



# Mining Accident News No.1126

26 to 31 August 2011

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Friday 26 August 2011

## USA: Mining in America more dangerous than policing, statistics show

*Extract from MINING.com*

Working in a mine is more dangerous than being a police officer in America, according to the latest data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The BLS said disasters at a coal mine in West Virginia and aboard an oil rig operated by British Petroleum in the Gulf of Mexico again made

mining one of the most dangerous American jobs in 2010, Reuters reported on Thursday:

**In private mining, fatal work injuries rose 74% to 172 in 2010 from 99 a year earlier, according to the government agency's census of deaths.**

**Fatality rates for mining rose to 19.9 in 2010 from 12.4 in 2009 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers.**



Policing, by contrast, is also getting more dangerous, with the number of fatalities rising by 40% from 96 in 2009 to 134 in 2010; 57 of the deaths involved highway accidents while 48 were homicides, Reuters said.

It was, indeed, an exceptionally bad year for mining and oil industry calamities in the United States. The Deepwater Horizon explosion killed 11 workers and resulted in the worst oil leakage into the ocean in history, while the accident at the Upper Big Branch coal mine in West Virginia caused the deaths of 29 miners and dealt mine owner Massey Energy a blow from which it would never recover. The accident resulted in several lawsuits against Massey, led to the resignation of the company's CEO Don Blankenship, and the sale of Massey to Alpha Natural Resources.

**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 26 of 2011

## China: Officials fired as rescue ongoing for mine

Extract from [ChinaDaily.com.cn](http://ChinaDaily.com.cn)

BOLI, Heilongjiang - Two senior county officials were sacked on Thursday as rescuers raced with time to save 26 miners who have been trapped in a flooded coal mine since Tuesday in Heilongjiang province.



Rescuers are about to descend into the coal mine in Boli county of Heilongjiang province, on Thursday, where 26 miners have been trapped since a flood on Tuesday. [Photo: China Daily]

Wang Xingwu, government head of Boli county, where the mine is located, and Zhang Xuegang, deputy county chief, were dismissed at an emergency meeting held by the Qitaihe city's Party committee on Wednesday afternoon.

The Boli county Party committee was also advised to dismiss Deng Xiaoqiu, head of the county's work safety bureau.

Deng has been the spokesperson for the coal mine accident the past two days.

The flooding occurred midday Tuesday, when 45 miners were working in a pit of the Hengtai Coal Mining Co. Nineteen miners managed to escape.

Locals on Thursday became impatient and blamed "absent work safety supervision" as the rescuers still could not reach the trapped workers after two days.

"The progress is too slow," one relative of a trapped miner shouted in the rescue center on Thursday.

Though local authorities announced that water gushed in at noon, people living nearby

suspected the accident occurred earlier and management did not take any action.

"You can't take any action to mitigate damage caused by a gas explosion, but you can evacuate workers when flooding begins," Du Guangrong, whose nephew, Li Dongdong, 22, is among the 26 trapped, told China Daily.

"Many people told me water began seeping into the pit at 9 am. The pit manager then informed the mine manager, surnamed Song, who did not stop mining activities because he thought it was manageable."

A preliminary investigation by authorities found that workers mistakenly drilled into a neighbouring deserted mine, causing water seepage and the ensuing flood.

Zhang Jun, a publicity official with the Qitaihe city government, dismissed the allegation by saying the accident occurred at noon and managers immediately reported it to county and city leaders.

Du told China Daily that locals have long been aware of the high risks of working in small-scale pits in the city that have experienced gas explosions and similar flooding several times in recent years.

"But we have no other choices. Working in a nearby forest farm around the coal mine would not sustain us."

Du said Li earned 5,000 yuan (\$780) a month as a miner and Li's mother also works for the mine above ground.

"If he can ascend safely, we'll never allow him to go down there any more."

According to information provided to China Daily by the rescue headquarters, an estimated 40,000 cubic meters of water gushed into the pit.

By 4 pm Thursday, 16,990 cu m of water had been sucked out by seven pipes with an hourly capacity of around 1,000 cu m.

Two of the seven pipes temporarily broke and stopped functioning on Thursday afternoon.

Meanwhile rescuers kept drilling holes into the ground to reach places where the trapped workers might have escaped.

Two holes had been drilled 195 meters and 190 meters into the ground by 4 pm and still had not reached any miners to deliver air, food or medicine.

"The channels might be able to reach miners on Friday at about 260 meters deep," said the publicity official. "But we can't be 100 percent sure about that."

A third place for drilling was prepared for operation on Thursday.

