that the accident was caused both by the design fault in the access to the driver's cabin and Roche's failure to devise a safe system of work to obviate the risk to which

it exposed drivers such as Jeffs," Justice Ruth McColl said yesterday.

Wambo is owned by Peabody Energy.

China: 4 dead, 1 injured in Xinjiang coal mine gas blast

Extract from Xinhua

URUMQI - Four people were killed and another was seriously injured on Thursday in a gas explosion that occurred in a coal mine in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

The accident took place at 10:50 am in a mineshaft in the Xinyuan Coal Mine, which is located in Barkol county. Twelve workers were in the mineshaft when the explosion occurred, according to a spokesman from the region's coal safety supervision bureau.

Rescuers managed to pull seven of the workers out of the shaft, with one injured worker sent to a local hospital for treatment.

The Xinyuan Coal Mine was built in 1997 and has an annual coal production volume of 90,000 tonnes.

The cause of the explosion is under investigation.

Friday 8 July 2011

WA: BHP Billiton suspends Port Hedland works after contractor dies at Finucane

Extract from The Australian

GLOBAL mining giant BHP Billiton suspended iron ore rail and port operations at Port Hedland in Western Australia's Pilbara region following the death early this morning of a 27-year-old contractor at the miner's Finucane Island ore loader.

The man, who is yet to be named, was killed shortly after midnight when a crane collapsed on the platform he was standing on.

Finucane Island is the former Goldsworthy mining loader to the west of the port, which is now used exclusively by BHP and which will be the basis of a major expansion planned to commence in 2105.



BHP workers in an underground harbour tunnel between Nelson Point and Finucane Island (file picture). *Source: Supplied*

The expansion project, called the Outer Harbour Development, it is still at the planning phase and last night's accident is understood to have been unrelated.

Finucane Island is one of two loading points used by BHP at Port Hedland, the other being the original Nelson Point operation, across the harbour from Finucane.

The only other iron ore exporter at Port Hedland, Fortescue Metals Group, has not been affected, according to a Fortescue statement.

A BHP statement earlier today said: "The onsite emergency team has been activated and external emergency services including police are attending the scene.

"At this stage we are unable to provide any further detail about the incident, but will do so as soon as possible during the day.

"The company's port and rail operations are in the process of being suspended until further notice."

Port Hedland is the world's second-largest iron ore port after the terminals at Sao Luis in Brazil, the export point for Vale SA's massive Carajas iron ore deposit.

A spokesman for South Hedland police said it was too early to identify the cause of the accident but that it would be the subject of an

inquiry by the Department of Mines and Petroleum.

WA: Miners' anger over BHP death site orders

Extract from Australian Mining

Miners were ordered back to work just hours after a man was killed at BHP's Port Hedland facility.

The unnamed 27 year old contractor, who was employed by conveyor operator Fenner Dunlop, was killed on Wednesday night when a crane toppled over at BHP's Finucane Island iron ore facility at Port Hedland.



A worker at the site has accused BHP of 'ruthlessness' after employees were 'instructed' to work their day shifts on Thursday, according to The West.

While it was reported the site went into lock-down soon after and work was halted, workers on site were told they had to begin their 12 hour shifts from 6am, despite the accident occurring only a few hours before hand.

According to the source, workers at the iron ore facility only learnt of the accident when they arrived at work and saw a cordon.

Many walked off the job in protest.

"We feel absolutely disgusted at what's happened," the man said.

"All our workers have said 'no, you can't go back to work, that's just wrong'."

BHP has confirmed that staff at Finucane Island were told to return to their shifts the next day.

The miner's vice president Ian Fletcher said BHP had a high safety record and that incident at midnight on Wednesday "was not a repetition" of previous fatalities.

However, recent comments to *Australian Mining* from alleged partners of workers at the site deny BHP forced staff to work.

They claim that all employees were sent home and given the option to return to work.

This accident has drawn attention to the number so safety inspectors in the industry, despite the fact the West Australian mines minister Norman Moore announcing the number of inspectors would double, late last year.

