



Mining Accident News No.1122

23 to 31 July 2011

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Saturday 23 July 2011

India: Goa asks 100 mines to beef up monsoon maintenance

Extract from TwoCircles.net

Panaji: The Goa government has asked the 100-odd operational open cast iron ore mines in Goa to beef up monsoon maintenance operations

after two mining accidents killed three people and left at least a dozen others injured.

Director for Mines Arvind Loliengar told IANS Friday that while no ore excavation operations were conducted during the monsoon season because the mining pits were waterlogged, the mining companies have been asked to take steps to ensure that accidents do not happen.

"There have been two (accidents) already this year. We do not want any more to happen," Loliengar said.

Three people were washed away, but saved later, on July 16 at the Vedanta Resources-owned Sesa Goa after the waterlogged mining pit developed cracks and torrents of water burst out.

While a government inspection report has suggested that technical faults caused the accident, in its statement the mining firm blamed the accident on excessive rains.

"Due to incessant rains of about 200mm in about eight hours in continuation of consistent heavy rains during last three days, water has flowed in to the adjoining areca-nut plantation and paddy fields," the statement by the company's general manager M.K. Reddy said.

"And this has occurred in spite of taking best mine management practices. The matter is being technically investigated for future mitigating measures in all mines of Sesa," Reddy added.

Last month, three people, including a site engineer, were killed, and several others were injured in another mining accident at Cuddegal, at a mine owned by Sociedade Fomento Pvt. Limited. In that accident, a piled stack of ore gave way and buried the three in mining sludge.

India: Body of Shahpura mine collapse victim recovered

Extract from The Times of India

JAIPUR: Almost 32 hours after a man working at an illegal mine was killed at Shahpura, his body trapped among the boulders was recovered by rescue workers on Thursday evening. District administration officials have announced an ex-gratia of Rs 50,000 for the kin of the deceased.

On Wednesday morning, a portion of the mine collapsed followed by a landslide of boulders on the vehicles, including half-a-dozen tractor trolleys, below. A man, identified as Mangi Balai (45), was killed in the accident but rescue operations could not extract his body from among the boulders.

Later, Mangi was identified as a sub-contractor and not a labourer at the mining site.

Talking to reporters on the tragic death of Mangi, local MLA Rao Rajendra Singh said, "It is very disappointing that neither the police nor the mining department intervene in time to stop illegal mining in the region."

Sunday 24 July 2011

UK: Mining giant under fire for worker deaths

Extract from Scotland on Sunday

VEDANTA Resources, the London-based mining giant buying a substantial part of Cairn Energy's Indian business, has come under intense fire from a shareholders' group over its safety record, with one worker dying every two weeks.

Influential investors' advisory group Pirc has called on shareholders at Wednesday's agm to reject the directors' pay report, which proposes that the total package for executive chairman Anil Agarwal should jump by 26 per cent to £1.7 million.

Vedanta, which is listed in London but based primarily in India, also plans to raise deputy

executive chairman Navin Agarwal's package by 39 per cent to just under £1.4m and chief executive Mahendra Mehta's package by 52 per cent to £482,000. Navin Agarwal is Anil's brother.

But Pirc believes there is an "apparent contradiction" between the company's stated bonus policy and making payouts - including £500,000 for Anil Agarwal - during a year in which 26 staff were killed.

The group said: "We have concerns over the payment of annual bonuses in apparent contradiction of the safety criteria upon which bonus awards can be made and the award of unexplained significant salary increases to executives.

"The report states that bonus awards are dependent on 'effective stakeholder management, which resulted in recognition and achievement of awards in corporate social responsibility, safety, quality, business excellence and best-employer status'.

"In light of the loss of 26 lives occurring across group operations and projects, it is not clear how the award of bonuses can be reconciled with stated policy."

A spokesman for Vedanta declined to comment on the report by Pirc.

If shareholders do rebel then Vedanta would join a long list of companies that have faced investors' ire over pay during the current season of AGMs.

Vedanta's record on its environmental impact and dealings with native tribes came into sharp focus last year when the Church of England sold its £3.8m stake following concerns about its human rights record in India.

Survival International - a charity campaigning for the rights of tribal people - said Edinburgh-based Martin Currie Investments had also sold its £2.3m stake.

The Joseph Rowntree Trust and Dutch pension fund PGGM also dumped their holdings

following a critical report from Amnesty International and protests led by Bianca Jagger outside last year's annual general meeting in Westminster.

