



Mining Accident News No.1225

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Thursday 15 November 2012

Two contractor miners killed in accident at AuRico Gold

Extract from www.miningweekly.com

TORONTO – Canadian-miner AuRico Gold on Wednesday said two contractors were killed at its El Chanate mine, located 37 km north-east of Caborca, in Sonora state, Mexico, when a pressure vessel in one the mine's processing plants ruptured.

The matter is currently being investigated by the company and the relevant authorities have been notified. The company would facilitate site-wide safety reviews and repairs for this portion of the processing facility.

AuRico said it expected gold production for the rest of the year would be impacted and, as a result, the company revised its full-year gold production guidance to between 70 000 oz and 75 000 oz for the El Chanate mine.

"The occurrence of this incident is incredibly distressing as the safety of our employees and contractors is the company's highest priority and this incident is a tragic shock to everyone," CEO Scott Perry said in a statement.

Our number one focus must remain on ensuring all of our employees and contractors return home safely, each and every day," he said.

The company's stock listed on the TSX traded down almost 4% at C\$7.76 apiece on Wednesday morning.

Friday 16 November 2012

NZ: Bill to impose Queensland mining regulations

Extract from www.voxy.co.nz

West Coast Tasman Labour MP Damien O'Connor is pushing for New Zealand underground miners to be guaranteed the same regulatory protection their Queensland counterparts enjoy, as recommended by the Pike River Royal Commission.

"Our miners need better regulatory protection now and the Queensland regulations offer the fastest way of doing that.

"I will be putting a Bill that imposes the Queensland Underground Mines Regulations on all New Zealand mines into the next ballot after consultation with my colleagues.

"The Pike River Royal Commission recommended such change and to wait around for a Government that has been slow to heed warnings in the area of workers safety would be negligent.

"The Bill complements one put forward by my colleague, Andrew Little, that will impose liability on irresponsible company directors who fail to protect workers in their company.

"Monday is the anniversary of the most tragic day in recent mining and workplace history. We all have to learn from the terrible mistakes that were allowed to happen at Pike River mine and take swift action to implement recommendations of the Royal Commission.

"Prime Minister John Key has to step up as well and reassure families that money is available for the recovery of their men now that a re-entry plan has been developed for the mine drift.

"Monday will be an enormously poignant day for the families, and the West Coast mining community. We all have a responsibility to honour them with progress on the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations," said Damien O'Connor.

Canada: Mom upset with premier

Extract from The Sudbury Star, Ca

The mother of one of the two men killed in an accident at Vale's Stobie Mine is disappointed Premier Dalton McGuinty is not backing her push to have a mining inquiry launched in Ontario.

But Wendy Fram said Thursday she is not giving up hope.

"I was pleased he took the time to speak to me," Fram said. "But he has not read a letter I sent to him yet. It is en route. I hope to meet again (to discuss it)."

Fram met with McGuinty briefly after the premier paid a visit to the former Hospital Memorial site on Regent Street, where Health Sciences North set up a six-room Simulation Lab in August.

The facility is used to teach new nurses and nurse practitioners, doctors in training and help keep the skills of existing staff sharpened on

how to deal with simulated emergencies, such as heart attacks and difficult births.

Fram said McGuinty told her that the reason an inquiry has not been ordered is because there will be an inquest into the accident. She said then she pointed out an inquiry has been ordered into the collapse of the Algo Centre in Elliot Lake, which claimed two lives.

"Why would it be different for our boys in the mines?" she asked. "He didn't really give an answer."

Fram's son Jordan and Jason Chenier were killed in June 2011 by a run of muck -- tonnes of rock and water.

"It's been too long (since a provincial mining inquiry was held). We just want to do it for the boys Jordan and Jason (Chenier)."

The last time a mining inquiry was conducted in Ontario was in the mid-1980s. Improving Ground Stability and Mine Rescue, or as it was more commonly know as the Stevenson Commission (after chairman Trevor Stevenson), came about following numerous mining deaths across Ontario mines, including a massive rockburst at Falconbridge's Falconbridge Mine on June 20, 1984, that ultimately claimed four lives.