In December Moore announced the appointment of 21 new inspectors to the resources safety division of the Department of Mine and Petroleum (DMP).

However, shadow mines minister Jon Ford said the state would have "blood on its hands" if it continued to neglect mine safety in the Pilbara.

Ford said there was only inspector based in the Pilbara compared to nearly 15 in the Eastern Goldfields.

Harmony halts ops at S.Africa mine after fatality

Extract from Reuters Africa

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - Harmony Gold Mining, South African third largest gold miner, suspended operations at its Unisel mine in South Africa after a worker was killed in an accident, it said on Friday.

"The mine has been closed until such time as all investigations into the accident have been completed," the company said in a statement.

Saturday 9 July 2011

NZ: Pointing the finger

Extract from press.co.nz

The Pike River royal commission of inquiry starts on Monday and will spend at least the rest

of the year considering how a coalmine exploded, killing 29 good men. What will it find?



Mines Rescue enter the Pike River Mine for the first time since the mine explosions on November 19, 2010.
Photo Iain McGregor

Perhaps the commission will conclude it was largely a blameless accident. As often proves to be the case in tragic disasters like airline crashes, a sequence of events, each minor or controllable in itself, happened one atop another to produce a catastrophe.

A ventilation fan may have failed because of a mechanical fault. Five minutes later, a coincidental rockslip might have exposed a trapped pocket of methane, immediately flooding a section of mineshaft with explosive gases.

Then, despite a carefully controlled underground environment, there was some source of ignition - maybe the hot blades of one of the mining machines, or even the fan trying automatically to restart with an electrical clunk. The story could be one of a freak combination of circumstances. Just the worst of luck.

Alternatively, the commission could swing to another kind of extreme. Point the finger at Rogernomics.

Pike River may turn out to be judged the end result of New Zealand's 1990s ideology-driven experiment in the privatisation of responsibility. Years of accumulated mine safety wisdom being dumped as too "nanny state", an unnecessary overhead that was stifling business innovation.

And so New Zealand went for an inspector-lite health and safety regime where too much expectation ended up loaded on to a small, cash-strapped, start-up mining company.

Pike River Coal might have boasted to its stock market investors that it was a shining example of a Kiwi self-regulatory style of operating. It led the world with its eco-friendly "surgical mining" techniques. It was a signed-up member of New Zealand business's voluntary Zero Harm Workplaces initiative. Boasts which turned out to be sadly hollow.

Grief, especially public grief, is usually an emotion looking for someone to blame. But already - despite a succession of investigative television specials, bloggers offering "informed" speculation, and even some batty conspiracy-mongers claiming the explosions were deliberately triggered to allow a foreign take-over of New Zealand mining - the final verdict on Pike River looks still to be bewilderingly open.

It really is a case of many more questions than answers at the moment.

"I tell you what, there's a helluva lot to come out," says Bernie Monk, Greymouth publican and spokesman for the Pike River mine families.

The families, represented by Christchurch QC Nick Davidson, will be a driving force at the inquiry, both because they are angry and seeking answers, and because they believe they have a lot of inside information to put on the table.



Iain McGregor
The danger of methane - flames pour from a ventilation shaft after the fourth explosion in the Pike River Mine.

Monk claims there will be revelations from the beginning: "Things we have known for months, but the public haven't heard about."

Feelings are running high, and clearly it will be some task for the inquiry to give submitters a chance to have their say, while not letting the process come off the rails.

The Pike River mine explosion occurred on Friday, November 19, last year. Almost immediately, Prime Minister John Key promised an inquiry, and soon this was promoted to a full royal commission like those that followed other large loss of life incidents such as Erebus and Cave Creek.

Few have quibbled with either the scope or the staffing of the inquiry. The terms of reference announced at a preliminary hearing in April appear to cover every possible avenue of questioning.



[Pike River Mine](#)

West Coast-based Green Party MP Kevin Hague says despite both National and Labour governments possibly being in the firing line for past regulatory mistakes, it looks like the commission has been left free to take the broadest possible view of what happened and the lessons that need to be learned.

