



Mining Accident News No.1216

21 to 31 July 2012

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Saturday 21 July 2012

Botswana: Jwaneng mine - plot thickens

Extract from www.mmegi.bw

The Jwaneng Mine accident story turned to a new chapter this week when a leaked report from the investigators who were part of the team investigating the accident levelled damaging allegations against Debswana. By last evening Debswana was understood to be moving to stem the PR damage from the report which cast doubts on the Debswana Jwaneng management's ability to address safety concerns

at the mine. This morning the diamond giant is scheduled to take journalists on a tour of the site, before addressing a press conference.

Debswana Group public and corporate affairs manager, Esther Kanaimba-Senai revealed that the investigations on the accident were complete and that the preliminary report was being circulated for finalisation. She furthermore dismissed suggestions that the company may not be fully dedicated to employee safety. "Our commitment to zero harm is unwavering," she said, adding that the company would deal with the matter in order to keep its safety ratings.

Meanwhile the unions, in their report demanded an urgent meeting with Minister Ponatshego Kedikilwe in what sources suggest is an indication of a lack of faith in the investigations collectively conducted with Debswana management.

Union insiders say the union is moving to block any possible moves by the mining company to gloss over the findings from the investigations. However, Kanaimba-Senai said the company is prepared to get to the bottom of the issue, and that it has already taken steps to address some of the issues raised by the investigations.

Attempts to get to the minister proved futile last night as his phone was off.

NZ: Legal action on Pike River commission

Extract from www.3news.co.nz

Legal action is being taken against the Pike River royal commission to force it to reconvene.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the mining disaster finished in April, but now Stacey Shortall, lawyer for former Pike River chief executive Peter Whittall says new evidence needs to be heard.

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
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She says new evidence filed to the royal commission after hearings ended should be publicly heard in the interests of fairness.



The Pike River mine explosion killed many men in 2010

Ms Shortall says no further comment will be made because proceedings are before the court, and were filed in the High Court in Wellington today.

The royal commission revealed two weeks ago that Ms Shortall had applied to reopen the hearings so that former mine technical staff members Udo Renk, Terry Moynihan and Greg Borichevsky could testify.

Mine collapse kills three in E. China

Extract from Xinhua

HEFEI - A mine collapse in East China's Anhui province has killed three workers, local authorities said Friday.

Three miners were buried when the open-pit Lunan limestone mine in Fanchang county collapsed around 6:30 pm Thursday, sources with the county's publicity department said.

Two other miners who were also working in the mine barely escaped, according to the sources.

The bodies of the buried miners were retrieved by 1 pm Friday.

The Fanchang government has ordered the mine to be suspended and an overhaul of all the non-coal mines in the county.

An investigation into the accident is under way.

This week in mining accident history (1)

22 July 1972

Blacksville No.1 Mine

Monongalia County, Blacksville, W. Va, USA

Underground coal mine

9 killed, mine fire

Report of a mine fire disaster that occurred on July 22, 1972, in the Blacksville No. 1 Mine, Consolidation Coal Company, West Virginia. The name of the company has since been changed to Blacksville No. 1 Mine, Blacksville Operations, Consolidation Coal Company.

A mine fire occurred about 7:30 p.m., Saturday, July 22, 1972, along the 3 North Main track haulageway, between the junctions of the A-1 and A-2 sections. The fire started when a continuous mining machine being transported along the 3 North Main track haulageway contacted the energized trolley and/or trolley feeder wires. At the time of the occurrence, 8 men were in the mine. Except for a foreman and eight employees working in by the fire area, all workmen in the mine escaped without incident via the service shaft portal.

Attempts to control and extinguish the fire were unsuccessful and the mine was sealed from the surface. The foreman and eight workmen engaged in miscellaneous duties in by the fire were entombed in the mine.

The mine was reopened January 3, 1973, and the bodies of the nine victims recovered. However, before the fire area could be totally recovered, the fire rekindled and the area had to be resealed.

The Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration, now the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), was informed by Adley E. Spottee, Vice President, Blacksville Operations, that the company does not plan to open and recover the sealed area at the present time. The area was subjected to extreme head and ignitions while sealed from July 25, 1972,

until January 2, 1973, and massive roof falls have occurred.

Methane

The Blacksville No. 1 mine was liberating approximately 6,125,000 cubic feet of methane in a 24 hour period at the time of the fire. Methane was not a factor in the cause of the fire; however, when the ventilation in 3 north was disrupted by falls of roof and dislodged stoppings, as a result of the fire, the methane build up inby and subsequent explosion was the main factor in the decision by the four participating agencies to seal the mine on the surface on July 24, 1972.

