



Mining Accident News No.1210

23 April to 4 May 2012

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Monday 23 April 2012

Qld: Call for more mental health care at mines

Extract from 9News, Aus

BRISBANE, - Mental health initiatives should be employed as standard safety measures on mine sites along with fluoro shirts and eye protection, a health organisation says.

The Australasian Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health says depression, anxiety and stress remain largely hidden on mining sites despite posing a serious safety risk.

The centre's chief executive Dr Jennifer Bowers says many mining companies are reluctant to spend money on programs that improve their employees' mental health.

"It's very acceptable now for everybody to wear their fluoro gear, to wear their protective gear, to be aware of all of the issues that they have to protect their safety and their health," Dr Bowers told AAP.

"What's not recognised is that if you don't feel good about yourself, (or) you've got problems with your family or your mates, (or) you're not functioning well, you're over 40 per cent more likely to be at risk of a physical accident."

Research is lacking but anecdotal evidence suggests mine workers are suffering depression and other mental health problems because they are subject to various stresses.

These include time away from family, long shifts, harsh environments, and dangerous jobs that demand high levels of concentration.

"People disclose to us some of the issues they face which they might not normally do because it's not a safe environment to say anything," Dr Bowers said.

"People will not declare it in those macho, 'suck it up, princess' sorts of environments."

She says mining companies must invest in initiatives that speak to miners in their own language.

Posters that read "Don't tell me to harden the f*** up, just talk to me" and presentations by Redgum singer-songwriter John Schumann are among the interventions that have already been successfully implemented on mine sites by the centre.

Some far-sighted companies had committed to the mental health programs but many directors and senior executives of other companies were reluctant to spend the money, Dr Bowers said.

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 10 of 2012

"It's really, really hard to get them to see that it's a cost-effective approach which will improve productivity and ultimately profit," she said.

Four die, five missing in Inner Mongolia coal mine blast

Extract from Xinhua

Nine miners were killed and 16 others injured in a coal mine accident in north China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region as the rescue wrapped up late Monday, officials said.

Rescuers found the bodies of five missing miners at Xingya Coal Mine at Urad front banner, Bayannur city after an eight-hour search, said a spokesman of the local government. Four people were killed on the spot when a blast rocked the mine at about 3:20 am Monday.

The 16 miners, including four severely injured, are being treated at a local hospital, the spokesman said.

The mine, with maximum output of 300,000 tons of coal a year, is licensed. The cause of the accident is being investigated, he added.

China's mining sector saw 185 accidents in the first quarter of the year, that led to the deaths of 289 people, the State Administration of Work Safety said last Friday. Altogether 1,973 miners were killed in colliery accidents last year.

Poor safety regulations and a lack of safety awareness are usually blamed for the frequent occurrence of colliery accidents.

Inner Mongolia holds China's largest coal reserves. It surpassed neighboring Shanxi Province to become the largest coal producing region in 2010. Its coal output reached 908 million tonnes in the first 11 months last year, rising 26.6 percent from a year earlier, according to latest available statistics.



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For mine safety information and publications:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety>

Wednesday 25 April 2012

USA: Man killed in mining accident

Extract from www.wkvt.com

A man is dead after a mining accident in Eastern Kentucky.

MSHA officials say it happened around 9:00 Wednesday morning at the McCoy Elkhorn coal mine near the Mousie community in Knott County.

Contract workers were removing a belt line from the mine when one worker fell off a catwalk about 15 feet in the air.

Officials say he suffered a head injury and died on the way to the hospital.

"MSHA takes any accidents seriously, and certainly a fatality. What we would initially do generally is order that section of the mine or the entire mine shut down so we can conduct an investigation," said MSHA spokesperson Amy Louviere.

The man's body was taken to Frankfort for an autopsy. His name has not been released.

Officials say the mine is active, but in a non-producing status.

This was the 7th mining death this year.

MSHA: 10 Miners Died in Work-related Accidents during the First Quarter 2012

Extract from www.wdvt.com, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration says 10 miners died in work-related accidents at the nation's mines during the first quarter of 2012, and half of those occurred on five consecutive weekends.

MSHA chief Joe Main said Wednesday that three of those killed on the five weekends were mine supervisors.

Six of the 10 deaths were in coal mines. The others were in metal and non-metal mines.

Main says all fatalities are preventable with effective pre-shift and on-shift inspections that identify and correct hazards. He says better training will help miners recognize those hazards and know how to fix them.

Last month, MSHA sent an accident-prevention alert to the mining industry after four consecutive weekends of mine fatalities.

But the very next weekend, a fifth person died.

Quote of the week



"Personally I'm always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught."

Sir Winston Churchill
British politician, 1874-1965

Friday 27 April 2012

China: Hopes for 11 trapped miners still remain: rescuer

Extract from English.news.cn

YANHE, Guizhou, -- A rescue official said Friday morning that there are spaces for life under the mine pit where 11 miners remain trapped by a colliery flooding in Thursday morning in southwest China's Guizhou province.

Zhang Yihao, head of the rescue operation, said the flood level has stopped rising in the Xinsheng Coal Mine, and there are two life spaces in the mine lane that are above the water level to allow the miners to take refuge.

He also corrected the total number of miners working under the mine to 23, instead the previously reported 22. And 12 of them have

managed to escape the accident which happened at 10:30 a.m. Thursday.

Zhang said the flooding may have been triggered by mining blast in a neighboring coal mine, which damaged the structure of the Xinsheng Coal Mine and produced heavy dust there.

More than 300 rescuers are braving the heavy dust to install facilities to pump water out of the mine and approach the missing workers.