Likewise, the choice of the three commissioners has been widely praised. The chair is Justice Graham Panckhurst, a High Court judge

originally from Reefton with a reputation as an independent thinker.

Panckhurst will be flanked by a former Inland Revenue commissioner, David Henry, and the Queensland mine safety commissioner, Stewart Bell.

New Zealand mine safety consultant David Feickert, himself an international expert advising the Chinese coalmining industry, says he is very impressed with the panel. "I think Stewart Bell's presence will ensure that 'best practice internationally' will be the test - Queensland is about as good as it gets in mining safety."

Yet Davidson speaking for the families, and also other lawyers representing submitters, have voiced a concern the commission is allowing too little time for the hearings.

The submissions are to be divided into four phases.

Next week begins with a fortnight on "context" - an overview of the history of the mine and New Zealand mining regulations.

Then it is planned to spend three weeks in September covering the search and rescue operation. The two remaining sessions, their dates still to be fixed, will examine the actual reasons for the explosion and the policy implications of whatever is found.

Monk, whose 29-year-old builder son Michael died at Pike River, says it sounds like an exhaustive process.

"But there's no way the commission is going to have time to cover everything, that's my opinion. With the time limits, a lot could be swept under the carpet, the public never hear about it."

Another worry of many is that there are also two criminal investigations in train, one by the police, one by the Department of Labour. Both of these are themselves massive operations - the department says it is its largest health and safety case ever, while the police plan to interview 400 people, including 20 witnesses overseas.

Ideally, these investigations would follow the royal commission, which exists to answer the public interest questions, rather than pursue prosecutions, and so operates with considerably greater openness and freedom.

The fear is that with possible charges hovering in the background, key witnesses will be reluctant to speak candidly at the commission hearings.

"The hearings could come to a grinding halt," says Andrew Little, the former national secretary of the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union.

However, the department is statute-bound to report within six months and that deadline has already been extended once by the High Court. The police are also under pressure not to delay.

Then casting the greatest shadow over the inquiry is the fact that no-one has been inside deep enough to recover the bodies.

Some robot camera recordings have been made. But there has been no forensic investigation of what actually took place on the day, or the days following.

And with confusion continuing over whether anyone ever will be allowed back into the blast area, it is hard to see how many of the most critical questions can be answered.

This is certainly the view of the families. "That's what we've been plugging for from day one. Before the royal commission starts, it's really important to get down there and find out what actually did happen," says Monk.

The hunt to find out what went wrong at the Pike River coalmine could have a lot of targets when the question turns to who is to blame.



Engineering safety seminars

The 21st **Mechanical Engineering Safety Seminar** will be held at Sydney Olympic Park, on Wednesday 10 August and Thursday 11 August 2011.

The 21st **Electrical Engineering Safety Seminar** will be held at Sydney Olympic Park, on Wednesday 9 November and Thursday 10 November 2011.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/resources/seminars-and-conferences>

This week in mining accident history

9 July 1918

Stanrigg Colliery

Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, Scotland, UK

Underground coal mine

19 killed, inrush of moss

Source: <http://www.monklands.co.uk/stanrigg/>

Mine accident at Airdrie - 19 workmen entombed

An alarming pit accident by which 19 miners were entombed occurred at Stanrigg Colliery, near Airdrie.

Over 70 men were in the pit when the moss above the workings subsided into the hump section. With the exception of 19 they managed to escape to the surface. A rescue party from Coatbridge was summoned, and operations were at once begun to try and reach the imprisoned miners. The moss-slip affected an area of about one acre. The moving mass filled up the roads in the pit, cutting off the escape of the men. The rescue party set to work immediately on arrival to bore through, so that they might get into communication with the entombed men and pass food to them. Subsequently an attempt was begun to reach them by sinking a shaft through the moss, but up till midnight it had not succeeded. The pit is situated in a desolate region in the hills amongst the moors.