Electricity

The fire resulted when a continuous mining machine being transported on an equipment carrier along the 3 north track haulageway contacted the energized trolley and/or trolley feeder wire. The resulting arcing ignited the oil and other combustible material on the continuous mining machine or equipment carrier. It appears that a high-resistance low-current ground fault occurred when the machine contacted the energized wire. Under such a condition there would not have been a sufficient current demand to open the circuit breaker and disconnect power to the 3 north trolley system. It is conceivable that two or three minutes elapsed before the current demand exceeded the 3,000 amperes necessary to operate the circuit breaker. Such a ground fault could generate sufficient heat to ignite any hydraulic oil on the machine.

Firefighting Facilities

A complete description of the mine firefighting facilities is listed in the preliminary report. The facilities appeared adequate; however, accord to statements from workmen, there was some confusion when the water cars were brought to the fire scene and water was not used on the fire. Attempts to extinguish the blaze using a dry chemical extinguisher were unsuccessful.

Escapeways

The escapeways should have been adequate to permit persons to escape from the A-2 and A-3 sections had the vacated the sections immediately when the fire occurred. From all indications, because of the time lapse between the time the fire started and the time the men attempted to leave the section, the integrity of the escape system had been destroyed by the fire or during attempted firefighting procedures.

Coal and Coal Dust

The high-volatile Pittsburgh coalbed ignites easily when subjected to head or flame. Although the coalbed was not a factor in the starting of the fire, the easily ignited coal and coal roof contributed to the intensity of the fire. The mine was well rock-dusted and coal spillages were not a factor in the fire.

Extent of Fire

The 3 north area had not been totally recovered before it became necessary to reseal the area. However, the area affected by fire and flames, as evidenced by the burned condition of bodies and materials, was determined. The only area evidencing effects from fire and flame, other than the area immediately surrounding the origin of the fire, was in the A-2 section.

During the recovery operations on Monday, July 24, 1972, the methane content of the air in the return airways outby the fire continued to increase, indicating a danger from an explosion and prompted the representatives of the four participating agencies to direct the mine rescue teams and others to return to the surface. While the men were leaving the fire area, an explosion occurred at 2:42p.m. During recovery operations of January 1973, it was observed that the explosion occurred in the 3 north mains, inby the fire area, and the forces from the explosion destroyed all ventilation controls. The area was covered by soot.

cont/..

Findings: Summary of Evidence

The findings are derived from the following sources: conditions observed in the mine by MESA (MSHA) personnel during the reopening, recovery and resealing operations; and from the preliminary report on the mine fire. After analysis of all available evidence, MSHA investigators summarize their findings below.

The foreman and four workmen in the A-2 section and the four men in the A-3 section were contacted by telephone about 8:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., respectively. Reportedly there was no smoke on either section at that time.

The foreman on the A-2 section telephone the dispatcher about 8:15 p.m. and informed him that smoke was present on the section.

According to statements received, the fire burned for at least 45 minutes before smoke was detected on the A-2 section, and at least 60 minutes after the fire started, smoke had not been detected on the A-3 section.

The foreman and workmen in the A-2 section and the four workmen in the A-3 section were approximately 2,200 feet and 3,600 feet in by the origin of the fire, respectively. There were at least two separate and distinct travelable passageways maintained to insure passage at all times of any persons, including disabled persons and were designated as escapeways. At least one of the escapeways in each section was ventilated with intake air to outby the origin of the fire.

There should have been sufficient time for persons in A-2 and A-3 sections to escape had they been instructed to do so immediately when the fire started.

On July 24, 1972, during firefighting and recovery attempts, and after several roof falls had occurred in the fire area, restricting the flow of air in the fire area, the methane content in the return air just outby the fire continued to increase. A danger from a mine explosion was developing and all persons were directed to return to the surface.

An explosion occurred about 2:45 p.m. while the men were leaving the mine.

Representatives of Consolidation Coal Company United Mine Workers of America, West Virginia Department of Mines and the Bureau of Mines (MSHA) decided that the mine had to be sealed on the surface to reduce the exposure of workers to possible explosions.

The mine was sealed July 25, 1972, and remained sealed until January 2, 1973, when it was determined conditions were suitable for unsealing and reentry.