Many volunteers from the county's Party committee and local women's federation have joined the operation in pacifying relatives or facilitating logistics.

The county hospital also prepared 500 nutrition fluid packs, each of 100 ml volume to sustain life for half a day, to be sent down through the holes.

## USA: MSHA cites Claiborne Co. mine with 32 violations and orders

*Extract from WBIR.com*

The Mining Safety and Health Administration made a surprise inspection at Wilcoal Mining, Inc. Tri-State One Mine in Claiborne County in July; the mine was subsequently cited with several 'significant and substantial violations.'



The inspection is part of a larger push by MSHA to make mines safer following the Upper Big Branch mining accident in April 2010.

Last month, MSHA inspected 10 coal mines and five metal/non-metal mines issuing 375 citations and orders.

These mines were targeted because they are deemed high risk by a history of poor compliance or specific compliance concerns. Other risk factors contribute to this classification.

To prevent advance warning of the mine, MSHA seized and monitored mine communications before the inspection.

During the inspection, 32 citations and orders were issued.

The press release states Tri-State One Mine was one of 13 operations to receive a letter from MSHA in November 2010 that placed it on notice of a potential pattern of violations of mandatory health or safety standards under Section 104(e) of the federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.

## Crews search for miners in Mexico coal accident

*Extract from www.MarketWatch.com*

MEXICO CITY -- Mexican steel and mining firm Altos Hornos de Mexico, or Ahmsa, said Friday that rescue workers were searching for four miners trapped after a coal mine cave-in covered part of the machinery being used to remove the commodity.

Labor Minister Javier Lozano said in messages on his Twitter page that because of the nature of the accident, there was limited hope for the survival of the missing miners. Lozano estimated that gas build-up in the mine could be dissipated by 3 p.m. CDT, allowing for rescue workers to move in.

Ahmsa said 132 miners were able to evacuate the La Esmeralda mine in the northern state of Coahuila, but four miners were missing. The company said that 66 rescue workers were on site and their first action would be to establish safe conditions inside the mine, which continued to have a functioning ventilation system.

The Labor Ministry said in a statement that once rescue efforts had concluded, it planned to

check for violations of security conditions for underground coal mining operations.

Saturday 27 August 2011

## 4 miners dead in cave-in at north Mexico coal mine

*Extract from Associated Press*

PIEDRAS NEGRAS, Mexico — Four miners have been killed in an explosion that caved in part of a coal mine in the northern Mexico border state of Coahuila.

The Minerale de Monclova company says Friday's accident at its La Esmeralda mine was caused by methane gas, which apparently exploded. It says 132 other workers escaped unharmed and the bodies of the dead miners have been recovered.

Fourteen miners died in a May 3 blast at another coal mine in Coahuila, and 65 miners died in an explosion at another Coahuila coal mine in 2006. Safety violations have been cited in the May blast.

Minerale de Monclova says the mine involved in Friday's accident has the latest safety technology.

## 3 miners rescued in China mine, 23 still trapped

*Extract from Xinhua*

Three miners trapped for more than four days in a flooded mine shaft in northeast China were rescued Saturday as authorities battled to reach another 23 workers still underground, state media said.

The illegally operating mine in Heilongjiang province flooded on Tuesday when 45 workers were in the pit, the official Xinhua news agency said. Nineteen miners managed to escape shortly after the accident.

Rescuers have been pumping water out of the mine and by Saturday afternoon had drained 56,150 cubic metres (about 2 million cubic feet)

and lowered the water level inside the pit by more than 10 metres (33 feet), Xinhua said, citing rescuers.

On Wednesday, the government in Boli county -- where the mine is located -- said it had sacked two top officials for their roles leading up to the mishap, including the county head.

Provincial authorities had ordered work at the mine owned by the Hengtai Coal Mining Co. to halt in 2007, but on August 16 the owner illegally restarted production, Xinhua said.

The flood occurred after workers mistakenly drilled into a neighbouring mine that had been filled with water, it said.

China's coal mines -- which have a dismal safety record -- have been hit by a series of accidents in recent years as demand for energy has spiked. In July, a coal mine flood in southwest Guizhou province killed 23 workers.

Last year, 2,433 people died in coal mine accidents in China, according to official statistics -- a rate of more than six workers per day.

Labour rights groups, however, say the actual death toll is likely much higher, partly due to under-reporting of accidents as mine bosses seek to limit their economic losses and avoid punishment.

### Quote of the week



"Happiness is your own treasure because it lies within you."