[*Glasgow Herald, July 10, 1918*]

The Pit Accident at Airdrie- Feared Loss of 19 Lives

The 19 miners who failed to escape from the pit at Stanrigg Colliery, in which there was a heavy subsidence on Tuesday, still remain entombed in the mine. The borings which were made yesterday with a view to establishing communication with the men revealed that there is water and black damp in the vicinity of the coal face at which the squad were engaged. The

hopes which were at first entertained that the men might be extricated alive have therefore diminished. Great difficulty is experienced in the cutting and boring operations which are carried on with the object of reaching the isolated section of the pit, and the rescue workers are not very sanguine of an early completion of their task. From the slow progress made up till last night the possibility has to be recognised that it may take several days to clear a way to the damaged portion of the mine.

Stanrigg Colliery, which is owned by Messrs M'Cracken Bros., is situated on moorland about three miles from Airdrie. The mossy surface, saturated by the recent heavy rainfall, is soft and bog-like at the part where the subsidence occurred. The ground has sunk perceptibly over an area about an acre in extent, and is broken by numerous fissures. The section of the pit affected is at the eastern extremity of the colliery. The workings at this point are on a higher level than any of the other seams, the distance below the surface being about 11 fathoms. The men who were at work on an adjacent but lower seam succeeded in making their escape, but every one of the miners in the hump section, as it is called, was evidently trapped by the fall of moss. The squad at full strength would have numbered 22, but three of the men were absent. One of the miners who escaped stated that he had passed near the hump section about 10 minutes before the accident happened. As he was going back again towards it he met a draw-man running toward the shaft, shouting "The moss, the moss." He saw the moss streaming down into the roadway, and ran for the pit shaft commonly used by the men. Seven of the miners got up by that shaft. The others had to make their escape by the outlet or emergency shaft farther west. Over 70 men were in the pit at the time of the accident, which took place about half past ten in the forenoon. If the men in the hump section were not overwhelmed by the subsidence they were completely cut off by it from exit by either of the

shafts, the mass of soil blocking up the only roadway they could use.

Three separate methods of trying to reach the entombed men have been adopted. Borings have been made with the view of getting into speaking communication with them and passing down food, and an attempt has been made to sink a shaft immediately above the seam. In both these undertakings the results yesterday were disappointing, the soil being too marshy and unstable for the sinking of a shaft, while the boring, as stated, indicated the presence of gas and water in the workings. The other course followed, and the one which offers most encouragement, is that of driving a roadway from the main shaft by way of a disused working. The rescue party are working in relays, and the operations are going on continuously. [*Glasgow Herald July 11 1918*]

Last night all hope of recovering the men entombed in Stanrigg pit, near Airdrie, was officially given up when the bore, which was being driven through the face, was finished about 6 o'clock. It was found, as was anticipated, that there was the depth of 8 foot 9 inches of water, which proved there could be no chance of any of the men being still alive. Those in authority discussed the question of attempting to recover the bodies, and Mr Walker, his Majesty's Inspector of Mines, decided that a regular shaft should be sunk as soon suitable arrangements could be made. [*Scotsman July 12 1918*]



[Stanrigg memorial site](#)



List of Dead

- **Thomas Brady**, 18, coal miner, single, Station Row, Whiterigg (body not recovered).
- **William Brady**, 49, coal miner, married, Station Row, Whiterigg (body not recovered) father & son
- **Robert Campbell**, 30 coal miner, married, Low Meadow Head (body not recovered).
- **William Campbell**, 48, coal miner, married, Ford Bridge Cottage, Barblues (body not recovered).
- **Alexander Gilchrist**, 30, coal miner, single, Wattstown (body not recovered).
- **Leslie McCracken Gilchrist**, 15, drawer, single, Wattstown
- **William Gilchrist**, 32, coal miner, single, Wattstown (body not recovered). - 3 brothers
- **Neil Livingston Thomson Lindsay**, 16, drawer, single, Bridge St, Longriggend
- **Bernard Augustus McAdam**, 14, coal miner, single, Back Row, Greengairs
- **David McNiven**, 17, coal miner, single, Browns Building, Greengairs
- **William Marshall**, 31, coal miner, married, McCracken's Place, Greengairs
- **Alexander Park**, 55, coal miner, single, Park Place, Greengairs (body not recovered).
- **Robert Pollock**, 49, coal miner (Army Pensioner), married, Drumbreck, Eastfield (body not recovered).
- **Robert Pollock**, 15, coal miner, single, Drumbreck, Eastfield (body not recovered) – father & son
- **John Queen**, 59, coal miner, widower, Brick Row, Dargavil
- **James Munro Sneddon**, 14, coal miner, single, Back Row, Greengairs

