



Mining Accident News No.1226

27 November to 11 December 2012

In this issue:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| China: Families of 23 deceased miners compensated..... | 1 |
| USA: Charged exec cooperating in W.Va. mine blast probe..... | 1 |
| Quote of the week..... | 3 |
| Gas outburst kills 5 in SW China mine..... | 4 |
| NSW: Healthy mine workers leads to less injuries..... | 4 |
| Grieving mother urges Qld Govt not to ignore mine safety..... | 4 |
| USA: Fatality at Greenbrier County Mine is 2 nd in 3 Years..... | 5 |
| Three killed in Mexico mine blast..... | 6 |
| USA: Search continues for worker in coal slurry pond..... | 6 |
| China: Rescue efforts under way to save 14 trapped miners..... | 7 |
| China: Illegal work blamed in mine disaster..... | 8 |
| China: 17 miners dead in Yunnan accident..... | 9 |
| China: 4 miners rescued after being trapped for 5 days..... | 9 |
| MSHA Releases Preliminary Report of Fatal Mine Accident..... | 9 |
| This week in mining accident history..... | 10 |
| China suspends eight officials over deadly mining accident..... | 11 |
| China: Death toll in colliery flooding rises to 511 | |
| Study finds FIFO workers unaware of entitlements..... | 12 |
| Mining dictionary..... | 12 |

Tuesday 27 November 2012

China: Families of 23 deceased miners compensated

Extract from www.chinadaily.com.cn

GUIYANG - The families of 23 miners killed in last week's coal mine accident in Southwest China's Guizhou province have received compensation, the mining company said Tuesday.

The Guizhou Panjiang Group, which controls the accident-hit Xiangshui Coal Mine, said each of the 23 families received 1.04 million yuan (\$163,780) in compensation and the families did not raise objections.

A coal-gas burst occurred in the mine on Saturday morning when 28 miners were working underground. Eighteen miners died on the spot. Five miners survived after being rescued, with one in critical condition, Guizhou provincial authorities said earlier.

An investigation into the cause of the accident has been launched. Initial results show that inadequate safety measures are to blame.

Two mine managers and a chief engineer have been sacked. A deputy general manager of Guizhou Panjiang Group also resigned.

Wednesday 28 November 2012

USA: Charged exec cooperating in W.Va. mine blast probe

Extract from Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. - An executive who ran several coal companies for Massey Energy and worked closely with former CEO Don Blankenship faces criminal conspiracy charges and is cooperating with federal prosecutors, a sign that authorities may be aiming their sights even higher in the company as they probe a fatal West Virginia blast that was the nation's worst mine disaster in four decades.

David Craig Hughart, president of a Massey subsidiary that controlled White Buck Coal Co., is named in a federal information document - which signals a defendant is cooperating - filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Beckley.

Although Upper Big Branch is never directly mentioned in the document, U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin told The Associated Press the charges come from the wide-ranging and continuing

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of NSW Trade & Investment

investigation of the April 2010 explosion that killed 29 men.

Hughart (HYOO'-gurt) is the highest-ranking official yet to be charged, and his cooperation suggests that federal officials could be working their way up the Massey hierarchy. Blankenship was known for dealing directly with presidents of his subsidiaries, possibly even bypassing layers of management in between.

Massey was bought after the disaster by Virginia-based Alpha Natural Resources, which has said it was sealing the mine permanently.

The court document accuses Hughart of working with co-conspirators to ensure miners at White Buck and other, unidentified Massey-owned operations received advance warning about surprise federal inspections many times between 2000 and March 2010.

Those illegal warnings gave workers time to conceal violations that could have led to citations, fines and costly shutdowns, the document says.

Four investigations have concluded that Massey concealed problems at the mine through an elaborate scheme that included sanitized safety-inspection books and an advance-warning system.

The United Mine Workers of America, which accused Massey of "industrial homicide," has demanded that Blankenship and 17 other Massey managers who refused to talk to investigators be compelled to testify publicly or cited for contempt. It says those responsible for the disaster must be brought to justice.