Edinburgh-based Cairn Energy was given the go-ahead at the start of this month to sell its 40 per cent controlling stake in its Cairn India subsidiary to Vedanta in a \$6 billion (£3.7bn) deal.

The sale had been mired in delays caused by the Indian government, which eventually ruled that more royalties would have to be paid on oil produced by Cairn India.

Monday 25 July 2011

Rescue Halted as 10 Trapped Chinese Miners Believed Dead

Extract from CRIENGLISH.COM

Efforts to rescue 10 miners that have been trapped underground for 23 days in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region were called off Monday as the men are believed dead, rescuers said.

On July 2, a mine operated by Guangxi Heshan Coal Mining Company in the city of Laibin, collapsed after days of heavy rain, trapping 22. Another 49 miners managed to escape.

Two miners were rescued 188 hours after the collapse and 10 bodies have been retrieved, the rescue headquarters said in a statement.

The 10 still trapped "had no chance of survival," according to the statement.

Rescuers had checked all the shafts but a 1,139-meter-deep one 23 days after the accident. A panel of experts believed there was no space for survival in the unchecked shaft that was filled with sand, coal, water and mining facilities. Also, it would take 100 to 150 days to clear the shaft.

This week in mining accident history

25 July 1917

No.12 Colliery

New Watford, Nova Scotia, Canada

Underground coal mine

65 killed, explosion

Source: www.gov.ns.ca

No. 12 Colliery in the New Waterford district was opened in 1908, through slopes on the outcrop of the Victoria Seam.



No.12 Colliery, Nova Scotia, date unknown

The No. 12 Colliery Explosion in New Waterford, July 1917, is another of Nova Scotia's significant mining disasters. About 270 men were in the mine at 7:20 a.m. on 25 July when there was an horrific explosion concentrated between the Nos. 5 and 7 levels, 2000 feet down the slope. Ninety men were still missing several hours after the explosion; 25 of them were subsequently rescued.

The first dead bodies were located at about 2:00pm that day. Fifteen hours after the disaster 62 bodies had been removed from the mine, and over 100 men had been reported injured. 90 men were still unaccounted for after the initial rescue efforts. 25 of these were rescued, leaving the final count of the dead at 65. The dead ranged from ages 14 to 65.

The rescue work was handled primarily by firemen, the Miner's union, and the company and volunteer miners. As all mines in the New Waterford district were closed, miners from

those mines aided in the rescue work. The rescue work was difficult and risky due to the gasses within the mine, despite efforts to vent them. At least three men died after re-entering the mine in an attempt to save others. Despite these risks many miners showed their courage, entering the mine several times in order to assist in the rescue efforts.

John McKenzie and Phillip Nicholson, two 17-year-old surface workers, died after they entered the mine to provide assistance. Miner William Cook made nine trips into the depths to rescue fellow-miners, before being overcome by gas. The final tally of 65 killed included 22 Newfoundlanders, seven of them from one small fishing village; their bodies were returned to their home community for burial. By this time, many European immigrants were employed in the Cape Breton collieries, and one of the miracles of the No.12 Colliery disaster was the story of a German miner stranded underground, who remained alive by holding onto an air line until finally rescued.



The explosion at No.12 Colliery

The explosion had been quite violent, leaving many bodies severely damaged, including several which were decapitated. This would have made identifying the bodies challenging. The first funerals for the some of dead miners were held on Friday, July 27, 1917.

It is also of note that the media attention given to this disaster seems to be quite limited, despite its relatively high death count for such a disaster at the time. This seems to be due, in part, to the coverage of World War I.

Tuesday 26 July 2011

Qld: Miners' lifestyles causing car crashes

Extract from 9News, Aus

Half the fatigue-related road crashes on Queensland mining roads occur on the way to work, indicating workers are burning the candle at both ends, a road safety group says.

The number of crashes on Queensland's mining highways have increased during the mining boom.

The number of people injured per year on the Bruce Highway between Mackay and Rockhampton jumped 45 per cent between 2004 and 2008, statistics published in The Australian newspaper show.

Graeme Ransley of the mining industry-funded Mackay-based Road Accident Action Group, says the numbers show half of the fatigue-related accidents are on the way to mining shifts, not on the way home.

"The actual mines themselves are managing the fatigue fairly well," he told AAP.

"What's actually happening is that families are not managing fatigue in their time off.

"When they've got three or four days off they are heading off on long trips, going to Brisbane, doing extraordinary mileages, going to bed at 11pm at night and getting up at 3am to commence the journey out to the mines."