The bodies of the nine victims were recovered January 3 and 4, 1973. Before the area could be totally recovered, the fire rekindled and the fire area had to be resealed.

On January 26, 1973, a withdrawal order Form 104(a) was issued to prevent removal of the seals in 1 east and 3 north without prior approval of the United States Bureau of Mines.

By letter dated July 9, 1976, the President of the Blacksville Division informed the District Manager, District 3, Morgantown, West Virginia, that the Company had no intention of re-opening the sealed fire area in the Blacksville No. 1 Mine, thus precluding the possibility of recovery and further investigation in the fire area.

Conclusion

No additional information was obtained to alter the conclusion as stated in the preliminary report. The fire occurred when a 1- JCM ripper-type continuous mining machine being transported in the mine, on a lowboy equipment carrier pulled by a trolley locomotive, came in contact with an energized trolley and/or trolley feeder wires.

Monday 23 July 2012

QLD: Mining group applauds interim drug ban

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The Queensland Resources Council (QRC) has welcomed an interim decision to re-classify a stimulant being used by mine workers.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has released plans to include DMAA along with other drugs including heroin and ecstasy on a schedule of prohibited substances.

The QRC says DMAA is legally available and is being used by mine workers to stay alert.

QRC chief executive Michael Roche says the drug has already been banned in several countries.

"The Queensland Government will need to apply that ban at the state level, essentially preventing the sale of the product in this state," Mr Roche said.

"We believe this is the appropriate action, just as we support action on other substances."

The TGA says there are no current approved therapeutic uses for DMAA, and it presents a high risk of abuse, misuse and illicit use.

It says adverse side effects include high blood pressure, psychiatric disorders, cerebral haemorrhage and stroke.

The substance is used in some sectors of the fitness industry as a pre-workout supplement.

Mr Roche says the QRC will call on the government to ban DMAA.

"We will be talking to the Attorney General about the appropriate action on the back of the TGA final decision," he said.

Mr Roche says the QRC has also been talking to the Attorney General about the appropriate banning of synthetic cannabis.

Canada: Still mourning 2007 death of son

Extract from NorthernLife.ca

He was known among his friends as a "guardian angel," his mom, Cheryl, said. "He was the one that would never allow anyone to be bullied."

Lyle was also a hero. When travelling in between Britt and Parry Sound one day, he and his friend came upon the scene of an accident.



Cheryl and Ephraim Dufoe's 25-year-old son, Lyle, died in 2007 in an accident at Kidd Creek Mine in Timmins. In the wake of several more recent mining accidents, the couple are pushing for an inquiry into mining in the province. Photo by Heidi Ulrichsen.

A vehicle was in a water-filled ditch with a telephone pole on top of it. Lyle lifted up the car while his friend managed to get the driver out. The Township of MacDougall presented him with a commendation for his efforts.

But even though he saved another man's life, his own time on Earth was to be short. On July 23, 2007, 25-year-old Lyle was killed while working at Kidd Creek Mine in Timmins.

The scoop tram he was operating fell down a 150-foot shaft protected only by a plastic snow fence.

After his death, the young man's parents, Cheryl and Ephraim, collected about 3,000 signatures on a petition, asking for changes to mining safety laws.

Although the Wahnapiatae couple's provincial representative, Nickel Belt MPP France Gélinas, presented it in the legislature, no changes were made.

"It was ignored," Cheryl said. "I'm sure other families have done similar things, yet it doesn't seem to have impacted strongly enough."

That's why Cheryl and Ephraim were outside the provincial building in downtown Sudbury July 23 — the fifth anniversary of their son's death — asking people to sign postcards addressed to Minister of Labour Linda Jeffrey.

The postcards ask the minister to launch an inquiry into mining safety in the province. The campaign was started by Gerry Lougheed Jr., the managing director of Lougheed Funeral Homes, earlier this year.

"Gerry Lougheed Jr. took care of our son Lyle when he died," Cheryl said. "He's a good man. I think he's got the community at heart."

A mining inquiry was also one of the recommendations made by Steelworkers Local 6500 in their report on the investigation of the June 2011 deaths of Jordan Fram and Jason Chenier at Vale's Stobie Mine.

But both Premier Dalton McGuinty and a spokesperson for Jeffrey have since stated that an inquiry isn't being contemplated at this time, as it might interfere with the coroner's inquests into Chenier and Fram's deaths.

"Even though recommendations are made by coroner's inquests, they're just recommendations," Ephraim said. "They don't change the law. It's the law that has to change. If the law doesn't change, incidents are still going to happen."