The mine in Qiaojia township, which is 37 kilometers from Yanhe's county seat, has a designed annual capacity of 90,000 tonnes.

WA: Tougher penalties bid for fatal safety breach

Extract from The West Australian

Unions have called for tougher penalties after a company was fined little more than a mine worker's annual salary for a workplace accident that killed a man.

John Holland was fined \$242,000 by the Federal Court this month for breaching occupational health and safety laws by failing to protect staff from harm at a Pilbara mine.

The oversight caused a fatal accident at BHP Billiton's Mt Whaleback site at Newman.

Wayne Moore, 45, of Collie, died in early 2009 when he fell 12m from an unsecured sheet of grid mesh on a machine.

It is uncertain how much Mr Moore earned, but tradesmen in the lucrative sector regularly earn more than \$150,000 a year, while more senior workers such as engineers get more than \$250,000.

The court imposed the maximum penalty under the old occupational health and safety regime, following a successful prosecution by national safety watchdog Comcare.

On January 1, the maximum penalty in the national system jumped to \$1.5 million for this

type of offence, and \$3 million for more serious breaches.

The WA system, which has yet to join the national regime, allows maximum penalties of \$500,000 for a first offence. The State Government is proposing a maximum fine of \$1.5 million under a harmonised system.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union said the case highlighted inadequate penalties in both jurisdictions.

State secretary Mick Buchan said the relatively small fines sent the wrong message to employers.

He said many in the sector earned in a year or two an amount similar to the \$242,000 fine.

He supported a private member's Bill from Greens MP Alison Xamon seeking to introduce an offence of industrial manslaughter.

Under proposed amendments to the criminal code, criminally negligent bosses could be jailed for up to 20 years.

The maximum fine would be \$3.75 million.

Ms Xamon said the maximum would apply to the most extreme cases, where bosses had knowingly risked lives to save money.

Commerce Minister Simon O'Brien said the State would not sign up to national harmonisation until the full implications for small business were known.

"I think the unions are being lazy and have simply not thought this through," he said.

USA: MSHA makes move on SCSRs

Extract from West Virginia MetroNews

Coal companies operating in West Virginia and around the country are going to have to phase out some safety equipment miners carry on them while working underground.

The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration announced Thursday the phase

out of SR-100 self-contained self-rescuers manufactured by Pittsburgh, Pa.-based CSE Corp. must begin immediately.

The action follows a report issued earlier this month by NIOSH following a NIOSH-MSHA investigation that showed not all of the units from that manufacturer were operating according to safety standards.

SCSRs are units miners carry with them that would give 60 minutes of breathable air in case of an emergency underground. The units became a main focus of the Sago Mine disaster investigation a few years ago.

MSHA said Thursday the phase out must begin immediately but operators have a year to make significant changes.

"By April 26, 2013, mine operators are required to replace with any other approved one-hour SCSR those SR-100s that are worn or carried by miners and stored on mantrips. The entire phase-out of all SR-100 units must be completed by Dec. 31, 2013."

NIOSH began testing the units in Oct. 2010 and found problems with the oxygen starter. NIOSH worked with MSHA to gather 500 of the SCSRs for further testing and five of those were found to be defective which is above the 1 percent allowable failure rate. There are 70,000 units currently in underground coal mines in the U.S.

Sunday 29 April 2012

Canada: Remembering accident victims 'not enough,' Gerard says

Extract from NorthernLife.ca

Speakers push for mining inquiry at Day of Mourning

Traditionally, Steelworkers Local 6500 presents white roses to the families of those who have been killed on Vale property every April 28, on the Day of Mourning.

Three more families received roses at this year's ceremony. On June 8, 2011, Jason Chenier, 35, and Jordan Fram, 26, were killed at Stobie Mine. Then, on Jan. 29, 2012, Stephen Perry, 47, was killed at Coleman Mine.

There are now 43 names on the list of those killed on company property since the Day of Mourning, which is now marked internationally, was started by Local 6500 28 years ago.

The union has also compiled a list of nearly 700 names of those killed on company property since the late 1800s.

"Since last day of mourning last year, we're adding three names to our list," Local 6500 president Rick Bertrand said, during the union's Day of Mourning luncheon event at the Steelworkers Hall.

"I cannot imagine the pain, the suffering and the emotions that the Fram family, the Chenier family and the Perry family have went through in the last year."

Gerry Lougheed Jr., one of the speakers at the event, said there needs to be an inquest into the state of mining in Ontario, as requested by Local 6500 earlier this year upon their release of a report on the events leading to Chenier and Fram's deaths.

He's even gone so far to print 1,000 addressed, stamped postcards addressed to Minister of Labour Linda Jeffrey, requesting the inquest. Some of the postcards were handed out at the event.

"So my thinking is, regardless of one's political leanings, whether they're left, right or upside down ... as a community we need to get together and say that an inquiry makes sense," Lougheed said, speaking to Northern Life after the event.

"Hopefully we'll make sure we don't have three fatalities in a three-month period within our own community again."Lougheed Jr., who has been speaking at the Steelworkers' Day of Mourning luncheon for more than 20 years, said he feels very strongly about workplace safety.

"Nobody should come into work with a lunch bag, and come out with a body bag," he said.



Steelworkers international president Leo Gerard speaks at Steelworkers Local 6500's Day of Mourning event April 28. Photo by Heidi Ulrichsen.

"That's just wrong. I think it affects me in a very personal way, because being a funeral director, I actually sit in my office with people. I know it's the right thing to ask for an inquiry, because the wrong thing is a 30-year-old widow with two children, making funeral arrangements with me."