He says miners' partners put pressure on them to stay up late.

"They need to understand if their partners have just finished 50 or even 60 hours in four days that they can't come home, for example, from Mackay, then jump in their private car and head off to Townsville to watch the footy for the night," he said.

Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union safety officer Greg Dalliston told AAP many

mining companies could do better with their education.

"The quality of it and how often it's delivered and the uptake of it is a different matter," he said.

"The companies think once they tell a person how to go to sleep that's it.

"Clearly some of the shifts they're putting in place and the length of them, how far they've got to travel back to work, those types of issues are all part of the total solution."

Meanwhile, a Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) spokesman said all recommendations from a coroner's report into three fatigue-related miner fatalities had been implemented.

"The government's commissioner for mining health and safety and the chief inspector of coal mines have met with the coroner," he said in a statement.

"They report the coroner was happy with the actions suggested by DEEDI to meet her requirements."

He denied claims reported in The Australian newspaper that the government had softened fatigue guidelines under pressure from BHP Billiton.

USA: Utah mining company cited in fatal February accident

Extract from The Salt Lake Tribune, USA

A federal report released Tuesday found management was negligent in a fatal Feb. 24 accident in which a man was trapped on a conveyor belt at a quartzite mine near Salt Lake City.

Amy Louviere, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), said a fine will be levied against Bolinder Resources LLC, since the investigation concluded management "engaged in aggravated conduct constituting more than ordinary negligence."

The company operates a crushing and sampling facility on Stansbury Island at the Great Salt Lake.

Allen K. Sherman, 56, of Delta, died of blunt force trauma after attempting to clean a magnet on the conveyor belt.

Sherman's sister, Gaynell Deem, said the man's wife received a settlement from the company but plans a lawsuit.

"He lost his life," Deem said. "I don't think any amount of money is consolation for losing his life. No amount of money is going to bring him back. But it also was a very tragic accident. My brother had worked with crushers ... his whole life. He did know what he was doing."

A telephone number listed for Sherman's home rang unanswered Tuesday. The company did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Mine safety investigators said management failed to ensure that safe operating procedures were followed while an employee was working on the conveyor belt. They also said warning horns indicating the equipment was being powered back up couldn't be heard above the plant noise.

The company has since made changes to prevent such accidents, including the addition of two more warning horns.

The Bolinder operation received 23 citations following inspections immediately after the fatal accident, according to federal records. The mine has been fined more than \$18,000 for violations since 2008.

One miner killed, 3 missing after Ukrainian mine accident

Extract from RIA Novosti

A miner was killed and three others went missing when a roof collapsed at a coal mine in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region in the early hours of Tuesday, the emergencies services said.

There were 96 people in the Rodinskaya mine when the accident occurred at about 01:50 am local time (10:50 GMT, Monday).

One of the five miners trapped underground has been rescued.

The Rodinskaya mine is operated by the Krasnoarmeiskogol mining company.

Quote of the week

"If you can make an employee happy by spending \$800 on a comfortable office chair, what's \$800?"

James R. Uffelman
(Founder of Technimetrics, USA Entrepreneur)

Wednesday 27 July 2011

India: NHRC meet highlights silicosis among mine workers

Extract from The Times of India

JAIPUR: Accident deaths, rising cases of silicosis among mine workers and poor facility for special children at government schools are some of the issues discussed here on Tuesday during the National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) western regional consultation meeting.

"Precious little has been done for silicosis victims in the state. Though the chief minister has recently given an ex gratia relief to 21 victims, no other effort has been made for mine workers suffering the disease. Dry mining is still on and in many parts of the state the disease is spreading rapidly," said Mahitosh Bagoria of Health, Environment and Development Consortium (HEDCON).

"All mining sites in the state portray a saga of inhuman conditions. Children are made to work, the wife is automatically sucked into the mining chain on the death of her husband, no identity cards are issued to mine workers and they work like bonded labourers. Even the name of the mine workers put up in front of the sites are not real ones and little information is given as to who owns the mines," he added.

USA: DOL's MSHA releases midyear mine fatality update

Extract from NewsWire.com, USA

ARLINGTON, Va. (MMD Newswire) - The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration today released a midyear summary of mining deaths in the country. As of June 30, eight miners were killed in coal mining operations, and six in the metal and nonmetal sector.