Prem Rawat  
(Indian Leader; 1957-)



Sunday 28 August 2011

## One of four survivors dead after mine flood traps 26 in NE China

*Extract from English.news.cn*

QITAIHE, Heilongjiang, -- A survivor of a coal mine flood in Heilongjiang Province that trapped 26 miners was confirmed dead early Sunday, according to the rescue command center.

The deceased, Zhao Wenquan, was one of the four survivors on Saturday in the mine. But only three were brought to the ground that day. They were immediately rushed to the People's Hospital in Qitaihe City, where the flooded coal mine is located.

Zhao was too weak to keep up with the other three as they crawled along the pitch-dark shaft looking for help. His body was retrieved around 3:30 a.m. Sunday.

The three survivors were in stable condition, said Shi Hong, vice president of the hospital.

Jing Renguang, 41, is one of the lucky three. He has been working as a miner for almost six years.

"The accident occurred when we were loading the tramcar with coal," Jing said in hospital.

"I rushed toward a tunnel that was higher up but even so was covered by water immediately," He said. "Fortunately, I managed to grab a rope and found a piece of timber to cling to."

Jing said he never imagined that such a disaster could happen so suddenly even though he'd repeatedly thought about the risks of working in a mine.

"We did not have anything to eat," Jing said. "We recalled the good times we'd spent with our families to boost morale."

After waiting in the dark for almost 102 hours, Jing said they heard the sound of pumps and then saw the water receding. "So we started to crawl forward in the water until we approached

the outlet and cried for help. And finally we were rescued," Jing said.

"I hope the other trapped miners can be saved as soon as possible," said one of Jing's family members at his side.

"The rescue work has entered the final stage," Wang Xiankui, governor of Heilongjiang, said Saturday evening.

As of 10 a.m. Sunday, rescuers had pumped 70,770 cubic meters of flood water from the pit with 12 pumps, reducing the water level by 13.97 meters compared to the initial level.

By 10:30 p.m. Sunday, a 277.9-meter deep hole had been drilled to supply ventilation to the area where the miners might be trapped, said Li Xingyuan, spokesman of the rescue command center, at a press conference early Monday morning.

The flooding occurred on Tuesday, when 45 miners were working in a pit of the Hengtai Coal Mining Co. in Boli County of Qitaihe City. Nineteen miners managed to escape.

The provincial government ordered the mine to stop production in 2007. But the owner restarted production without permission on Aug. 16, according to the local work safety bureau.

The accident happened after workers mistakenly drilled into a neighbouring mine.

## This week in mining accident history

**29 August 1929**

**Kames Colliery**

**Muirkirk, Lanarkshire, Scotland, UK**

**Underground coal mine**

**2 killed, fall of roof**

Source: [www.scottishmining.co.uk](http://www.scottishmining.co.uk)

Two young miners were killed in Kames Colliery, Muirkirk, Lanarkshire, yesterday afternoon as the result of a heavy fall from a roof. Their names are Michael Parker, 45 Springhill Terrace, Muirkirk, and James Casagranda, Main Street, Muirkirk. It appears that the men were

working together when a large mass descended upon them. Rescue parties worked strenuously, but owing to the heavy nature of the fall several hours elapsed before they could extricate the men, who were dead when brought to the surface. The colliery belongs to Messrs William Baird & Co [*Scotsman* 30 Aug 1929]

Monday 29 August 2011

## Sounds heard from Chinese mine where 22 missing

*Extract from Associated Press*

Rescuers heard knocking sounds Monday from a flooded Chinese mine where 22 workers have been trapped for nearly a week.

The noises came from a 920-foot (280-meter) pipe that was drilled late Sunday to allow fresh air into the illegal mine in the Heilongjiang province city of Qitaihe in the northeast of China, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.


Twenty-six miners were trapped Aug. 23 when workers broke through into an adjacent flooded pit.

Xinhua said three miners were rescued Saturday and one body has been recovered.

The mine had been ordered shut in 2007 but was reopened without permission on Aug. 16, Xinhua said, citing the provincial bureau of occupational safety.

China's mines are notoriously deadly, although safety improvements have cut annual fatalities by about one-third from a high of 6,995 in 2002 despite a tripling in the output of coal used to generate the vast majority of China's electrical power.

In April 2010, 115 miners were pulled from a flooded mine in the northern province of Shanxi after more than a week underground.



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<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/publications/seminar-presentations>

## Coal mine flood traps 12 in SW China

*Extract from Xinhua*

Twelve miners were trapped when a coal mine flooded in southwest China's Sichuan Province Monday, local government officials said.