Neither Blankenship nor one of his attorneys immediately responded to an email seeking comment Wednesday.

Hughart could be the link prosecutors need to go up the Massey food chain.

He's been president of at least 10 Massey subsidiaries throughout his career, positions that would have required the consent of a CEO whose micromanagement is well documented.

At Big Branch, for example, Blankenship demanded production reports every 30 minutes.

Investigators say that at other Massey mines, Hughart colluded with others to violate laws requiring adequate ventilation, the removal of explosive coal dust and the application of pulverized limestone to prevent explosions.

Hughart has agreed to plead guilty to two charges: felony conspiracy to defraud the federal government by impeding the actions of MSHA, and misdemeanor conspiracy to violate mandatory health and safety standards. The felony charge carries a possible sentence of five years in prison. The misdemeanor carries up to one year.

Goodwin wouldn't say who else might be charged or when. His investigators are "trying to push forward as quickly as we can," Goodwin said, but that developing the necessary evidence means obtaining the cooperation of people like Hughart.

Hughart is the third person to face serious criminal charges in the mine-blast investigation.

Former Upper Big Branch superintendent Gary May is also cooperating with prosecutors. He pleaded guilty to a federal conspiracy charge for his actions at the mine and is set to be sentenced in January.

Former Massey security chief Hughie Elbert Stover, meanwhile, is appealing his conviction last fall on charges he lied to investigators and ordered a subordinate to destroy documents. He was sentenced to three years behind bars - one of the stiffest punishments ever handed down in a mine safety case - but has been free pending appeal. Witnesses testified that Stover instructed mine guards to send radio alerts whenever inspectors entered the property. He's denied any wrongdoing.

The explosion at Upper Big Branch was sparked by worn teeth on a cutting machine, and fueled by methane and coal dust. It was allowed to propagate by clogged and broken water sprayers. The force of the blast traveled miles of

underground corridors, rounding corners and doubling back on itself to kill men instantly.

Goodwin's office negotiated a \$210 million agreement with Alpha to settle past violations at UBB and other Massey mines, protecting the company from criminal prosecution.

But individuals such as Hughart remain on the hook.

A memo suggesting Blankenship regularly ordered underlings to put profits before safety emerged during a wrongful-death lawsuit filed by the widows of two men killed in a 2006 fire at Massey's Aracoma Coal Alma No. 1 mine.

The memo told workers that if their bosses asked them to build roof supports or perform similar safety-related tasks, "ignore them and run coal."

"This memo is necessary only because we seem not to understand that the coal pays the bills," it said.

Massey settled that lawsuit for undisclosed terms, and Aracoma paid \$4.2 million in civil and criminal penalties.

Public records suggest Hughart worked closely for at least 15 years with Blankenship, who retired about eight months after the disaster.

Blankenship dropped out of public view for a while but has been resurfacing. Last month, he donated \$300,000 to the Marshall University medical school, and he's been posting his thoughts on politics and other matters on a website.

Gary Quarles, who lost his son Gary Wayne at Upper Big Branch, said he wants the former CEO to face criminal charges.

"Everybody thinks he's above the law," he said. "I want at least something filed against him, to show him you can be had. It doesn't matter what he's charged with, just something. ... Even Martha Stewart went to jail.

"If they can get him in prison for at least a year - and I don't care if he's catered to every day he's there - then at least we got something.

That's what we've asked for," Quarles said. "He shouldn't be able to get off scott-free. He was in charge, and everybody knows it.

Clay Mullins, who lost brother Rex in the explosion, is disappointed that no one directly linked to Upper Big Branch was charged Tuesday, but he sees the Hughart charges as "good news" and an indication that investigators are going up the chain of command.

"They need to go after anybody that's done wrong, and it don't have to be at the UBB mine," he said. "That's other lives that man put in danger. People like that, they need to get rid of them. They need to put them away before they kill somebody.