"Even though the number of mining deaths for the first half of this year are at an all-time low, one mining death is still one too many," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

"Fatalities can be prevented," he added. "They are not an inevitable byproduct of mining. Effective health and safety programs, training of miners and proper workplace examinations can identify and eliminate the hazards that kill and injure miners. Mine operators are well aware they must take responsibility for the health and safety conditions in their mines to prevent these tragedies."

Of the eight coal mining deaths, three were a result of machinery accidents. Two miners died in rib collapse accidents, two miners were killed in powered haulage accidents and one miner was killed in a fall accident. Two of the eight fatalities involved contractors.

Of the six fatalities in metal and nonmetal mines, two miners died as a result roof collapses. One miner was killed when he was struck by sliding material, one miner died in a machinery accident, one miner lost his life in a powered haulage accident and another miner was killed in a fall accident. Two of the fatalities involved contractors.

MSHA has taken a number of actions to identify mines with health and safety problems, and has initiated several outreach and enforcement initiatives including "Rules to Live By," a fatality prevention program spotlighting the safety and

health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations.

"We believe those actions, along with initiatives by the mining industry, have resulted in the improved safety record thus far this year," said Main. "No miners should have to die on the job just to earn a paycheck. MSHA is vigorously enforcing the Mine Act, and constantly looking for ways to improve policies and regulations to prevent these unnecessary tragedies. We want all miners to go home safe and healthy at the end of each shift."

MSHA is providing mine operators, miners, trainers and others with information on the causes of the mining deaths that occurred during the first half of this year as well as the actions needed to prevent them on MSHA's website at <http://www.msha.gov/fatals/summaries/summaries.asp>.

Additional information on the causes and actions needed to prevent mining deaths is available at <http://www.msha.gov/focuson/rulestoliveby.asp>.

Thursday 28 July 2011

Qld: Mine safety conference hears plea from young widow

Extract from ABC Rural News, Aus

The story of losing a husband and a young father has left delegates in tears at a mine safety conference in Mackay in northern Queensland.

Jason Blee died four years ago after being caught between a shuttle car and mine wall in Anglo Coal's Moranbah North site in the Bowen Basin.

His widow Rachel Blee wants all of the 18 recommendations handed down by a coronial inquest into his death implemented.

She says there needs to be an increased awareness of safety management systems and there should be a zero fatality and injury rate.

"These young guys that are coming through now, they've been put into supervisor's positions

with a minimum of six months' experience," she said.

"They still don't know themselves what they're doing and really going through and making sure that they follow legislation and also follow the SMS (Safety Management System) of the mine site that they're working for.

"I always said from that day he wouldn't die in vain, he would be the face of safety and let's hope and pray that this doesn't happen to anyone else.

"I know we've had a couple more fatalities since Jason's accident, but they've been open cut, and I'm just hoping that their families can get something out of what I'm doing for the mining industry."

The Bowen Basin Safety Conference, organised by the Mackay Area Industry Network (MAIN), attracted 300 delegates to look at ways safety in the region's mines could be improved.

The chief executive of G and S Engineering Services, and member of MAIN, Mick Crowe, says the conference was a whole of industry approach to tackling the important issue of mine safety.

"It'll make a difference in awareness, it'll make a difference in getting people on a common platform, but the real measure will be what we do out of this," he said.

"An annual event's not going to change the world.

"What we want to do is try and measure each year where we're at and make sure we're getting better, but then get follow ups to act on issues will make it easier for people to do the right thing around safety."

S.Africa: Two dead, five injured in KDC East accident – Gold Fields

Extract from miningweekly.com

JOHANNESBURG – South African gold miner Gold Fields halted operations at its KDC East

and KDC West mines, formerly Kloof and Driefontein, after two workers were killed and five others injured on Thursday.



The JSE-listed miner said the workers died after an accident following a seismic event measuring 1.6 on the Richter scale at the Number 7 shaft at KDC East.

Two of the injured workers were hospitalised, while the other three suffered minor injuries.

The Department of Mineral Resources issued a Section 54 stopping both KDC East and KDC West until the mine had completed the statutory investigation and presented the findings to the department.

Gold Fields, led by CEO Nick Holland, said all employees were withdrawn from the reef horizon at the shaft after the accident.

"This accident shows that there cannot be any let-up in our efforts to mine safely," Holland commented.

Friday 29 July 2011

20 killed in 2 mine accidents in Ukraine

Extract from www.ajc.com

KIEV, Ukraine — A blast at a coal mine in eastern Ukraine and an elevator collapse at another on Friday killed at least 20 people, officials said. Rescuers were still searching for 17 miners missing at both mines.