Steelworkers International president Leo Gerard said too many employers in the province use what he calls "lazy health and safety."

"These are blame the worker programs," he said.

"If you get hit by a chunk of loose in the mines, it's your fault. If you trip on a broken stair, you should have known that stair was broken. If you twisted your ankle, you're going to be disciplined. That happens in too many workplaces. Blame the worker lazy safety programs do not fix the problems."

Eight people have been killed in the province's mining industry over the past year, he said. Three hundred thirty eight have been killed on the job in Ontario over the past year, 6,000 have died of industrial disease, and 240,000 have made workplace injury claims.

Gerard echoed Lougheed Jr.'s comments about the need for an inquiry into mining practices in the province.

The last inquiry into the province's mining industry ended up becoming the basis of the current occupational health and safety legislation.

This legislation hasn't been changed in 30 years, "although our workplaces have changed, everything we do has changed, although our workplaces have become more internationally owned," Gerard said.

It's not enough to just remember those who have been killed on company property over the years, he said.

"What we need to do is honour them by using all the energy, creativity and commitment we have to make sure lives will not be lost," Gerard said. "On behalf of the people who have died, we're going to make sure nobody else's family ever has to go through this."

Monday 30 April 2012

NSW: Mining industry urged to tackle mental illness

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A report to be released at a conference in the Hunter Valley today has found mental illness is costing the mining industry up to \$450 million a year.

The report, prepared by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health and the University of Newcastle, has found about 8,000 to 10,000 mine workers experience a mental health illness over a 12 month period.

Mental illness is the main topic at the two-day Minerals Council's Occupational Health and Safety Conference which opens today at Pokolbin.

The conference will be addressed by former Newcastle Knights player Andrew Johns, who will speak about his mental health challenges throughout a successful rugby league career.

Institute Director Trevor Hazell says mental illness costs a single mine between \$300,000 and \$400,000 a year.

"There are three main areas, one is absenteeism, people who are suffering from anxiety or depression do take more time off work," he said.

"There's presenteeism, that's coming to work while you're unwell then they'll be less productive even though they're not off work.

"Then the third area of impact is injury.

"People with mental illness are at a higher risk of having an injury at work."

Mr Hazell says the industry can play a key role in removing the stigma surrounding mental illness.

"We are actually recommending a comprehensive approach in which we look at opportunities to actually promote the mental health of workers in the industry.

"The industry is already addressing many risk factors, including fatigue so we would want to include what they're already doing and look for opportunities to do more in that area of prevention."

Tuesday 1 May 2012

9 Still Trapped in Flooded SW China Colliery

Extract from Xinhua, China

Nine miners were still trapped in the flooded colliery in southwest China's Guizhou Province, as continuous rainfall has hampered the rescue efforts, local authorities said Tuesday.

By Tuesday, rescuers have recovered the bodies of two miners, and are still rushing to pump water out to rescue the trapped under the Xinsheng Coal Mine in Qiaojia township, Yanhe Tujia autonomous county, said Han Shuqiang, a rescue expert on the scene.

Han said heavy rainstorm pounded the region from Sunday, and the water level down the colliery shaft is still rising.

Local weather forecast department said more rain is expected in the next 48 hours.

The shaft became flooded at about 10:20 a.m. Thursday, when 23 miners were working underground. Twelve managed to escape on their own, leaving 11 trapped.

The mine has a designated annual capacity of 90,000 tonnes, and the cause of the accident is being investigated.

Wednesday 2 May 2012

Qld: Worker sacked for smoking in Bowen Basin mine

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

An investigation is underway after a central Queensland miner was found with cigarettes and a lighter while working at an underground coal mine.

A spokesman for the Department of Mines and Energy says they are looking into allegations a contract worker at Peabody Energy's North Goonyella mine, west of Mackay, was smoking while underground last week.

He says co-workers smelt smoke and quickly located the man, who was found with cigarettes and a lighter.

The man was taken to the surface and immediately sacked.

The spokesman says their investigation will determine whether to prosecute the man for breaches of the Coal Mining Safety and Health Act.

Maximum penalties for breaching the Act include a \$50,000 fine or six months in jail.

Mine operator Peabody Energy is assisting with the investigation.

This week in mining accident history

2 May 1972

Sunshine Mine

Kellogg, Shoshone county, Idaho, USA

Underground silver mine

91 killed smoke inhalation and CO poisoning

Background

The Sunshine Mine is located about 8 miles southeast of Kellogg, Shoshone County, Idaho, and was owned by the Sunshine Mining Company. The mine was America's richest silver mine.

Employment totalled 522 persons, 429 of whom worked underground. The mine was operated on three 8-hour shifts, 5 days a week. Miners gained entrance to the active mine workings by walking along a 200 foot drift (tunnel) to the Jewell Shaft, and were then lowered to the 3100 and 3700 levels by means of a hoist (elevator), then transported by train to the No. 10 shaft and again lowered by means of shaft conveyance to their designated levels. The No. 10 shaft extends from 3100 to the 6000 feet. Production was being maintained on the 4000, 4200, 4400, 4600, 4800, 5000, and 5200 levels, with some development work on the 5400, 5600, and 5800 levels.



Summary of Disaster

A fire of as yet undetermined origin was detected by Sunshine employees at approximately 11:35 a.m. on May 2, 1972. At that time, smoke and gas was coming from the

910 raise on the 3700 level. This fire precipitated the death of 91 underground employees by smoke inhalation and/or carbon monoxide poisoning. A subsequent shutdown of production of 7 months followed. Evacuation efforts at the time of the onset resulted in 81 men being evacuated the first day and 2 men being rescued 7 days later from the 4800 level.