Following his visit to the simulation lab, McGuinty announced \$8.5 million in new funding for Health Sciences North to help reduce surgery and diagnostic test wait times.

In handing out the money, McGuinty said since his government took office in 2003, Ontario has gone from having the worst surgery wait times in Canada to the best. He said that at Health Sciences North, wait times for things such as hip replacements have fallen from 473 days to 163 days, and knee replacements have fallen from 987 days to 257 days.

"I love your community," McGuinty said. "You have a Health Science centre. You have a full-service teaching hospital. You are providing good, quality care. I think that in future years, it's important to continue the work in research. You

have to make your mark there. The great thing about research is that when you make a discovery, you do soon behalf of mankind."

When asked about emergency room wait times at Health Sciences North, McGuinty said the province has set aside funds to address issues such as staffing levels and what happens to people after they leave the department.

"We are the only province in the country that has a specific strategy aimed at reducing those times," he said. "It is a tough nut to crack. Somebody shows up at the emergency department and so many things happen after. It leads us to long-term care, home care."

Quote of the week



"Thoughts, like fleas, jump from man to man, but they don't bit everybody."

Stanislaw Jerzy Lee
Polish poet and aphorist (1909-1966)

Saturday 17 November 2012

USA: Coal Miner dies in accident

Extract from The Southern Illinoisan, IL, USA

SALINE COUNTY - A coal miner suffered fatal injuries when he was pinned by a continuous mining machine at Peabody Energy's Willow Lake Mine in Saline County Saturday.

Chad Wayne Meyers, 30, Goreville, died in the accident that occurred about 3:20 a.m., Peabody spokeswoman Meg Gallagher said in a statement released Saturday.

Meyers was caught between the machine and the coal rib, Mine Safety and Health Administration spokeswoman Amy Louviere said.

He was pronounced dead at 4:40 a.m. An autopsy indicating preliminary cause of death as blunt force trauma was performed Saturday, Saline County Coroner Jerry Doug Watson said.

A closure order was issued to the mine by MSHA, which is investigating the accident, Louviere said.

The idled mine employs about 460 people and operates year-round, seven days a week.

"Willow Lake deeply mourns the loss of a fellow employee and expresses its sympathies to family members, coworkers, and friends," Gallagher said.

Funeral services for Meyers are incomplete at Blue Funeral Home in Goreville.

Sunday 19 November 2012

M'boro widow remembers day of Pike River mine disaster

Extract from www.news-mail.com.au

TWO years on from New Zealand's Pike River Mine disaster, Maryborough's Kim Joynson is still coping with the loss of her husband.



Benjamin Joynson, 13, with his mother Kim and brother Jonathon, 15, comfort each other as they remember their father and husband Willie who died in the Pike River Mine disaster in 2010. Robyne Cuere

Today will mark the second anniversary of the mining disaster, which claimed the life of Willie Joynson and 28 other men in the mine near Greymouth.

Kim Joynson said she remembered the day of the accident well, and recalled learning of the tragic accident through a phone call from a friend.

"We had been living in New Zealand for about 16 months when it happened," Mrs Joynson said.

"I just remember my friend calling me up and asking me if Willie was home.



Willie Joynson. File

"She told me to turn on the television and that's when I saw it.

"I tried to call the control room at the mine to see if he was all right, but it rang out."

The primary explosion occurred on November 19, 2010, about 3.44pm, and was caused by a build-up of methane gas within the mine.

Three more explosions occurred down the mine in the days after the first one.

Emergency services declared that no workers would be found alive within the mine.

The bodies of the 29 men still lie deep inside the mine.

It took the Pike River Mine company several hours to return Mrs Joynson's call and inform her of the accident.

"Pike really wanted him (Willie) to work there and it was a job that would give us more time with him," she said.

"He took the job so that he would be home more often, and could spend more time with the boys.