Rescue workers speak with people near the Suhodilka-Eastern mine, where a blast killed at least 16 workers and injured three others, in Suhodilka, Luhansk region, Ukraine, Friday, July 29, 2011. Rescuers were looking for nine miners missing after a powerful pre-dawn blast at the Suhodilka-Eastern mine in the Luhansk region that killed 16 workers and injured three others. (AP Photo/Emergency Situations Ministry, Pool)



A general view of the Suhodilka-Eastern mine in the Luhansk region of Ukraine, where an accident has killed some workers and injured others, Friday July 29, 2011. Regional authorities suspect the accident was caused by a powerful explosion of methane, the Luhansk regional administration said in a statement.

The twin accidents in eastern mining regions shocked the country and highlighted the persistent dangers of the Ukrainian mining industry, believed to be one of the world's most dangerous because of outdated equipment and widespread disregard for safety regulations.

The pre-dawn blast at the notoriously dangerous Suhodilka-Eastern mine in the Luhansk region killed 17 workers and left nine missing. Investigators suspect the accident was caused by a powerful explosion of methane, the Luhansk regional administration said in a statement.

The blast hit the mine shortly before 2 a.m. Friday at a depth of 3,000 feet (915 meters) when miners were working the night shift.

Emergency Situations Ministry photos showed worried relatives of the miners talking nervously to officials and rescue workers outside the mine's headquarters, as medical and emergency trucks were parked nearby.

Mykhailo Volynets, the head of the Independent Trade Union of Miners, called the mine "one of the most dangerous in Ukraine" due to buildups of methane and coal dust.

Hours after the blast, an accident hit another mine in eastern Ukraine. An elevator used to transport miners and equipment in and out of the Bazhanova mine in the eastern Donetsk region collapsed, killing three workers and leaving eight others missing, said Emergency Situations Ministry spokeswoman Yulia Yershova. Hundreds of other workers laboring at a different section of the mine were trying to leave through emergency exits and pathways, she said.

Senior government officials arrived Friday morning at the Suhodilska-Eastern mine and were working to establish the cause of the explosion. President Viktor Yanukovych was also expected to fly to the site later in the day, according to his office.

Volynets said 70 percent of the equipment at Ukrainian mines is outdated and urgently needs replacement.

UPDATE (31 July 2011): The death toll from two mine accidents in eastern Ukraine has risen to 36 people, the Ukrainian Emergencies Ministry reported on Sunday.

USA: Welder ID'd in mine prep plant fatality

Extract from Bluefield Daily Telegraph, USA

MAITLAND — A spokesperson for the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training released the name of the worker who was electrocuted while he was working on the Superior Processing Plant in Maitland.

Jason Stacey, 40, a foreman/welder with the Mike Dover Corp., based in Marion, Ill., died as

a result of the accident at the prep plant at 8:44 p.m., on Wednesday night. Stacey had 12 years of experience and had been working at Superior for 15 months.

"The preparation plant is undergoing renovation and currently does not process coal," according to Leslie Fitzwater, spokesperson for the Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

The cause of the accident remained unknown late Thursday afternoon, but Fitzwater said that inspectors with the Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training as well as inspectors with the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration were at the scene, investigating the accident.

Mike Dover Corp., is a private contractor at the prep plant. Stacey's death is the 12th coal mining fatality this year according to MSHA's web site, and the fourth mining fatality in West Virginia in 2011.

USA: Mining Deaths at All-Time Low

Extract from ohsonline.com

MSHA's chief said the 14 deaths were still too many. Its fatality prevention program has had an impact, he said.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration's midyear summary of U.S. mining deaths, as of June 30, reports 14 deaths: eight miners died in coal operations, and six died in the metal and nonmetal sector. "Even though the number of mining deaths for the first half of this year are at an all-time low, one mining death is still one too many," said Joe Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

"Fatalities can be prevented," he said. "They are not an inevitable byproduct of mining. Effective health and safety programs, training of miners, and proper workplace examinations can identify and eliminate the hazards that kill and injure miners. Mine operators are well aware they must take responsibility for the health and safety

conditions in their mines to prevent these tragedies."

Three of the eight deaths in coal mining resulted from machinery accidents. Two were rib collapse accidents, two resulted from powered haulage accidents, and one miner died in a fall accident. Two of the eight fatalities involved contractors. Of the six fatalities in metal and nonmetal mines, two deaths resulted from roof collapses, one from being struck by sliding material, one in a machinery accident, one in a powered haulage accident, and one in yet another fall accident. Here, too, two of the fatalities involved contractors.