Preliminary Report of Major Mine Fire Disaster

Chronology of the Fire and of the Rescue and Recovery Operations

The following description of the events related to the major disaster at the Sunshine silver mine is based on records maintained by the mine operator, interviews with mine officials and workers, depositions taken by Department of the Interior attorneys from survivors of the catastrophe and others, Federal mine inspection reports, and observations made by Bureau of Mines personnel.

Discovery of Fire and the Activities Thereafter

On May 2, 1972, a total of 173 men making up a normal day shift (7 a.m. to 3 p.m.) crew entered the mine and proceeded to work up to the time they learned of the fire. In the morning, miners Custer Keough and William Walty were engaged in enlarging the 3400 ventilation drift to decrease the ventilation resistance in the main exhaust airway. Their work consisted of drilling and blasting along the back and ribs, mucking, and rock bolting. An underground mechanic, Homer Benson, also reported to the 3400 level with an oxygen-acetylene cutting torch which was needed to remove old rock bolts along the drift, and transported it to the worksite with a small battery-powered locomotive. The worksite was west from the 09 vein bulkhead about 500 feet. Benson completed the cutting of the old rock bolts and arrived back at the 3700 level station with his equipment at 10:35 a.m. Keough and Walty ate lunch on the 3400 level at a presently unknown location.

Most of the salaried and day's pay personnel who normally ate their lunch from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. did so at their normal locations. Harvey Dionne, Jim Bush, Bob Bush, Jim Salyer, and Fred (Gene) Johnson, mine supervisors, were in the Blue Room (supervisors' room) near the 3700 level No. 10 Shaft station. Arnold Anderson, Norman Ulrich, Gary Beckes, and John Williams were in the electric shop also near the 3700 level No. 10 Shaft station to the south.

Leslie Mossburgh, Bill Bennett, Clyde Napier, Homer Benson, and Hap Fowler were in the drill repair shop located to the north of the No. 10 Shaft station on 3700 level. Greg Dionne, Tony Sabala, and Donald Beehner were in the pipe shop located at No.8 Shaft. James Lamphere was in the 3700 level warehouse. Pete Bennett and Kenneth Tucker were in the 08 machine shop in by the pipe shop. Don Woods was at the No. 10 Shaft chippy hoistroom. Morris Story and Jack Harris were also at 3700 level No. 10 Shaft station.

Floyd Strand, chief electrician; Kenneth Ross, geologist; Larry Hawkins, sampler; and John Reardon, pumpman, completed their morning activities at the No. 10 Shaft area. At 11:30 a.m., the above crew departed the No. 10 Shaft station on the 3700 level enroute to the Jewell Shaft on a man coach. Their route took them past the Strand substation, 910-raise, No.5 Shaft, and No.4 Shaft. They arrived at the Jewell station shortly after 11 :40 a.m. Shortly after lunch, at about 11:35 a.m., Ulrich and Anderson stepped out of the electric shop and smelled smoke. They immediately shouted to the Blue Room. Harvey Dionne and Bob Bush, foremen, came out and the four men started in the direction of the smoke which was toward the Strand substation. The smoke was discovered to be coming down the 910 raise. Harvey Dionne climbed up onto drift timber below the raise in an effort to spot fire. He was unable to detect any fire at that location. Jim Bush then arrived on a small battery-powered locomotive. Harvey Dionne, Jim Bush, and

Ulrich proceeded toward the Jewell Shaft. They met Ronald Stansbury, haulage locomotive operator, who was proceeding from the Jewell Shaft. Stansbury was instructed to return to the fire door and close that door. Jim Bush and Harvey Dionne returned toward the 910 raise. Ulrich, who had accompanied Stansbury, manually closed the fire door near the Jewell Shaft and proceeded up the Jewell Shaft to the 3100 level station.

At about 11:40 a.m., Delbert (Dusty) Rhoads and Jim Salyer simultaneously telephoned Pete Bennett in the 08 machine shop. They notified Bennett of smoke and asked Bennett to check to determine if a fire was burning in the shop area. Bennett and Tucker, knowing there was no fire in the shop, went from the shop toward the 808 and 820 drifts. Bennett discovered the 820 crosscut was so full of smoke he could not enter. Bennett met Bob Bush at the 808 drift. Upon entering that drift they found the smoke was again so thick that they could travel but a few feet. They retreated and tried to return to the 08 machine shop. They encountered much heavier smoke than before upon returning to the 820 crosscut. Travel back to the 08 shop was impossible.

Bob Bush then instructed Bennett and Tucker to proceed to the Jewell Shaft. As Bennett and Tucker were walking out the 3700 level toward the Jewell Shaft they met Jim Bush and Harvey Dionne returning toward No. 10 Shaft. Bennett and Tucker also met Edward Davis at No. 4 Shaft and told him to leave the mine.

As Harvey Dionne and Jim Bush returned toward No. 10 Shaft, they attempted to go into the 08 machine shop area. They reached the 820 drift and proceeded about 100 feet into the smoke before being driven out. Harvey Dionne and Jim Bush decided to evacuate the men. Harvey Dionne then went back to make sure the air door was closed and prepare for evacuation at the Jewell Shaft. Jim Bush then headed back toward the 910 raise where he encountered Bob Bush, Wayne Blalock, and Pat

Hobson, who were in a state of near exhaustion. Jim Bush then attempted to remove the three men from the mine. Jim Bush carried Bob Bush and Hobson under each of their shoulders and pushed Blalock in front of him. About halfway to the Jewell Shaft, Jim Bush himself was near exhaustion and had to leave all three men and go to the Jewell Shaft to try to get assistance.