The flooding happened at around 10 a.m. Monday when 30 miners were working underground at the Zengjiagou Coal Mine in the county of Dazhu, Dazhou City, according to a spokesman with the provincial work safety bureau.

Eighteen managed to escape while 12 others remained trapped, said the spokesman.

Rescue efforts are underway.

## USA: Coal-Mine Systems to Protect U.S. Workers from Machines Proposed

*Extract from Bloomberg*

President Barack Obama's administration said it will propose requiring detection systems for automated coal-cutting machines to prevent them from crushing miners.

The rule from the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration would make companies install the programming on self-propelled equipment that rips ore from the rock face and loads the chunks onto conveyors or into shuttle cars, according to a statement posted today on the agency's website. When the system senses a miner within five feet (1.5 meters), it would sound a warning or flash a visual signal. Within three feet, it would halt the device.

From 1984 through 2010, 30 miners were killed and 220 injured when such machines pinned or struck them, the agency said. Two deaths occurred in 2010 and one so far this year, the mine-safety administration said.

"Some underground coal-mine operators already are using the technology", Joseph A. Main, assistant Labor secretary for mine safety, said in the statement. "And we know that it saves lives."

Companies would be able to phase in the upgrades over 18 months after the rule is final, according to the proposal.

Systems developed by Nautilus International Control and Engineering Ltd. of Burnaby, British Columbia; Strata Products LLC of Sandy Springs, Georgia; and Matrix Design Group Inc. of Colorado Springs, Colorado, have been approved by the agency, and at least 35 continuous-mining machines in the U.S. have them installed, according to the statement. Mines in South Africa already use them, the agency said.

The agency said it was proposing the rule rather than issuing an emergency temporary standard so that public comment can be solicited to be consistent with Obama's executive order to make the regulatory process more practical.

Public hearings are scheduled in Denver; Charleston, West Virginia; and Washington, Pennsylvania, in October, according to the proposed rule.

Tuesday 30 August 2011

## Miners rescued from flooded illegal Chinese pit

*Extract from [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)*

**Officials say one miner died in the accident, and three others are still missing**



Nineteen coal miners have been rescued after being trapped underground for a week in north-eastern China, officials have said.

The miners became trapped in the mine in Heilongjiang province after drilling into a flooded shaft by accident.

One miner died in the incident and three others are still missing. Three were rescued on Saturday.

Xinhua reports that the mine, near the city of Qitaihe, had been ordered to close in 2007 but re-opened illegally.

Hopes that the miners were still alive were revived on Sunday when noises were detected through a 920-ft (280m) pipe that was drilled to allow fresh air into the mine.

Television images on the state broadcaster showed the men being brought slowly to the surface, all apparently in good health.

The footage showed cheers from rescuers as the men appeared, bandages over their eyes to protect them from the light.

Wednesday 31 August 2011

## USA: Boone mines to get potential violation designation

*Extract from [The Register-Herald.com](http://The Register-Herald.com)*

Unreported accidents at two Boone County coal mines formerly owned by Massey Energy have prompted the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration to issue notices of potential patterns of violations.

Notices were sent to the Randolph Mine, operated by Inman Energy, and Justice No. 1 mine, run by Independence Coal Co., Inc.

Neither mine was cited in the last screening round back in November, but the pair, along with three other mines Massey Energy owned and two owned by Peabody Energy, were subjects of audit to ascertain if they failed to report injuries that would have influenced MSHA's decision.

MSHA said both coal firms refused to surrender accident, injury and illness data to the federal agency.

“One of the factors the agency considers before issuing a PPOV notice is the mine’s accident and injury history,” said Joe Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

“Refusal to provide this information to MSHA prevents the agency from determining whether a mine meets the PPOV screening criteria.”

Only last Friday, the federal agency put Rhino Eastern LLC’s Eagle 1 mine in Raleigh County on notice for a PPOV, marking the first time in MSHA’s history a mining installation has been so designated twice.

In the latest action, Administrative Law Judge Kenneth Andrews of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission held that MSHA’s demand for audit information, under the Constitution, is “a reasonable exercise of government responsibility over public welfare where it is related to occupational health and safety.”

The judge also ruled that MSHA’s ability to perform such audits is needed to “effectively protect miners from the broad range of accidents, injuries and illnesses that are inherent risks in mining.”

A few months ago, Alpha Natural Resources acquired Massey Energy, and MSHA said the new owner agreed to yield records for five of its mines, including Randolph and Justice.

The audit by MSHA showed that 24 injuries at the mines were either unreported or covered inaccurately in official records. Altogether, the 24 injuries resulted in 1,125 lost days of work.