"We were going to leave in August before the accident ... but we decided to stay there for a bit longer."

The findings of a royal commission of inquiry into the disaster released on October 30 placed the blame squarely on a lack of health and safety procedures by the company and a lack of oversight by the New Zealand Department of Labour.

Monday 19 November 2012

Bodies of Britons killed in Pike mine blast 'could be retrieved'

Extract from The Telegraph, UK

A report suggests that the bodies of 29 men killed in New Zealand's Pike River mine disaster, including two Britons, could be recovered.



Britons killed in the New Zealand mining disaster: Pete Rodger, left and Malcolm Campbell, right

The bodies of two Britons killed in a mining accident in New Zealand could be recovered, two years after their deaths.

Pete Rodger, from Perth, and Malcolm Campbell, from Fife, were among 29 men who

were killed when gas explosions rocked the Pike River mine in 2010, causing it to collapse.

The families of the dead were told that it was too dangerous to recover the bodies, but they decided to commission a team of mining experts to investigate whether there was any chance of re-entering the coal mine near Greymouth, on New Zealand's South Island.

The team – which included former UK principal mines inspector Bob Stevenson – has now concluded that it would be possible to enter the mine.

"It is our belief as a group that yes, we can in fact effect a re-entry into these workings and we can do it safely. It's not without problems, but we believe those problems are solvable," Stevenson said, reported the Australian Associated Press.

The experts have developed a plan for the extraction of the bodies which has been given to Solid Energy, the mining company which bought the assets of the now bankrupt Pike River business earlier this year.

A spokesman for Solid Energy said that the company would review the report, but that its own experts had assessed the situation and believed there was "no way to safely carry out a standalone re-entry of the abandoned workings".

He added however that it was possible that the bodies could be recovered if a commercial mining operation was begun in the area once more.

"We estimate it will be several years at least before the company would be in a position to say if we had a safe, technically feasible and commercially viable mining plan," he said.

A spokesman for New Zealand's Department of Labour said that its High Hazards Unit, which was set up in the aftermath of the disaster to oversee mining safety, would also have to approve the plan before any attempt was made to re-enter the mine.

The Pike River tragedy, caused by a methane gas explosion, was New Zealand's worst mining disaster in almost a century. Earlier this month, an investigation concluded that it could have been avoided if health and safety procedures had been followed.

Investigators said that reports of excessive methane levels were "not heeded" and workers were exposed to "unacceptable risks".

British expat Mr Rodger, 40, had moved to New Zealand only two years before the accident in order to be closer to his mother and sister, who had emigrated there. Mr Campbell, 25, had worked at the mine for two years, and had been preparing to marry his fiancée when the tragedy occurred.

A few weeks ago, Mr Campbell's father said that he and his family had been "left in limbo" by the lack of effort to retrieve his son's body.

Yukon Zinc agrees to \$150K fine in deadly accident

Extract from Canadian Occupational Safety

WHITEHORSE — The owner of Yukon's Wolverine Mine has agreed to pay a \$150,000 fine, the highest possible, following an accident two years ago that killed a worker.

Yukon Zinc Corp. and contractor Procon Mining and Tunnelling pleaded guilty this week to charges related to a collapse which killed 25-year-old Will Fisher.

Fisher was a mechanic for Procon when he was buried under 70 tonnes of rock on April 25, 2010 in the mine 190 kilometres northwest of Watson Lake.

He and other employees had been servicing equipment used to install support in the walls and ceiling of the underground mine.

The two other employees were not seriously hurt.

Judge John Faulkner will decide next week how much Procon will pay for its role in Fisher's

death, but a Yukon government lawyer is seeking the same \$150,000 fine.

Court heard that during the night shift before the collapse occurred; water in the tunnel caused the ground beneath the rock bolter equipment to become soft and the machine to get stuck.

The soft ground had to be dug out.

"As a result of the mucking out, the floor of the slope was lower at the location where the ground fall occurred," says a statement of facts agreed to by the mining company and the territory's director of occupational health and safety.