Harvey Dionne, after returning to the Jewell Shaft, made the decision to remove restrictions over the No. 12 borehole to allow more fresh air to reach the lower levels.

Immediately afterward, according to the depositions made by survivors, Fred (Gene) Johnson, a shift boss, while at the 3700 level No. 10 Shaft, telephoned the mine maintenance foreman, Tom Harrah, at his office in the surface machine shop at about 12 noon, and (1) requested that the stench warning system be activated and that (2) oxygen breathing apparatus be sent into the mine. At this time, he also ordered the hoistman to prepare the cage for moving the men up to the 3100 level to get them out of the mine. The stench warning system was activated at 12:05 p.m. and the apparatus was gathered and transported down Jewell Shaft to the 3100 level station.

Because of the dense smoke between the 910 raise and No. 10 Shaft, the man (Don Wood) operating the No. 10 Shaft "chippy" hoist on the 3700 level was forced to abandon the hoistroom. Consequently, the "chippy" hoist was never used for evacuating men. Survivors, who later stated that their signals to the "chippy" hoistroom went unanswered and therefore assumed the signal system was inoperative, did not realize that the hoistroom could not be occupied.

According to the hoist log taken from the No. 10 double-drum hoist on the 3100 level, the first load of men was hoisted at 12:13 p.m. About 12 men rode the cage from the 3700 level to the 3100 level, including two cagers and three other men who had ridden up from the 4500

level. The cage arrived at the 3100 level at 12:15 p.m. and returned to the 3700 level where the remaining men boarded. They left the 3700 level at 12:16 p.m. and arrived at 3100 level at 12:17 p.m. Greg Dionne reboarded the cage and went down to the 4600 level with short stops on the 3700 level and 4400 level to pick up additional men including Delbert (Dusty) Rhoads, who, among others, had ridden the "chippy" cage down after lunch.

A full cage-load of men was sent up to the 3100 level from the 4600 level at 12:24 p.m. Greg Dionne remained on the 4600 level station. Byron Schultz, cager, reboarded the cage and went back down to 4600, arriving at 12:27 p.m., where another load of men boarded. Dionne remained at the station and Schulz rode up to the 3100 level, arriving at 12:30 p.m. Schulz reboarded at 3100 level and went to the 5000 level with a stop at 4600 to pick up Dionne and additional men. The cage then traveled back to the 3100 level arriving at 12:35 p.m. Delbert (Dusty) Rhoads and Arnold Anderson, mechanical and electrical lead men, possibly returned on this trip to the 3400 level. Another trip was made back to the 5000 level and returned at 12:44 p.m. Schulz and Dionne both returned to the 3100 level on this trip. The cage went back to the 5000 level and remained 12 minutes. The cage then went to the 5400 level and made a trip back to 3100 station.

All hoisting at No. 10 Shaft ceased at 1 :02 p.m. While on the 3400 level, Rhoads and Anderson were standing by and requesting permission to cut off the main exhaust fans on that level. Several persons listening on the mine telephone heard the request. A decision was never received.

The men hoisted from the lower levels of the mine were directed by Gene Johnson on the 3100 level to travel to the Jewell Shaft via that level to be hoisted to the surface. Gene Johnson had remained at the 3100 station to

direct the crews to Jewell Shaft instead of the Silver Summit escapeway.

According to the depositions, men obtained self rescuers from storage boxes on the shaft stations. Some of the men reported they had difficulty in using the self rescuers and they discarded them. Many men were doubtless quickly overcome by carbon monoxide and smoke, and died before they were able to reach the Jewell Shaft.

At about 1 p.m., and within an hour after the stench warning system had been activated, the first group to attempt to locate and rescue additional survivors went underground. An apparatus crew of four men, Robert Launhardt, Larry Hawkins, James Zingler, and Don Beebner, went across the 3100 level from the Jewell Shaft. On the way toward No. 10 Shaft, the crew met Roger Findley, who was on his way out toward the Jewell Shaft. Findley was having difficulty breathing and was given oxygen. Zingler then took Findley out to good air.

The crew continued toward No. 10 Shaft and met By- ron Schulz, who appeared in serious trouble and pleaded for oxygen. Beehner responded and gave Schulz his face mask, but went down himself as he attempted to put his mask back on. Then Launhardt tried to assist Schulz, as Hawkins placed his mask over Beehner's face, meanwhile holding his breath as long as he could before taking another breath of air from his mask. When Hawkins tried to place his mask again to Beehner's face, he noticed blood gushing from Beehner's mouth and nose as he lost consciousness.

Hawkins' apparatus then malfunctioned and he attempted to make his way out. He went down twice before mustering the strength to jump onto the last car of a train which Launhardt was bringing out with Schulz aboard. All three reached the Jewell Shaft station and were hoisted.

While these events were occurring on the 3100 level, moves were undertaken by some of the miners to rescue fellow workers on the 3700 level. Jim Bush, a mine foreman, had called to the attention of some other miners that three men, Robert Bush, Blalock, and Hobson, were on the 3700 level. He, himself, had tried earlier to save them, but was unable to do so. According to depositions from survivors of the disaster, three men on the 3700 Jewell station, Ronald Stansbury, Roberto Diaz, and another man, started out to bring the men to safety. They left the station and proceeded along the 3700 level aboard a locomotive and coach. Bearing in mind a previous warning from Jim Bush to be careful and avoid running over one of the victims last seen by him lying across the track, the three men stopped their locomotive short of the fallen man who was later identified as Blalock. They then went ahead on foot. Stansbury went farthest in and located Bob Bush lying on the ground, but he, himself, was fast becoming overcome and therefore started to retreat. On the way back, as he was stumbling along, he saw one of his fellow would-be-rescuers, Roberto Diaz, down on the ground. Alternately crawling and stumbling, he reached some fresh air at No. 5 Shaft where he ran across Harvey Dionne, Paul Johnson, and Jasper Beare reentering the drift.