"It's time the United States government stands up to these coal companies - and anybody who acts like that," he said. "They need to cut them down. If they can't abide by the law, then close the doors. Let somebody who can abide by the law run it."

Quote of the week



"Household tasks are easier and quicker when they are done by somebody else."

James Thorpe, Native American
US football player & track athlete (1888-1953)

Thursday 29 November 2012

Gas outburst kills 5 in SW China mine

Extract from Xinhua, China

Five people were killed and two injured in a coal mine gas outburst in southwest China's Guizhou Province early Thursday, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at about 4 a.m. under a transportation shaft of Nengtong Coal Mine in Pu'an county of Qianxinan prefecture when nine workers were doing maintenance work, the county government said in a press release.

Of four people who managed to escape to safety, two were under medical treatment but suffered no life-threatening injuries. The rest five were killed as emergency treatment failed to save their lives.

All coal mines in Pu'an county have been ordered to suspend production for a sweeping safety inspection.

A deputy director of the county bureau of work safety and mayor and a deputy mayor of the town where the coal mine is located were suspended from their posts.

The Nengtong Coal Mine has an annual production capacity of 150,000 tonnes.

Friday 30 November 2012

NSW: Healthy mine workers leads to less injuries

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A Hunter Valley mining company says a health improvement program has made inroads, cutting absenteeism and injuries.

Around 150 workers at Xstrata Coal's Blakefield South underground mine underwent the 16-week health challenge.

Overall the employees saw an 18 per cent improvement in their body mass index, a 17 per

cent improvement in blood pressure, and a nine per cent reduction in cholesterol.



150 workers at Xstrata Coal's Blakefield South underground mine underwent the 16-week health challenge.

Fitness For Work coordinator, Kristy Landry says the results are outstanding.

"What's been really pleasant to see is that people have kept going with the program, even when it finished the 16 weeks," she said.

"So, should we test that (key biometrics) again I would imagine we'd see even better results.

"There were some improvements in absenteeism, as well as our injury rates are tracking well."

Ms Landry says a healthier workforce has had a significant impact on the number of injuries.

"Well, if we look at 2010, because we were largely non-operational in 2011, we had 18 lost time injuries in 2010, as opposed to this year - we've only had four," she said.

"So I think the results are speaking for themselves.

"Having a dedicated person onsite that they can go to has helped as well with early prevention."

Grieving mother urges Qld Govt not to ignore mine safety

Extract from Noosa News, Qld, Aus

JOANNE Ufer wonders if there was one more watchdog looking over her son's mine site, would he would still be with her today?

The Rockhampton mother lost her son, Josh, in the tragic Pike River Mine Disaster in 2010.

Josh, 25, has been working in the mine for only six months before it collapsed, killing 29 workers.



Mother of Joshua Ufer who lost his life at the Pike River Mine Disaster. Photo: Chris Ison

Ever since the disaster Ms Ufer's voice in the mining safety debate has increased.

A former mine worker herself, Ms Ufer is calling on the State Government not to act on a proposal to scale back check inspectors' powers in Queensland mines.

The Queensland Resources Council has put forward a proposal to remove power from check inspectors to stop production if they believe there is a safety risk.

After meeting with Mines Minister Andrew Cripps in Brisbane on Thursday, Mrs Ufer said she did not want the mine industry standard to go backwards.

"(Check inspectors) are an extra set of eyes to make sure things are done properly," she said.

"To see them not have the power they have now would not be a good thing.

"We don't want to go backwards. We want to continue with our high safety and record."

Following a Royal Commission into the Pike River collapse, the New Zealand Government was told to look to Queensland for an insight into high-standard mine safety.

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union district secretary Tim Whyte said check inspectors were "another avenue" for coal mine workers to voice concerns.

"The main value they bring is the coal mine workers won't stick their hand up to say this is wrong, right or indifferent," he said.

"It's another avenue for coal said the government was committed to upholding Queensland's mine safety system.