At the time of the collapse, the "back section of the rock bolter was located beside and under ground that was inadequately supported," the statement says.

"The bolter was reinforcing unsupported ground."

Yukon Zinc was responsible for, among other things, providing geotechnical support and a plan for ground support for the mine, but the company said it relied on Procon's safety program.

An expert brought in after Fisher's death concluded the mishap was caused by inadequate ground support, given that the tunnel had been widened and dug out.

A second expert concluded the safety program at the mine was not "robust or comprehensive enough for the type of operation or high hazard environment," the agreed statement of facts reads.

This is not the first time an employee has died at the mine.

Six months before Fisher's death, 20-year-old Paul Wentzell, an apprentice mechanic with Procon, was crushed by a driverless Toyota Land Cruiser.

Procon pleaded guilty to two charges under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and was fined nearly \$100,000.

In the six months before Fisher's death, there were three ground falls at the mine, the court heard.

According to the agreed statement of fact, after a ground fall on Feb. 7, 2010, Procon employees recommended the need for geotechnical expertise in their draft incident report.

"This draft incident report was received, reviewed and commented on by Yukon Zinc. No reviews or changes to the mining practices or safety program at Wolverine were implemented as a result of these ground falls."

But Procon's lawyer, James Sutherland, argued his client's employees were just "foot soldiers" in the operation. Yukon Zinc was responsible for geotechnical support and ground support plans, he said.

The only thing Procon could have done with its concerns was stop work, Sutherland said, but the company was reluctant to do that because ground support plans were not its area of expertise.

Stopping work would have meant shutting down the mine, which had 331 employees at the time, he said.

Looking back, halting work would have been the right choice, he said.

Sutherland insisted the company is not hiding behind Yukon Zinc, but was trusting a company with more knowledge. It should have been more assertive, but its mistakes were not deliberate, he said.

He suggests a \$100,000 fine would be more appropriate in Procon's case.

After Fisher's death, the company spent more than \$1 million to improve its safety program, he said.

A \$100,000 fine is a sufficient deterrent which also sends a message that the company's positive steps have been acknowledged, he said.

Faulkner is scheduled to make his ruling Nov. 20.

This week in mining accident history

19 November 1915
Midlothian Limestone Pit
Harburn, Scotland, UK
Surface limestone mine
Explosives incident
1 killed

Fatal Mining Accident at West Calder - Yesterday a limestone miner named John Girdwood, residing at New Hermand, West Calder, lost his life by an accident in the Midlothian Company's limestone pit at Harburn. Two shots were being fired at different places in the pit, and Girdwood, hearing one go off, thought it was his. He was proceeding to see his place, when his own shot went off and he was killed. He leaves a widow and young family. [Scotsman 20 November 1915]

Wednesday 21 November 2012

QLD: Study reveals miners' mental health risk

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A new study in Queensland has found people in the mining industry could face a greater risk of developing mental health issues compared with other shift workers.

The Griffith University study found miners have less control over their rosters than shift workers in other sectors.

It also says they are prescribed more sleeping tablets and anti-depressants than the rest of the community.

Professor of employment relations David Peetz says it could indicate a "downward spiral" effect from shift work, causing sleep disorders that progress into depression.

"When that lack of say is combined with people wanting to work fewer hours, that's when you're getting increased use of medication," he said.

"Workers are feeling that they've had no say in how shifts are organised. That's when they're most likely to be showing some of these negative effects."

The study shows staff wanting to work fewer hours are 40 per cent more likely to take medication for depression.

Professor Peetz says many workers accept long mine rosters thinking they will enjoy the longer run of days off but end up less satisfied with their leisure time than the national average.

The study was funded by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), which says the issue is more important than wages.

Toxic Gas Leaves 5 Dead in NW China Mine

Extract from Xinhua

Toxic gas inside a copper mine has left five workers dead in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, local authorities confirmed on Wednesday.