Stansbury informed them that, in addition to the three men that his group had tried to rescue, another man (Diaz) was down, making a total of four, one of whom was lying across the track.

Johnson and his companions then continued toward No. 10 Shaft. They boarded the locomotive and car which had been used and abandoned by Stansbury and his colleagues, but had to give it up when it struck a body lying across the track and was derailed. Realizing they could not help any of the stricken men, they started to walk back toward the Jewell Shaft. During the trip, Johnson, too, went down, adding to the list of persons who had already died in the disaster. Subsequently, Jim Bush, accompanied by Ulrich, made one more rescue

attempt, protected only by self rescuers, but they had to abandon their efforts.

At 3:06 p.m., in order to eliminate recirculation and facilitate access to No. 10 Shaft, fans on the 3400 level were shut down from the 3700 level switch station. Four more bodies were found at the 3700 cable shop at this time. By 4 p.m., ventilation to the 3100 level No. 10 Shaft station had improved considerably and the air door was opened.

At 3:50 p.m., on May 8, an extensive cave-in was discovered in the 910 raise area on the 3700 level. In preparing to send men to the lower mine levels via the No. 12 borehole as part of its plan to carry out rescue and recovery operations through a fourth front, the Bureau had obtained two man-capsules from the AEC Nevada test site together with an engineer, Frank Solaegui, employed by Reynolds Electrical and Engineering Corp., an AEC prime contractor, who supervised use of the man-capsules at the Nevada Test Site, and could provide invaluable help with the rigging and use of the capsules in the Sunshine mine.

Each of these capsules had been designed to carry two men, and were brought to the mine because a man-capsule (or "torpedo" or man-cage) which was designed and built at the mine site turned out to be inadequate for the task, primarily because it did not provide an emergency escape hatch.

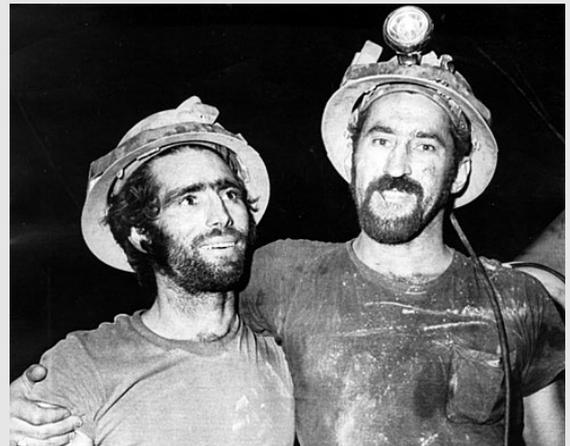
In order not to divert men from the other rescue and recovery operations, the Bureau gathered 22 additional men from nearly all its Metal and Nonmetal Health and Safety districts throughout the country. Shortly after 9 o'clock at night on May 8, the first two-man crew was lowered into the No. 12 borehole in the AEC capsule that was finally selected as most suitable for the operation. They discovered that the borehole not only was irregular and rough but contained many slabs of loose rock which could endanger the lives of any men making the descent. Therefore, as they were being lowered, they began to scale loose rock. In the

first hour, they progressed less than 150 feet of the total 1,100-foot distance, and were hoisted because of extreme fatigue. Crew after crew then followed, scaling the loose and jagged rock. By 3 a.m. on May 9, the capsule had descended only 450 feet. After the crews reached a depth of 580 feet, conditions improved. The remaining 520 feet of the corkscrew-shaped borehole was in better condition, and the manned capsule was able to reach the 4800 level shortly after 7 a.m. A fresh crew with equipment was then lowered and by noontime began exploring the 4800 level for survivors. This crew searched the area around the bottom of the borehole and the drifts west of cars, and one victim had fallen between the locomotive and the rib. The 4200 level self-rescuer cabinet had been entered, but no self-rescuers were found with these victims.

It was also observed that the self-rescuer boxes on 4600 level were empty. Also, it was evident that the persons on 5200 level had attempted to build a bulkhead with brattice cloth, and the drift walls west of the Alimak raise were seen coated with a tar-like substance.

The last bodies, making a total of 91 victims, were removed from the mine at 3:40 a.m. on May 13. Sunshine mine officials on May 15, 1972, provided Bureau officials with an updated accounting of mine personnel caught up in the disaster. They said 173 employees were underground when the fire was discovered. Of this number, 80 persons escaped, two survived, and 91 perished. The figure of 80 persons who actually escaped differed from figures reported earlier by the company. The final figure was determined when it was confirmed that only 13 of a possible 33 mechanics, only five of a possible 17 electricians were underground at the time of the fire, and four other employees did not go underground during the day shift on May 2. The difficulties experienced earlier in providing a reliable count of the number of persons underground at the time of the fire stemmed from the check-in, check-out system at the mine. On reporting for work, each mine

worker normally picks up a cap lamp and battery specifically assigned to him. However, additional cap lamps are at times sent underground to replace those whose batteries become exhausted. Shift bosses also keep on their person, mainly for payroll purposes, a tally of individuals on the job, but in this case, many of the shift bosses perished with their crews.



Tom Wilkinson, left, and Ron Flory beam after being rescued from the Sunshine Mine fire in May 1972, in Kellogg, Idaho

Recovery Operations

Trained rescue crews from other local mines had been at the mine since 2:30 p.m. One of these crews had been instrumental in making an early recovery of 5 bodies from the 3700 level drift near the No.5 shaft. Several other unsuccessful rescue attempts were made this first afternoon and evening.