Cheryl said she's almost been afraid to turn on the TV since her son's death because she might hear about another mining accident.

"It brings it back," she said. "There are so many deaths, and they're repetitive occurrences. The two young men that died in the mine last June, a year ago, their cases are so similar to previous cases. So why have changes not been made?"

She said she was pleased to see a number of people stopping to sign the postcards in downtown Sudbury June 23.

"We're getting quite a few, actually," she said, adding they've heard a few stories from passersby who have been impacted by other mining tragedies.

While the couple are working hard to ensure there's a mining inquiry, they say nothing will ever make up for the fact that their son won't get to live his life.

"It's very difficult," Cheryl said. "We have four grandchildren now that he never got a chance to see. He never got a chance to get married or have kids of his own. I miss him every day. We just hope that other people can be saved."

Those who wish to sign postcards are asked to go to the Steelworkers Hall on Brady Street or any of the Lougheeds Funeral Home locations.

Quote of the week



"He who builds a better mousetrap these days runs into material shortages, patent-infringement suits, work stoppages, collusive bidding, discount discrimination--and taxes."

H. E. Martz, NFL head coach, USA (1951-)

Tuesday 24 July 2012

India: Lessons from mines

Extract from The Indian Express

Accident rate in coal mines shows that the inefficiencies that hit production undermine safety

The rate of accidents per 1,000 coal miners began improving since the nationalisation of coal mines in the 1970s, but statistics show that the pace of improvement plateaued by 2003-04. As

a report in this paper showed, in 2008-11 there were 399 accidents that led to 322 deaths and 55 workers being injured in mines operated by state-owned Coal India Ltd, Neyveli Lignite Corporation and Singareni Collieries. The major causes for the high rate of accidents in coal mines include roof and side falls in underground mine; mishaps during surface transport by dumpers, trucks and other heavy earth-moving machinery in opencast mines; and leaks of gases like methane.

But the underlying reasons were two-fold — the easy improvements that were possible had already been exhausted by then and the technological solutions that were now needed to make coal mining safer demanded more money. The period of stagnation in improvement in mine safety also coincided with what observers have described as the period of lull in the modernisation of the technology of public sector-led coal extraction in India. Yet, in the same period, Coal India has built up a cash reserve of over Rs 45,000 crore. But CIL didn't bother to invest the money in bringing in new technology. Essentially, the tapering off of the improvement in mine-safety processes and procedures is due to a combination of the same factors that typically make government-run companies inefficient. The levels of red tape stymie decision-making, relegating even a straightforward imperative like worker welfare. The fact that at the same time as accidents were increasing, Coal India and its subsidiaries were ineffectual in raising production to meet the growing demand from the power sector, is no coincidence.

Countries like the US and Australia have better safety records for coal mines than India in the same period. Australia, incidentally, is a global leader in this respect even though more of its mining is underground while a good percentage of the work in India is open-cast. In 2010, Coal India had sent a team to learn from some of these experiences but, by all accounts, the results are yet to show. In the context of the current denationalisation debate on coal,

however, this much is clear: an improvement of the safety record is inextricable from and coterminous with the rise in productivity.

Wednesday 25 July 2012

NZ: Potentially fatal accident closes mine

Extract from stuff.co.nz

Development work at Solid Energy's Spring Creek mine has been shut down after coal fell on a miner early today in what has been described as a potentially fatal accident.



[Spring Creek Mine](#)

The High Hazards Unit of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment put a prohibition notice on development operations at the mine near Runanga on the West Coast.

"A miner was hit by falling coal, and the inspectors who went to the mine today are concerned that Solid Energy's management of strata (or seam) stability in the mine is not at an acceptable level," said Brett Murray, general manager of the High Hazards Unit.

The miner was in Christchurch Hospital with serious injuries. He was part of a team installing roof support in a recently formed underground tunnel area.

"Our inspectors believe the accident had the potential to have been fatal, and they have shut down work in development areas pending a proper assessment of strata stability," Murray said.

Development areas are those areas in an underground coal mine being prepared for mining.

"I will be discussing this issue, and recent events at the company's Huntly East mine with company senior management," he said.

Larry Hull, Solid Energy's group manager coal operations, said the company was "obviously very concerned that one of our people has been hurt".

"Prior to the inspectors' decision, the mine's management team had already ceased underground face operations and had begun a risk assessment and review of all relevant operating procedures and job safety checklists.