"As part of the national mine safety harmonisation process, the Minister has clearly stated he will not allow any diminution of mine safety and health standards as they apply to the Queensland resources sector," she said.

"The Newman Government is absolutely committed to upholding Queensland's internationally-recognised mine safety system, and a safety record that is the envy of many countries."

Saturday 1 December 2012

USA: Fatality at Greenbrier County Mine is 2nd in 3 Years

Extract from www.wvntv.com

This is the 2nd fatality at the Pocohontas Mine A in Greenbrier County.

According to officials, a man was killed at the facility in 2010, when owned by Massey Energy.

Alpha Natural Resources acquired Massey in energy in 2011 for \$7.1 billion.

Representatives with Alpha Natural Resources said Thursday the number of citations at the mine since the takeover went down by 25 percent from 2011-2012.

After the death of an electrician at a Greenbrier County coal mine, the president of the company he worked for issues a statement.

Craig Boggs, President of Alex Energy said, "We are all saddened by the loss of a talented colleague and friend. Our sympathies go out to the O'Dell family. The prayers and thoughts of all of us are with Steven's family at this difficult time."

State and Federal mine safety and health officials were promptly notified. They're investigating to find out just what happened and why. The company is cooperating with their investigation.

WVNS has confirmed from sources that the 27-year-old victim is Steven O'Dell. O'Dell was an electrician at the mine.

O'Dell is the state's sixth mining fatality this year.

Three killed in Mexico mine blast

Extract from The Statesman, India

An explosion rocked a mine in central Mexico, killing three miners and injuring three others, officials said.

The blast took place at the Tizapa mine yesterday, which holds gold, zinc, lead and copper and is located in Zacazonapan, some 60 kilometers west of the Mexico state capital of Toluca.

"The incident apparently took place when the workers were handling explosives," Guillermo Castaneda, a member of the civil protection agency, told reporters.

Mexico state governor Eruviel Avila said he ordered an investigation.

USA: Search continues for worker in coal slurry pond

Extract from foxreno.com

SHINNSTON, W.Va. — Crews on Saturday located a bulldozer that plummeted into a West Virginia coal slurry pond when an embankment collapsed, and will resume the search Sunday for the operator.

The bulldozer and two pickup trucks slid into the Nolans Run impoundment of Consol Energy's Robinson Run mine shortly after noon Friday. Two engineers who tumbled into the water were promptly rescued. They were treated at hospitals and released.

Lynn Seay, spokeswoman for Pennsylvania-based Consol, said in an email that the bulldozer was located early Saturday evening.

"The dive crew is currently trying to determine the depth of the dozer," Seay wrote. "Once that determination is made, the recovery operations will stop for the night to allow for development of a recovery plan and will resume in the morning."

She wrote in a subsequent email, "We cannot yet determine if our employee is in the cab of the bulldozer and will not know that until we proceed with the recovery plan."

Earlier, Seay said the search for the missing worker had been suspended at midnight Friday and resumed Saturday. Crews were draining the pond, which was 12 feet deep, and sonar equipment was brought in to help divers and other rescue personnel who were searching for the missing person. Seay said the embankment remained unstable and continued to shift, creating difficult conditions for the search.

The Robinson Run mine was idled while the search was under way, and Seay said a decision on resuming operations would be made on a shift-by-shift basis.

U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration officials were on site, along with company, state and union officials. It was unclear what caused the collapse, which MSHA spokeswoman Amy Louviere described as a "massive failure" at the mine's preparations plant.

Preparations plants wash raw coal to help it burn efficiently before it is shipped to customers. Coal slurry impoundments are used to contain both solid refuse and the wastewater byproduct known as slurry.

Looking for more info on mine safety?


Visit the NSW Government mine safety website

<http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/safety>

where you will find safety alerts and bulletins, upcoming events and a wide range of mine safety publications.

Why not subscribe? You will receive mine safety alerts and safety bulletins, as well as information on mine safety training, seminars, competency, publications, resources and legislation.