MSHA's "Rules to Live By," a fatality prevention program, highlights safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations. "We believe those actions, along with initiatives by the mining industry, have resulted in the improved safety record thus far this year," said Main. "No miners should have to die on the job just to earn a paycheck. MSHA is vigorously enforcing the Mine Act and constantly looking for ways to improve policies and regulations to prevent these unnecessary tragedies. We want all miners to go home safe and healthy at the end of each shift."

USA: Second fire reported at Lucky Friday Mine

Extract from The Spokesman Review

Investigators are looking into the cause of a second fire in three weeks at the Lucky Friday Mine.

The underground silver mine near Mullan, Idaho, was evacuated at 7 p.m. Tuesday after a contractor's employee reported that he smelled smoke.

Hecla Mining Co. deployed three mine rescue teams to monitor the fire and prevent its spread. They were able to contain the fire to a small area on the 4900 level, according to a statement from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The fire was extinguished at around 3 p.m. Wednesday. Underground workers were able to return to work on Wednesday evening, said Melanie Hennessey, Hecla's vice president of investor relations.

Exactly three weeks earlier, on July 5, another small fire was reported at the Lucky Friday.

The cause of that fire also remains under investigation. Officials declined to say whether arson is suspected.

The July 5 fire "is being looked at in context to this fire in case there may be a connection," MSHA said in its statement.

The investigation team includes Hecla, the state fire marshal, the Shoshone County sheriff's department and the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Saturday 30 July 2011

6 Dead in Covered-up Coal Mine Accident in NE China

Extract from Xinhua

Six people were killed in a coal mine explosion that had been covered up for 13 days in northeastern Heilongjiang Province, a provincial work safety official said Saturday.

The mine owner Wang Guomin has confessed that six people were killed in the blast in the Guomin Coal Mine in the Taoshan District of Qitaihe City at about 9:30 a.m. on July 17.

The finding came after a joint provincial investigation team arrived in Qitaihe in response to reports from locals that a coal mine gas explosion killed several people on the morning of July 17.

The mine owner deliberately covered up the explosion, according to an initial investigation.

A further investigation of the accident is underway.

Sunday 31 July 2011

USA: Miners Recovering After Tunnel Ridge Mining Accident

Extract from The State Journal, W.Va, USA

According to Ohio County EMA Director Lou Vargo, a mine train jumped its tracks and injured six people.

WHEELING -- West Liberty's Volunteer Fire Chief said the mine accident at Tunnel Ridge Saturday was the most severe mine accident he has handled since the mine, owned by Alliance Coal, has been opened.

"The description was a crew of men coming out of the mine finishing their shift coming down the hill and hit a turn, derailed off of the rail and hit the mine wall," West Liberty Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Bill Cox said.

He said it was the most severe because six miners were injured.

The accident happened around 7 p.m. Saturday, and Cox said upon impact, one miner fractured his ankle and the others suffered from head injuries as well as bumps and bruises.

"Initially, we had first responders go and couldn't get an ambulance at first. Clearview responded with the ambulance," Cox said.

Wheeling, Brooke County and Bethany were also on scene.

All six workers were rushed to Ohio Valley Medical Center. As of Sunday, OVMC officials said four miners have been released, while the other two were admitted and in fair condition.

"Anytime we have an incident like that, we will review at the fire chief's meeting later in the month and if anything, we learn and improve, and will certainly implement those changes," Ohio County EMA Director Lou Vargo said.

Prior to Saturday's accident, Ohio County EMA Director Lou Vargo has been working closely with Tunnel Ridge to develop emergency plans for the coal mine. He said the coal mine invited

first responders to an open house so they could become familiar with it.

"By doing this a couple weeks ago, and with what happened last night, first responders knew where to go, how everything worked in Tunnel Ridge, and the success of the story was emergency planning with Tunnel Ridge," Vargo said.

Vargo said this is why disaster preparations are crucial so accidents like this one do not end up being more severe.

Vargo said Alliance Coal will be conducting an inspection.

Some underground coal mining has been occurring at Tunnel Ridge - owned by Alliance Resource Partners of Tulsa, Okla. - since last March. Its longwall operation is expected to begin sometime in 2012. Last May, officials said the mine already employed 160 people, and when it reaches full capacity is expected to employ 300 people.