"If any changes are needed as a result of those reviews, the underground mining teams and supervisors will take part in refresher training before work resumes," he said.

New Zealand Amalgamated Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union assistant national secretary Ged O'Connell said it was very concerning that someone had been injured in the mine.

The mine's union delegate had been allowed to view the accident scene and Solid Energy was co-operating fully with investigations.

O'Connell said work in mines during development phases held more risks, which called for a greater emphasis on safety.

"I'm not sure why that roof fell in and why the miner was in a position to be struck by it."

He said the beefed-up High Hazards Unit had given the mining industry more confidence that incidents would be thoroughly investigated.

"Our delegate reports there has been an improving health and safety culture at Solid Energy."

Following the incident, spokesman for most Pike River families, Bernie Monk, strongly criticised the government department for failing to tighten

mining safety while it waited for findings from the inquiry into the fatal November 2010 explosion.

"I'm sick of the minister saying that she's waiting for the Pike River report. It's completely not good enough."

The royal commission was due to give its report into the deaths of 29 men at the underground West Coast coalmine to the Governor-General by September 28.

Monk, whose son Michael, 23, died in the mine, also blamed safety problems on law changes in 1992 which disestablished the independent mining inspectorate.

"We're just lucky we are having small incidents at the moment. What are they going to do - wait for another explosion?"

"This should have been attended to years ago. Now it's caught up with them."

NZ: Pike victim wins \$10,000 for job loss

Extract from www.3news.co.nz

One of the men killed in the Pike River Coal mine should never have been dismissed the way he was from his previous job at a coal mine in Southland, says the Employment Relations Authority (ERA).

In a decision only released today because of delays caused by the mine disaster and then the Christchurch earthquake, the ERA has ruled Keith Valli, Chris Pinn and Ray Waghorn were unjustly dismissed by Solid Energy from its opencast mine at Ohai, northwest of Invercargill.

The men were made redundant when the mine lost two large contracts in 2007.

In today's decision the ERA says the way Solid Energy went about assessing and ranking who should go was wrong.

Nevertheless, at the time Mr Valli quickly got a job at the Pike River Coal mine near Greymouth, and would commute there each week from his home in Southland.

The 62-year-old was one of the 29 men killed in a series of explosions in November, 2010.

ERA member Mike Loftus ruled that although all three men were badly treated by Solid Energy, Mr Valli was not entitled to lost wages because he got the job straight away.

However, Mr Valli had spoken of the hurt and stress he and his wife suffered after being badly treated by a company for which he had worked for 28 years.

Mr Loftus ruled that Solid Energy pay the three men \$10,000 each for compensation for humiliation, loss of dignity and injury to feelings.

Mr Pinn and Mr Waghorn were also awarded one month's lost wages and superannuation contributions.

Mr Valli's \$10,000 will go to his next of kin.

Thursday 26 July 2012

Seven die in Mexico mine accident

Extract from NineMSN

Seven miners have been killed in an explosion at a coal mine in northern Mexico, police say.

"We confirm the recovery of the bodies of the seven trapped miners," police official Francisco Martinez said in a statement on Wednesday.

"All indications are that the explosion was caused by a pocket of accumulated gas," Martinez said.

Police said earlier that the seven miners were men aged 22 to 39.

The mine is in the municipality of Muzquiz, in the state of Coahuila, which borders the US.

Coahuila has seen a series of fatal mining accidents in recent years, including a 2007 disaster at the Pasta de Conchos mine that claimed 65 lives.

In a report published in November 2011, the country's human rights commission denounced the poor conditions in mines in the state.

Chinese officials prosecuted for blast cover-up

Extract from ChinaDaily, USA

KUNMING - Seven officials will be prosecuted and 15 others will receive administrative punishments for a deadly colliery blast in Southwest China in April and their attempts to cover up the accident, the local mining safety watchdog said Thursday.

Those to be indicted include the mine bosses, two mining officials of a township government and two mine safety supervisors in the city of Xuanwei, Yunnan province, the provincial coal mine safety supervision administration announced in a statement.

Twelve miners were killed and three others were injured in explosions at Yangmeishan Coal Mine in Xuanwei's Haidai township on April 15. An investigation found that after the accident mine bosses and township government officials hid corpses, forged safety records, tampered with witnesses, destroyed evidence and arranged secret deals in an effort to silence the victims' families.

"They tried to hide the scale of the accident. What they did was extremely bad and had very negative social impacts," the statement said.