By early morning of May 3, as the scope of the disaster was beginning to be realized, additional help was being organized. Other persons from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, State Mine Inspector's Office, and the United Steelworkers Health and Safety Department began arriving on the scene.

Several more unsuccessful recovery attempts were made on the morning of May 3. On the afternoon of May 3, six more bodies were recovered from the 3100 drift.

The fresh air entering the mine through the Jewell Shaft was being monitored to insure that contaminated air was not being recirculated throughout the mine. Rubber inflatable bags were being used to construct temporary seals

and bulkheads in drifts and raises along the airways. This enabled rescue crews to establish fresh air bases as they progressed further into the mine.



Friends and relatives of miners trapped underground during the Sunshine Mine fire wait for word in this file photo from May 1972, in Kellogg, Idaho. Photo by The Spokesman-Review/AP Photo

Bulkheading and airtight seals were also being placed from the Silver Summit drift on the 3100 level. This gave two-way approach to the No. 10 hoist, which was essential for the recovery of the No. 10 shaft and lower working levels.

Work was also being done at the surface exhaust ventilation fan to clear smoke and gases from the 3100 level and 3700 level. On May 7, rescue crews entering from the Silver Summit drift had counted, but did not recover at that time, 15 more bodies near the 3100 level No. 10 shaft station area.

In the meantime, after much preparation and some minor setbacks, the U.S. Bureau of Mines had succeeded in readying a two man "capsule" to be lowered to the 4800 level via No. 12 borehole to search for possible survivors. These efforts led to the recovery of 2 men, Tom Wilkinson and Ronald Flory, who were found to be in good condition after being trapped for 8 days. They were brought to the surface on the afternoon of May 9. By early morning on May 10, 36 bodies had been recovered, 11 had been located but not recovered, 2 had been rescued, and 44 were left unaccounted for.

Work was continued on activating the No. 10 hoist. The hoist became operational at about

3:00 p.m., May 10. The shaft signalling system was revamped and descent to the lower levels progressed one level at a time. By late afternoon, May 11, all bodies previously unaccounted for had been located. The last were removed from the mine on May 13.

Investigation of Possible Causes of Fire ‘

Investigation of the cause and the origin of the fire has continued (on a periodic basis). In order to determine the probable cause of ignition, one must try to ascertain the location of ignition. The general opinion is that the fire originated in the 09 vein somewhere between the 3400 and the 3550 levels, presumably near the 09 crosscut on the 3400 level.

It is believed that when sufficient heat and fire had burned through a wooden bulkhead on the 3400 level 09 drift causing the bulkhead to collapse, smoke and gases were then picked up by the exhaust ventilation system and recirculated down the 910 raise and other raises along this route to the 3700 level and throughout the general working areas of the mine.

It is believed that the collapse of this bulkhead caused a short circuit of the ventilation, thus allowing the exhaust air to become the main source of air movement in the intake or fresh air system. This was unknowingly perpetuated by the closing of the fire doors on the 3100 level and the 3700 level. As the two main exhaust fans situated on the 3400 level continued to operate throughout the time of the fire and were not shut off until 3:00 p.m. on May 7, when a fire fighting crew shut the main power feeder off at the 3700 level substation.

Oxygen and Acetylene Cutting and Welding

The possibility of ignition resulting from the cutting of rock bolts with an acetylene oxygen cutting torch on the 3400 level may have been the indirect cause of starting the fire although it is very unlikely that the fire began at the exact place that the cutting was being done. The area where the cutting was being conducted was no less than 300 feet on the downwind side from

the nearest timbered area, which was the 09 drift intersection reported to have been thoroughly wet down.

There is a vague possibility that the hot bolts or some smouldering material such as wooden wedges, headboards, or rags may have been collected and disposed of behind timbers close to the 09 drift intersection, to flare up after the three workers left the area.

Smoking of Cigarettes

It was found that two men that worked on the 3400 the morning of the fire smoked cigarettes but it is doubtful that anyone could smoke cigarettes in the area of where it is believed the fire started. According to company personnel there was no way of gaining entry to 09 drift on 3400, and due to the high velocity of air, 1600 feet per minute in the outby, it is doubtful anyone could smoke cigarettes in this extremely fast air current (not impossible but doubtful).

Electricity

Subsequent investigations have indicated there were no energized electrical wiring or installations in the burn area.

Spontaneous Combustion

Because of the large amount of timbers that had been previously used in the area where the fire is believed to have started, plus the reported accumulation of other combustible materials, the possibility of fire ignition by means of spontaneous combustion was given a lot of credulity even though no one in the Coeur d'Alene Mining District can remember an instance where a fire was initiated due to spontaneous combustion from old mine timbers. The 09 drift on 3400 had been bulkheaded off in the early 60s to prevent ventilation leakage and to restrict entry of persons into the worked out areas. It is not known for certain every material used in the construction of these bulkheads.

It was reported that the timber sets in this intersection was laced with shiplap and/or plywood boards chinked along the walls with

burlap. The boards were covered with tar paper and then sprayed with urethane foam. The entire intersection, for an estimated 50 feet, was slick walled with plywood, tar paper and urethane foam, and canopied overhead in the same manner. It is not known what all materials were previously disposed of in the abandoned worked out area of the mine, but it is likely that several materials classified as combustible would have been found in the old workings, i.e., old broken timbers, rags, burlap, paper wrappings from lunches, explosive containers and probably explosives. Any or all of these materials could have contributed to spontaneous combustion if the right conditions existed.