The mine is expected to produce 6 million tons of coal a year. The coal reserve estimate is 97.4 million tons as of December 2010, according to the Alliance website.

USA: Crandall Canyon mine disaster fades from view as probe drags on

Extract from Salt Lake Tribune

Little has happened in the quest to determine more precisely what caused the Crandall Canyon Mine disaster, leaving many loved ones of the nine miners who died nearly four years ago wondering whether justice will ever be served.

Their doubts are fueled by the fact that three years have passed since the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) released its investigatory report on the disaster, which began on Aug. 6, 2007.

The report blasted Murray Energy Corp., whose Utah subsidiary ran the mine, for recklessly

disregarding safety in pursuing a mining plan “destined to fail” and fined the company \$1.34 million for violations contributing directly to the massive Aug. 6 implosion that killed the first six miners (three rescuers died in a second implosion 10 days later).

But the company cannot even respond to MSHA’s allegations because the U.S. Attorney’s Office for Utah is quietly conducting a criminal investigation at the behest of MSHA and Rep. George Miller, D-Calif.

That criminal probe halted all legal discovery into the substance of the citations, delaying an administrative process that usually gets closer to the truth as attorneys on both sides zero in on pertinent details. It’s a proceeding, though, that often relies heavily on human memory, something known to falter over time.

The prolonged probe also is a heavy weight hanging over Laine Adair, who was general manager of Crandall Canyon and Murray Energy’s other Utah mines. Miller singled him out for criminal review, questioning whether Adair “individually or in conspiracy with others, willfully concealed or covered up [or made] false representations” to MSHA about dangerous conditions in the mine before the walls blew in.

Those others could be Adair’s managers at Crandall Canyon or his superiors with Ohio-based Murray Energy, on up to the boss, Robert Murray.

Adair and his Washington, D.C., attorney, Gregory Poe, declined to comment, citing the ongoing criminal investigation. Murray Energy spokesman Rob Murray also had no comment.

For Frank Allred, whose brother Kerry died in the initial implosion, the longer that questions of responsibility for the disaster linger, the greater his dread that they will just fade away unresolved.

“I don’t understand all the legal stuff,” the Price resident admitted. “But, yes, it bothers me. It’s very frustrating and very sad that this kind of stuff has to go on.

“Everyone wants to get on the bandwagon when it happens. As long as it’s a popular thing to do; they showboat,” Allred said. “But in the end, what gets done? Nothing. I’ve given up hope. I don’t know how many others have.”

Arturo Sanchez lost his dad, Manny, in the initial implosion. Like Allred, he feels “like the longer it goes, the less that’s going to get done.”

Discouraged, but not out of hope » Other victims’ relatives may not yet be without hope but they are discouraged, said Ed Havas, a Salt Lake City attorney who helped represent heirs of the first six victims and two injured rescuers in a civil wrongful death and injury lawsuit against Murray Energy and Crandall Canyon’s other owners. That suit was settled for a large but undisclosed amount of money in May 2009.

“It is a source of some frustration that it is taking a long time to come to an end. ... There’s still an aspect of this tragedy left unfinished,” Havas said, adding that clients have told him that “though they wish the process had not taken this much time, they are concerned that the process be done well more than it be done quickly.

“They are concerned that if anything does come from the criminal probe, those truly responsible will be called to account [for their actions], and that responsibility not be avoided or placed on a scapegoat just to get a result,” he added.

That’s the goal of the U.S. Attorney’s Office of Utah as well, said its spokeswoman, Melodie Rydalch.

“Even though we received referrals from other agencies on the Crandall Canyon matter, we must conduct our own investigation,” she said. “Working with the agents assigned to the case, we must look at things independently before we bring criminal charges. These investigations can, and often do, take a substantial amount of time.”

Rydalch acknowledged that her office, which has not had a U.S. attorney since Brett Tolman resigned at the end of 2009, asked MSHA earlier this summer for “what we anticipate will

be the final extension of a stay” on the administrative proceedings involving violations cited in the agency’s disaster report.

A grand jury has been seated to hear testimony about the criminal case. But Havas and Fred Silvester, a Salt Lake City attorney who represented another group of disaster victims or their survivors, said prosecutors have not contacted any of their clients.

And Lola Jensen, whose husband, Gary, was the MSHA inspector killed Aug. 16 in the ill-fated rescue operation, said she has felt abandoned, receiving only brief responses to her inquiries to the MSHA’s victim liaison about where matters stand.