It said the mine was shut down, its license revoked and owners fined 6.3 million yuan (about \$1 million).

The administration, however, did not reveal the charges against the officials and the identities of the 15 others who received various administrative punishments.

China's mines are among the deadliest in the world. The latest available data from the central government showed that 1,973 miners were killed in coal mine accidents in 2011. The death toll for that year, however, was 19 percent lower than that of 2010.

Friday 27 July 2012

USA: Rockefeller reintroduces mine safety legislation

Extract from The Register-Herald.com

Cooking the books to shield unsafe conditions in underground mines from federal gumshoes and higher penalties for faulty ventilation are two key elements in Sen. Jay Rockefeller's revised bill, inspired by the Upper Big Branch explosion that left 29 miners dead in Raleigh County.

Rockefeller would ban the practice of keeping two sets of books, one with the true account of mine hazards, the other one doctored to keep federal and state inspectors from knowing the real conditions underground.

"The catastrophe at Upper Big Branch was a wakeup call that not enough was being done to protect our coal miners," Rockefeller, D-W.Va., said Thursday.

"In the two years since that terrible day, we've made some progress, but major reforms are still desperately needed and continue to be stalled by opponents."

To date this year, he pointed out, mining accidents have claimed 20 workers.

"And even one death is too many," the senator said.

"We cannot — and we dare not — forget our obligation to miners, their families and our West Virginia communities."

An explosion shook the sprawling Upper Big Branch mine complex on April 5, 2010, in the town of Montcoal, in the worst accident in the industry in four decades.

Upper Big Branch was operated by Performance Coal Co., a subsidiary of the former Massey Energy, which since the tragedy has been absorbed by Alpha Resources.

Two one-time Upper Big Branch employees already have criminal records on charges lodged

after federal prosecutors got involved in the disaster.

Gary May, a former superintendent, faces sentencing Aug. 9 after pleading guilty to a charge of defrauding the federal government involving his mine duties.

The other official, Hughie Elbert Stover, 60, is appealing his convictions of lying to federal authorities and ordering an underling to eliminate Upper Big Branch documents. His attorney, William Wilmoth, characterized the U.S. Attorney's Office case against his client as "a total lack of evidence."

In a briefing for the media by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration in Beckley, officials disclosed that Massey maintained two sets of books at Upper Big Branch, and that the practice wasn't uncommon in the industry.

Rockefeller said he included a ban on this based on the recommendations by the United Mine Workers of America, which led its own investigation into the disaster.

Fines as high as \$225,000 could be imposed on operators for "flagrant violations" of ventilation problems that expose miners to explosions. The MSHA report concluded the Upper Big Branch blast entailed a massive buildup of coal dust.

Another issue deals with a long-running health matter — black lung.

Rockefeller wants MSHA to provide a rule in six months to lower exposure levels to respirable dust. What's more, the agency would be obligated to re-examine the incidence of the ailment every five years. The senator noted that more than 70 percent of the 29 victims at Upper Big Branch tested positive for black lung.

Another new wrinkle in the updated bill calls for up-to-date safety training and information about conditions underground for workers, operators and regulators.

Adding his support to the bill, Sen. Joe Manchin, also D-W.Va., met recently with families of the victims and said he came away with a feeling

that patience is growing thin on beefing up safety.

“Well, let me tell you that we’re all tired of hearing simple rhetoric,” he said.

“We have been talking about these reforms for far too long. It’s time for all of us to sit down together, to put our parties and our politics aside and do the right thing for the safety of our miners.”

Rockefeller re-introduced the earlier provisions, such as expanding MSHA’s authority to subpoena documents and testimony, creating an independent panel to look into serious accidents, beef up protections for whistleblowers, and elevate criminal penalties, which now are a misdemeanor for first offense, to a felony level if the violators knowingly tipped off crews about an impending inspection.

“The wounds from this heart-breaking disaster are still very fresh, and will never fully heal,” Rockefeller said.

“But we have a deep and continuing obligation to make sure that miners — and all workers — can go to work, do their jobs, and return home safely to their families at the end of the day.”

NZ: Spring Creek Mine reopens after worker accident

Extract from TVNZ.com.nz

Solid Energy’s Spring Creek Mine has resumed full operations after a serious accident earlier this week.

A miner was seriously injured by falling coal on Wednesday in an area of the mine that was being developed for mining.

The miner is said to be “fairly comfortable” in Christchurch Hospitals after the incident, which inspectors said had the potential to be fatal.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has today lifted its prohibition notice on work in the mine, after an investigation from the High Hazards Unit.