- **John Sneddon**, 31, coal miner, married, McCrackens Place, Greengairs (body not recovered).
- **George Templeton**, 37, coal miner, married, Low Meadow Head
- **William Douglas Williamson**, 27, coal miner, married, Arthur's Land, Plains (body not recovered).

Sunday 10 July 2011

WA: Man's legs 'crushed' on Fortescue worksite

Extract from WAtoday.com.au

A man is in intensive care at Royal Perth Hospital after he reportedly lost one leg and had the other leg crushed in an accident on a Fortescue Metals Port facility in Port Hedland on Friday afternoon.

A Fortescue Metals Group spokeswoman confirmed a FMG contractor in his 40s suffered serious injuries in an accident.

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union state secretary Kevin Reynolds said he understands the man lost one leg and had the other severely crushed.

Advertisement: Story continues below

The FMG spokeswoman said the worksite was in maintenance shut-down when the accident happened.

The man was first rushed to South Hedland Hospital and then flown to a Perth hospital by the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the FMG spokeswoman said.

The incident, believed to have happened after a hydraulic ram failed, follows the death of a 27-year-old contractor at BHP Billiton's Pilbara industrial site on Thursday.

Mr Reynolds said while these two accidents represented the most serious kind, but less serious accidents happened on mine sites around the state every day.

"It's becoming epidemic, the push on these iron ore sites," he said.

He said the government did not provide inspectors on sites and union officials were restricted to do safety inspections.

"This is the result of that," he said.

"Workers are too frightened to speak up as they fear they will be sacked.

"They (the mining operators) are just chasing the almighty dollar."

A Royal Perth Hospital spokesman said the man was in a stable condition.

3 rescuers die of heat stroke at coal mine in E China

Extract from Xinhua

JINAN - Three rescuers died of heat stroke in fighting a coal mine fire on Sunday in East China's Shandong province, according to the rescue headquarters of Zaozhuang Fangbei Coal Mine.

The rescuers were obstructed by fire burning points under the mine shaft as they were scrambling to approach 28 miners who have remained trapped since the mine fire broke out on Wednesday.

A spokesman with the rescue headquarters said all of the three rescuers died of heat stroke because of working in high temperatures.

The rescuing teams progressed slowly, as the temperature in the mine shaft reached 60 degrees Celsius and exceeded 80 degrees in some areas, rescuers said.

A total of 91 people were trapped after an air compression device located in a parking lot 255 meters underground caught fire at 6:45 pm Wednesday. Sixty-three miners were rescued as of Thursday.

More than 1,000 rescuers have worked in rotation in the rescue operation.

Four bodies retrieved from collapsed coal mine in S China

Extract from Xinhua

Rescuers on Sunday retrieved the bodies of four miners from the collapsed Heshan Coal Mine in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, where two miners were miraculously pulled out alive in the morning 188 hours after the accident occurred.

The fatalities have increased the death toll in the mine collapse accident to eight.

A total of 71 miners were working underground when the accident occurred on July 2 -- 49 managed to escape.

Rescue works are still going on for 12 people that remain trapped underground.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AUGER MINE

A system of mining that involves the use of a large diameter scroll drill to recover coal near seam outcrops or in open-cut mines where the strip ratio exceeds economic limits. It is also used where the terrain is too steep for overburden removal and where recovery by underground methods would be impractical or unsafe.



Auger mining

-Ed