“I get a one-line email back” from the victims’ liaison with the U.S. Attorney’s Office saying ‘the FBI is investigating,’ ” she said. “I don’t know whether to push it [because] we’re trying to move on with our lives. Is it my responsibility or someone else’s?”

Jensen is convinced that what happened was not merely an accident. If MSHA had been properly informed about how hazardous conditions were in the Crandall Canyon mine, she said, lives would have been saved.

“If there had been some coming forth, at least three others wouldn’t have been killed,” she said, referring to her late husband and fallen rescuers Dale “Bird” Black and Brandon Kimber. If MSHA had more information about sizable “bounces” that had dislodged big chunks of coal from the mine’s walls in the months and days before the deadly implosion, Jensen said, the rescue operation likely would have been conducted differently — and she would not be a widow.

But according to MSHA’s disaster investigation, agency officials did not learn until too late about the true extent of a major bounce in March that ended mining operations in a section of the mine about 900 feet from where the deadly implosion occurred five months later. Nor did the company inform MSHA, as it was legally required to do,

about a large bounce three days before the fatal collapse.

Those omissions are central to the criminal referrals involving Adair and possibly other Murray Energy officials.

Said Miller in a May 2008 memorandum to members of the House Education and the Workforce Committee: “Adair and others at [Murray Energy] may have purposefully misled MSHA about the severity of the March bump fearing MSHA would close the mine, and [they] continued to adhere to the mischaracterization after the August incidents in an effort to downplay the foreseeability” of the catastrophic failure on Aug. 6.

After Miller made that statement, Adair’s attorney Poe called it “deeply disappointing and utterly unjustified,” contending “the facts will show that Mr. Adair’s conduct was entirely proper.”

Adair’s alleged actions also figure into the citations later issued in MSHA’s investigation. In addition, the report accused the company of violating its approved roof-control plan by removing up to 5 feet of coal from the mine tunnel’s floor and hacking into a barrier pillar that was off limits, having been left behind specifically to help hold up the mountain over the mine.

Weakened by these extra cuts, “a sudden and violent failure of the overstressed coal pillars occurred, instantaneously releasing large amounts of accumulated energy,” MSHA’s probe determined.

Memories of event fading » Even if the criminal investigation ended tomorrow and an administrative law judge began hearing arguments immediately on appeals of the 18 citations and orders issued by MSHA, two former agency heads agree the passage of time will make it harder for the process to pinpoint accurately what happened.

Dave Lauriski, a Carbon County native who ran MSHA under President George W. Bush, said “it

will be difficult because a lot of things change. The inspector who issued citations may no longer be around. Somebody on the company side might not be around, either. It could go either way.”

He feels sorry for Adair, a member of a mine rescue team involved in an unsuccessful effort led by Lauriski to save the 27 victims of the 1984 Wilberg mine disaster, which, like Crandall Canyon, was in Emery County.

“With a strict liability statute like MSHA’s, you’re guilty until you’re proven innocent,” Lauriski said.

Davitt McAteer, who preceded Lauriski as MSHA’s boss during the Clinton administration, said “it’s a shame, just a damned shame” the U.S. attorney’s investigation has dragged on so long.

“Unfortunately, it suggests that in the end, it will peter out. The longer these things go, the more likely they are to be resolved without prosecution. That’s an accepted fact in criminal work or civil matters,” he said.

While the criminal probe has languished, the whole issue of mine safety has become more contentious.

Lauriski noted that political pressure from Miller and others in Congress drove MSHA to beef up enforcement, enact stiffer penalties for infractions and crack down on mines with poor safety records.

Those tough tactics compelled mining companies to fight back, contesting most if not all citations.

MSHA’s online records clearly show that’s true, including at Utah mines. Between 2000 and 2011, Utah operators paid 37 percent of the \$11.7 million in fines issued by MSHA. From 2007 to the present, that rate dropped to 27 percent.

To Lauriski, this approach detracts from mine safety. “When compliance drives safety, it always takes away from miners’ ability to identify

and eliminate hazards and mitigate risks,” he said.

McAteer supports the more punitive approach against mine operators who shirk safety for the sake of production, otherwise the ultimate sacrifices paid by miners — such as those at Crandall Canyon — are forgotten.

Too often, he said, “the poor men and women who work in the mines don’t see the improvements that should come as a result of a disaster. That’s been the history of mine disasters and miners’ lives lost in this country.”

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

A

AUXILIARY VENTILATION Portion of main ventilating current directed to face of dead- end entry by means of an auxiliary fan and tubing.

-Ed



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.

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