All employees of the mine, near Greymouth, have remained fully employed over the past two days.

The West Coast mine was forced to close briefly in February after a series of safety incidents.

USA; Mingo man killed in mine accident

Extract from the Charleston Gazette, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A Mingo County man early Friday morning became the 12th U.S. coal miner to die on the job in 2012.

Johnny Mack Bryant II, 35, of Lenore, was crushed to death when he became pinned between a mine wall and the boom of a continuous mining machine, according to information from state and federal agencies.

The incident occurred at about 4:15 a.m. at Coal River Mining LLC’s Fork Creek No. 10 Mine, near the intersection of the Boone, Kanawha and Lincoln county lines south of Charleston.

Bryant was part of a crew that was setting up the continuous mining machine for the upcoming day shift when the accident occurred, according to Jesse Lawder, a spokesman for the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Lawder said that Bryant “received fatal crushing injuries when he was reportedly caught between the conveyor boom of the continuous mining machine” and the mine wall.

Leslie Fitzwater, spokeswoman for the state Office of Miners’ Health, Safety and Training, said that Bryant had one year and 14 weeks of experience as a miner, with all of it at the Fork Creek No. 10 operation.

Fork Creek No. 10 is a relatively small underground mine, producing 670,000 tons of coal last year with 90 employees. Mine operator Coal River Mining is controlled by James O. Bunn and Franklin D. Robertson, according to MSHA records.

In each of the last two years, Fork Creek No. 10 recorded accident rates worse than the national

average for similar types of mines, according to MSHA data. Coal River Mining was cited by MSHA following fatal accidents at other operations in 2001 and 2005, agency records show.

Between 1984 and 2011, at least 33 miners were killed nationwide in crushing or pinning accidents that involved the operation of remote control continuous mining machines.

MSHA chief Joe Main proposed a rule to begin requiring mine operators to install "proximity detection" devices that would shut off mining machines when they get too close to workers.

MSHA says the proposal has net benefits of \$2.5 million per year, when the costs of new equipment are weighed against the benefits of reduced injuries and deaths. West Virginia coal industry lobbyists have complained MSHA is moving too quickly to require the devices.

A final version of the rule has been awaiting approval from the White House Office of Management and Budget for months.

Three Killed in Siberian Mine Accident

Extract from RIA Novosti

Three miners have been killed early on Friday in an accident in the Ziminka coal mine in southwest Siberia's Kemerovo Region, the regional administration reported.

"The bodies of three miners have been discovered," administration spokesman Anton Gorelkin told RIA Novosti.

Investigators believe that a poisonous gas leak inside the mine, located in the town of Prokopyevsk, could have caused the deaths. There were eight people in the mine, owned by the Siberian Business Union, at the time of the accident. Five escaped safely.

Regional authorities have reacted promptly. Kemerovo Governor Aman Tuleyev has taken personal control of the accident response,

establishing a special investigation commission, while police have launched a criminal probe.

Tuleyev has also ordered checks at all mines in the region to ensure the safety of workers, his office said in a statement.

The governor and the mine owner agreed that each of the families of those killed will receive all legal compensation, an extra 2 million rubles (about \$62,000) and an apartment, the statement said.

Children of the killed miners will also receive their monthly salaries until they turn 18 – the age when a child is considered an adult in Russia. They will also be ensured free education and receive the best available health services, the statement said.

Sunday 29 July 2012

China: 5 Dead, 32 Injured in Coal Mine Blast

Extract from Xinhua

Relevant people who involved in concealing a coal mine explosion which left five dead and 32 others injured on Thursday in Yangquan city in north China's Shanxi province will be punished, local government announced Sunday.

The gas explosion, which occurred at 4:10 p.m. on Thursday in a coal mine of Yuquan Coal Industry Co. Ltd., in Yuxian county of Yangquan city, killed five workers and injured 32 others, the government of Yangquan city said it had confirmed the accident three days later.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

Local government said Sunday that relevant person will be punished in accordance with the law and regulation.

Based on rules and regulations issued by China's State Administration of Work Safety, in case of any coal mine accident, the involved company should report within one hour to local safety supervisory departments of county-level government or above, which then should report

to the provincial safety supervisory administration within two hours.

5 Rescued after SW China Coal Mine Accidents

Extract from Xinhua

Five coal mine worker have been rescued after being trapped for more than 96 hours in a coal mine's tunnel collapse in southwest China's Guizhou province, the local rescue headquarters said.