Arson

There has been no substantial evidence provided that leads us to believe the fire was deliberately started.

Report of investigation at:

http://www.usmra.com/repository/category/disasters/unshine_report.pdf

Thursday 3 May 2012

Canada: City will honour memory of miners killed in historic, tragic accident

Extract from Nanaimo Daily News, Ca

Canadian flags will be lowered to half mast Thursday to honour those killed in a major mining disaster 125 years ago.

A total of 150 men, representing all but seven miners working in the No. 1 Esplanade Mine, operated by the Vancouver Coal Company, died as a result of a coal dust explosion deep in the ground shortly after 6 p.m. May 3, 1887.

The explosion started deep underground after explosives were laid improperly. Although many miners died instantly, others were trapped by the explosion. These men wrote farewell messages in the dust of their shovels. Nearly 150 children lost their fathers and 46 women became widows.

It was the province's worst mining disaster and the second worst in Canadian history.

At the time, the dangers of coal dust were not well understood.

It is one of a few memorial events recognized by the City of Nanaimo.

"It's not done for every reason but this one was significant," said Mayor John Ruttan. "It was a very sad day in 1887. The population of Nanaimo would have been much smaller then, so it was a significant portion of the city's population."

The mayor and council felt it was important to honour those killed and the descendents.

"It's only the right thing to do," Ruttan said.



No 1 Esplanade Explosion Monument, at the foot of Milton Street, Nanaimo

The South End Community Association plans to remember the disaster with a memorial ceremony Thursday at 5:30 p.m., at Esplanade and Milton Street.

THE ESPLANADE MINING DISASTER

150: Miners killed, including 53 Chinese men whose names were considered too difficult to pronounce, so were known only by their employee numbers.

7: Men who walked out of the disaster, including mayor Richard Gibson. Seven bodies were never recovered.

189: Killed in Hillcrest, Alta., the worst mining disaster in Canadian history in 1914. The Esplanade explosion was second worst.

18 million: Total tonnage of coal produced from the rich No. 1 Esplanade mine before its final closure in 1937.

\$4: Approximate daily pay for a miner at the time. Because they were paid according to coal productivity, miners sometimes took shortcuts.

6,500: Nanaimo's population in 1887.

China: Rescue progresses after 9 died in flooded colliery

Extract from Xinhua and China Daily

HEGANG, Heilongjiang - A total of 350 rescuers had drained a flooded colliery in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province as of noon on Thursday, but five miners remain trapped, according to latest official updates.



Miners carry pipes for a rescue mission in a flooded coal mine in Hegang, in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, on Thursday. Nine miners were confirmed dead in the accident that happened on Wednesday morning. Wang Song / Xinhua

A shaft of the Junyuan No 2 Coal Mine, located in Xing'an district of the city of Hegang, flooded at 7 am Wednesday, and rescuers have since worked around the clock to drain the mine, said officials with the rescue headquarters.

Twenty-eight miners were working underground when the accident happened. Fourteen of them managed to escape on their own or with help, and nine have been confirmed dead, they said.

It is estimated that 800 cubic meters of water flowed into the mine. The rescuers are now cleaning up the resulting silt and searching for the trapped miners, said Xie Diancai, vice mayor of Hegang.

Xu Longqing, a doctor with Hegang People's Hospital, said that five people were sent to the hospital for treatment on Wednesday night.

One of the miners, Liu Zhiqian, 41, had a skull and rib fractures and was in a coma. The other four had no physical injuries but were emotionally distressed.

"The electricity went out at about 6 am that morning, and then the continuous sound of the wind from the pit exit suddenly ceased," said miner Wu Yanyi, 42.

Sensing something might go wrong, Wu ran toward the exit, but it was blocked by water. "I had no choice but to turn back to a mining platform because the water flow was so strong."

Miner Yu Yongbo, 45, said the water got as high as 2.4 meters, but then receded. "We were soaked in water for about 18 hours and attempted to knock on pipes to send signals. I can't describe how excited I was when I saw the rescuers coming toward us in the mining cars."

The two men had worked through Tuesday night and were about to take a break on Wednesday morning when the accident occurred.

Wu, who started his job at the mine two months ago, said he didn't receive safety training or participate in any coal mine accident drills.

The investor and the legal representative of the mine have been detained by authorities. Xing'an district government's deputy chief in charge of coal mine safety has been sacked, Xie added.

Further investigation is underway.

The Junyuan No 2 Coal Mine is licensed, with a coal reserve of 800,000 tonnes and an annual production capacity of 60,000 tonnes, according to the Hegang city government.

The governor of the province, Wang Xiankui, has asked the rescue headquarters to "save the trapped ones regardless of the cost" and "investigate the cause of the accident and address the issues to put an end to similar accidents".

Meanwhile, the city has initiated a hazard-sweeping campaign for all collieries.

Friday 4 May 2012

Six missing in central China coal mine accident

Extract from Xinhua, China

CHANGSHA -- Rescuers in central China's Hunan province are racing to locate six miners who were missing in a coal mine accident, local authorities said Friday.

The miners with the Congshan coal mine in the township of Shashi in Shaodong County went missing after their cage plunged into the shaft at about 8:45 Wednesday, according to the Shaodong government.

The government has since ordered production suspension of local mines for an all-out overhaul.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

- Berm** A pile or mound of material capable of restraining a vehicle. Also known as a 'bund' or 'windrow'. Berms should be constructed on all exposed haul road edges, and be a minimum height of half (of the largest) haul truck wheel. Berms should be of sufficient strength to prevent a truck from travelling over the exposed edge.



-Ed