The accident occurred around 3:40 p.m. on Tuesday when the workers, all from Wenzhou No. 2 Pit Engineering Company, were working at Dadi Mining Company in Lueyang County, according to a statement from the county government.

An initial investigation showed that a worker surnamed Feng entered a shaft that has been sealed for half a year to fetch clothes that he had left there before the shaft was sealed.

Three of Feng's co-workers, surnamed Kang, Zhou and Qin, entered the shaft to look for him after they noticed that he had not come out.

The three workers attempted to retreat after they realized the abnormal situation inside the pit due to the high density of toxic gas.

However, only Kang succeeded in getting out and the other two were felled by toxic gas.

Another two workers, surnamed Zhang and Chen, then descended into the shaft to rescue the others but were also trapped inside.

By 7:20 p.m., all five workers had been pulled out of the mine and sent to local hospitals. All of them died later after rescue efforts failed.

Production at the mine has been suspended for safety checks and overhaul, according to the statement.

Further investigation into the accident is underway.

NZ: Pike River directors reject profit claim

Extract from Herald Sun, NZ

THREE former directors of the Pike River Coal company have hit back at the findings of the royal commission of inquiry into the disaster, saying they never put profit before safety.

John Dow, Ray Meyer and Stuart Natrass were directors of Pike River Coal at the time of the explosion at the West Coast underground mine, where 29 men were killed in November, 2010.

Earlier this month, the royal commission released the results of its 14-month inquiry into the disaster, finding the mine's managers were so focused on short-term coal production, they never considered the risk of an explosion.

But the three directors, after digesting the report fully, released a statement through their lawyers on Wednesday, saying they strongly disagreed with the suggestion that production was ever prioritised ahead of safety at the mine.

They said the commission's view conflicted with evidence it received from senior management staff, who emphasised that, while encouraging production safety was always their highest priority.

They accused the commission of basing its view upon conjecture or impression, and not the evidence.

"Its report does not identify any particular circumstances, or any documents, in which a safety requirement was not met for financial reasons or because it might have impacted upon production."

They said the commission did not seek any evidence from the company's financial staff, nor review the company's accounts or financial documents.

"The company's board never rejected a health and safety request on financial grounds or because it might have impacted upon production."

The men also said the mine's operations were known to the Department of Labour mine inspectors, the miners' union, the New Zealand Mines Rescue Service, international and national contracting companies, consultants and mine experts, and many others.

"None of these individuals or organisations expressed concerns to the company's management in relation to safety at the time," the directors said.

The men said they welcomed discussion about the future of mine safety in New Zealand following the commission's recommendations.

Thursday 22 November 2012

Philippines: DENR probes Paracale mining accident

Extract from www.abs-cbnnews.com

MANILA, Philippines - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered on Thursday an investigation into the mining accident in Camarines Norte, which killed at least three workers and trapped others after a site tunnel collapsed.

Secretary Ramon Paje said the Bicol regional office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is already investigating the incident. He said MGB is also ready to help in rescue and retrieval operations.

"Our field personnel are already closely coordinating with the mining operator in the area, along with police and local government personnel, for an assessment of the situation," Paje said in a statement.

Initial reports showed that the tunnel in Barangay Palanas, Paracale collapsed Tuesday night after dynamite exploded in the mine site.

MGB regional director Theodore Rommel Pestano said the explosion occurred in the property of United Paragon Mining Corporation (UPMC).

Since the tunnel was near the shoreline, the explosion may have caused water from the sea to flood into the collapsed area and trap the small-scale miners, he said.

Local police have already retrieved the bodies of three dead miners.

The mining operation was allegedly financed by a certain Augusto Jordan, a resident of Palanas, police said.

Pestano, meanwhile, said he will meet with UPMC's security managers since the collapsed area was reportedly within 200 meters from the shoreline, meaning it was supposed to be a "no-go zone" for miners

Friday 24 November 2012

2 Die in accident at Colombian coal mine

Extract from Fox News Latino

Two workers were killed Friday when a gas explosion caused a cave-in at a coal mine in the southwestern Colombian province of Valle del Cauca.