The tunnel of the coal mine of Anlilai Coal Mine in Pu'an county collapsed at 6:26 p.m. Wednesday, trapping five miners, according to sources on-site with the rescue headquarters.

Fifty-three rescuers were sent underground to dig a tunnel to reach the miners when another collapse occurred at 2:15 p.m. Thursday, trapping the rescuers, said the rescue headquarters.

The 53 people were all pulled out unscathed six hours later through a newly-dug tunnel.

Rescuers found the five trapped worker at around 7:20 p.m. on Sunday, and sent them to hospital for treatment.

An investigation into the cause of the accidents is underway.

The mine, located in Louxia township of Pu'an county, has an annual production capacity of 210,000 tonnes.

Monday 30 July 2012

Slope failure kills 4 in SW China mine

Extract from ChinaDaily, USA

GUIYANG - Four people were killed and one injured in a slope failure in a phosphate mine in Southwest China's Guizhou province Saturday, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at around 4 pm Saturday in an open-pit mine of Wengfu phosphate mine in the city of Fuquan, killing two people

immediately and trapping three others, said the municipal publicity officials.

The three were later pulled out, but two were already dead while one sustained injuries.

An investigation into the cause of the incident is under way.

The mine belongs to Guizhou-based Wengfu (Group) Co, Ltd. which specializes in phosphate mining and compound fertilizer production.

Slope failures can cause casualties and potentially result in a mine catastrophe as unexpected rock movement is often fatal and it can occur with little warning.

China: 8 confirmed dead in flooded colliery

Extract from Xinhua

Eight miners were confirmed dead after rescue work concluded more than 20 days after a coal mine flooded in Central China's Hunan province, local authorities said Monday.

The bodies of two more victims were lifted out of the shaft at the Qielichong Colliery in Leiyang on Sunday, raising the final death toll from the accident to eight, said a spokesman with the provincial coal mine safety administration.

The tragedy occurred at around 6 pm on July 4 when 40 miners were working underground. Twenty-four managed to escape, while the other 16 failed to reach the surface. Four days later, eight of the trapped workers were rescued alive.

Earlier reports said the accident was not immediately reported to the local government, delaying rescue operations by almost 12 hours.

The mine owner, Liu Yaping, is in police custody.

This week in mining accident history (2)

31 July 1972

Box Flat Colliery

Swanbank, Ipswich, Queensland, Aus

Underground coal mine

17 killed, mine fire

The Box Flat Colliery was located in Swanbank, Ipswich, Queensland. The mine opened in 1969 and operated until its closure in 1972. Its coal was mined for the operation of the Swanbank Power Station.

A massive explosion occurred at 2.47 am on 31st July 1972 at the Box Flat mine in which 17 men were killed and several others badly injured.



Morning of the Box Flat Mine disaster, 1972

A small fire started in the mine about 300 metres underground. After several attempts to close doors in a tunnel, a team of 14 men started to try

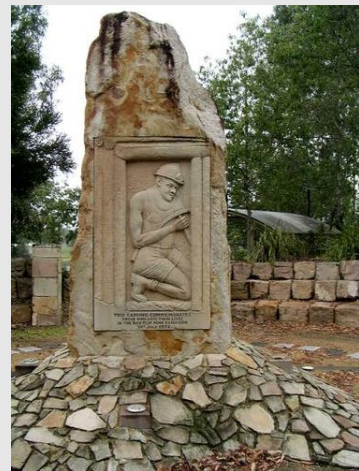
to seal off stone drives about one kilometre from the entrance. Three more men were at the surface in the entrance to No 5 conveyor belt tunnel. The 17 men included nine officials and employees of Box Flat mine and eight men from the Mines Rescue Station.

The incident was the worst mining disaster in Ipswich's history. After the explosion the mine closed and the tunnels mouths were sealed. The miners bodies were never retrieved from the mine.

The Report from the Mining Inquiry can be found at:

http://mines.industry.qld.gov.au/assets/inspectorate/boxflat_inquiry.pdf

A memorial can be found in Swanbank on Swanbank Road located near the power station. It honours those who lost their lives in the Box Flat Mine disaster. A bridge on the extension of the Centenary Highway was named in honour of the lives lost in the 1972 disaster.



Box Flat Mine disaster memorial

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

Blasting cap

A detonator containing a charge of detonating compound, which is ignited by electric current or the spark of a fuse. Used for detonating explosives.

-Ed