Peabody’s failure to comply with a June 13 request for the required data at its Air Quality No. 1 mine in Knox County, Ind., led MSHA to impose daily fines of \$4,000, as of June 23. Until the desired information is turned over, MSHA said the penalties will remain in force.

## USA: One man in hospital after coal mining accident

*Extract from WKYT27 News First, USA*

A coal mining accident in Harlan County has one man in the hospital.

It happened yesterday at Stillhouse Mining in Lynch.

Jimmy Saylor was working on a belt within in the mine.

He turned off the belt before climbing on it.

"While he was there working on the belt, the sampler comes on and makes a swipe at the belt and of course hits him. So when it strikes him, then he falls," said Mr Tracy Stumbo, Accident Investigation Division Chief Investigator.

Saylor is in stable condition at Holston Valley Hospital with several injuries.

Electrical inspectors are on site now checking into the mechanics of the equipment.

Officials are trying to determine whether the accident was a mechanical error.

The mine was closed yesterday, but it is back open today.

## Lifetime pensions awarded to 14 of the trapped Chilean miners

*Extract from CNN, Latin America*

Fourteen of the 33 Chilean miners who were trapped underground for more than three months after a mine collapse in northern Chile will get lifetime pensions.



The Chilean miners and rescuers attend the 2010 CNN Heroes tribute in Los Angeles

Chilean first lady Cecilia Morel met with the 14 miners Tuesday to deliver the news at a



ceremony held in the town of Copiapo, near the site of the San Jose mine collapse.

Morel, who traveled to Copiapo on behalf of President Sebastian Pinera, said the miners will receive a monthly pension of 250,000 Chilean pesos, the equivalent of almost \$540. The miners will receive this benefit for the rest of their lives.

"When the accident happened, we put all of the resources available to us to rescue you. We accompanied your families every moment and we could not abandon you to fate afterwards. This government is committed to be with you and help you as much as we can," Morel said in awarding the pensions.

The Chilean government chose the miners who will receive the lifetime pensions based on their health, age, and the opinion of the group of survivors, officials said.

The ceremony at the Atacama Regional Museum was also attended by Chilean Mining Minister Hernan de Solminihac. The minister said the government is also helping the miners who lost their job when the mine collapsed.

"Following the instructions of the president, we made a great effort to compensate more than 200 workers at the San Jose Mine so that they could receive this benefit before the first anniversary of the accident and we have fulfilled that commitment," Solminihac said.

Morel reflected on the ordeal that the miners have been through. "Now we see that they're all alive and well, but this trauma didn't happen in a vacuum. They became famous due to a disaster that is still negatively affecting them. That's why they need this help, which will be one more step towards their recovery," she said.

In spite of becoming famous after surviving the mine collapse, life hasn't been easy for the miners. Several are still unemployed. Others are surviving by selling fruits and vegetables on the streets of Copiapo, driving taxis or doing odd jobs. The most successful ones have gotten into public speaking, but the money and the

opportunities are likely to dwindle as years go by.

Jorge Galleguillos, one of the survivors, said earlier this month that the good will from their country faded fast. "They love us more abroad. They congratulate us, they want to touch us and get a blessing from us. That's not the case in Chile. Only a few greet us with affection; many more say 'hi' with envy," Galleguillos said.

Galleguillos was one of four miners who traveled to Washington, D.C., in early August to open an exhibit about the mine collapse and subsequent rescue at the Smithsonian Institution.

Author Jonathan Franklin, who wrote a book about the miners called "33 Men" and who did extensive interviews with them, says recovery hasn't been easy.

"They're taking lots of pills, they're heavily medicated. I think they really needed better psychological counseling and they feel best when they're together as a group. They might have differences. They fight over money sometimes but when they're together, they're like a band of brothers," Franklin said.

## Mining dictionary

### A guide to coal mining terminology

#### B

#### BACK HOLES

Roof holes of a round of shots.

-Ed



Trade & Investment

### Industry Assistance Seminars - Mastering Fatigue Management

A series of free seminars on Mastering Fatigue Management will be held between September and November 2011 at Broken Hill, Lithgow, Wollongong, Dubbo, Maitland and Cobar. The seminar program consists of a two day educational workshop. Arrangements can then be made to conduct a one day on-site evaluation on fatigue.

Registration forms are available to download below. Please email completed registration forms to: [minesafety.seminars@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:minesafety.seminars@industry.nsw.gov.au)

Further information & Registration Form [http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/40212/8/Mastering-fatigue-management-2011.pdf](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/40212/8/Mastering-fatigue-management-2011.pdf)