"It's confirmed that the two miners died, but it has not been possible to recover (the bodies) because there is a lot of gas," the chief engineer at the El Remanso mine, Luis Fernando Rivera, told Efe.

The first team from the National Mining Agency was unable to retrieve the dead, but a second

team is en route to the mine in Jamundi, Rivera said.

Firefighters and other specialists will persist in efforts to recover the bodies, Sandra Calvo Pinzon, spokeswoman for Colombia's DGR risk management agency, told Efe.

Mining accidents claim dozens of lives every year in the Andean nation.

19 dead, 4 missing in SW China coal mine accident

Extract from China Daily, USA

GUIYANG - Nineteen miners were confirmed dead, and four others remain trapped after a coal-gas outburst hit a coal mine in Southwest China's Guizhou province on Saturday, rescuers said Sunday.



Miners rest at the entrance of the Xiangshui Coal Mine in Liupanshui City of Southwest China's Guizhou province November 25, 2012. A coal-gas outburst has killed 19 miners with four others still trapped. [Photo/Xinhua]

The search is full in swing after gas density in the pit has declined, and rescuers are expected to reach the trapped miners this afternoon, said Yin Zhihua, vice mayor of Liupanshui, in a brief.

Twenty-eight miners were working underground when the accident occurred at 10:55 am at the Xiangshui Coal Mine, the provincial authorities said.

By 9 pm, five miners have been rescued, with one being in critical conditions, local officials said.

The coal mine, operated by Pannan Coal Exploitation Co, Ltd, is located in Panxian county of the coal-rich Liupanshui city. It went

into operation in 2006 with a designed annual output of 4 million tonnes. The mine sits on a coal deposit of 1.3 billion tonnes.

Coal produced by Xiangshui feeds Pannan Power Station in the region, which is considered a key part of the government's strategy to send electricity from its resource-rich western region to the power-hungry industry belts in the east.

According to government figures released in mid-October, 1,146 people died in 650 mining accidents this year. About 46.5 percent of the deaths were caused by illegal mining operations.

Authorities intended to shut down 625 small mines this year to boost mining safety.

The State Council, or the cabinet, on Saturday ordered tightened coal mine safety supervision.

It said in a circular that coal mines which have failed to meet the safety standards should not be reopened and those who abuse their power to lower overhaul standards would be punished.

Monday 26 November 2012

NZ: Mine safety compared to China's

Extract from Wanganui Chronicle, NZ

Wanganui-based mine safety consultant David Feickert says New Zealand's mines should, in theory, be safer than China's, but Pike River has disproved that notion.

Last week, Mr Feickert returned to China, where he advises the Chinese Government on mining safety.

His current project addresses lung diseases caused by the inhalation of dust created by the mining process.

Mr Feickert said New Zealand's large mines should have been much safer than those in China, because it was a developing country.

"Sadly, the Pike River tragedy showed us all that our safety legislation and practice was ... very weak and must be changed."

His comments come after the release of the royal commission's damning report into Pike River.

Mr Feickert is one of three internationally recognised mining experts who have been asked by the families of the 29 dead miners to determine if a recovery operation is feasible.

Earlier this month, former UK mine inspector Bob Stevenson, British mining engineer David Creedy and Mr Feickert spent five days in Greymouth reviewing the findings of the royal commission's report and plans to recover the miners' bodies. They concluded the area where the men died could be reached.

Mr Feickert said he hoped the mine's new owner, Solid Energy, and the Government would respond positively to the trio's body-retrieval plan.

"We cannot go into detail at this point, as we have agreed to discuss the plan with the company and its external experts."

But Mr Feickert said once he and his colleagues, Solid Energy and the Mines Rescue Service agreed on a plan, the families would be in a position to seek financial support from the Government to implement it.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

Brow A low place in the roof of a mine, giving insufficient headroom.



-Ed