Just click  on the mine safety website home-page.

Monday 3 December 2012

China: Rescue efforts under way to save 14 trapped miners

Extract from CHINADAILY, USA



WANG JIANWEI / XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

Two Chinese characters that mean "safety" are seen on Sunday on the wall of an entrance to Furuixiang Coal Mine in Qitaihe city, Heilongjiang province, where 14 miners were trapped underground after a flood on Saturday.

Rescuers are busy pumping water from the shaft of a coal mine in Qitaihe, Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, in an attempt to save 14 miners trapped underground by a flood on Sunday.

Twenty-two miners were working in the pit when the accident happened at 11:40 pm on Saturday at Furuixiang Coal Mine in Qitaihe city. Six miners managed to escape, according to Li Shuguang, an official in charge of emergency response with the city's work safety bureau.

As of press time on Sunday, two miners had been pulled out of the pit, which was inundated with more than 4,000 metric tons of water after the accident, according to rescuers. The two were sent to a local hospital.

Four pumps have been put into use since Sunday afternoon to transfer the water, and rescuers said the pumping would last 10 hours.

Local authorities have mobilized more than 200 rescuers and medical personnel.

Police placed the mine's owner under surveillance and froze the mine's assets, Li said.

One of the two rescued miners, 43-year-old Wen Hongfu, told China Central Television that his

younger brother, 42-year-old Wen Honghe, is still trapped underground. Wen Hongfu suffered minor injuries and is receiving treatment.

The ages of the trapped miners range from 30 to 50, CCTV reported.

Local authorities said the flooded colliery was a licensed site operated by Furuixiang Coal Corp, according to the Xinhua News Agency.

This is not the first time Qitaihe has suffered a coal mine accident in recent years.

In November 2005, a gigantic explosion rocked a coal mine in the city, killing 171 miners and injuring 48.

An investigation by the State Council found the tragedy was caused by irregular use of dynamite. Eleven mine officials were criminally punished, and another 21 were given disciplinary or administrative penalties.

Qitaihe is well known for its rich mineral resources, especially coal. The city was established in 1958 with the primary goal of developing local mines.

The city is now the largest manufacturer of coking coal and coke in Northeast China and has about 400 million tons of coal and coke reserves, according to the city government.

In an attempt to diversify its economy from the heavy reliance on the mining industry, Qitaihe is carrying out an economic transformation, it said.

A series of coal mine accidents have occurred in the past three months, suggesting China is still being haunted by safety problems in its mines.

An explosion of gas and coal claimed 23 lives and injured five people in a mine in Liupanshui of Guizhou province on Nov 24.

The biggest mine accident this year occurred on Aug 29, when 48 people were killed and 54 injured in a gas explosion in a coal mine in Panzhihua, Sichuan province. The accident led to the detention of 14 people who were found responsible and the suicide of another person involved in the case.

Tuesday 4 December 2012

China: Illegal work blamed in mine disaster

Extract from English.Eastday.com

A flood in a coal mine in Qitaihe in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, where 14 miners remain trapped, was the result of illegal mining, according to local authorities.

As of Monday evening, rescuers were still pumping water out of Furuixiang Coal Mine, which flooded at about 11:40 pm on Saturday, but rescuers could not predict when the water will be drained, Li Shuguang, an official in charge of emergency response with the city's work safety bureau, told China Daily.

"The rescue operation is a race against time. I am convinced there is still hope to save the trapped miners. The rescuers will never give up," he said.

But he said rescue headquarters were unable to locate the trapped miners.

Fourteen miners had been trapped in the pit for more than 50 hours as of press time on Monday. Five pumps have been put into use and are able to drain 455 metric tons of water per hour.

"The mine's owner deliberately hid the real conditions in the pit and provided us with a false map," Li said. "That led to a miscalculation of the amount of floodwater in the pit."

In addition, the bad weather is posing challenges for the rescue.

Heavy snow began to fall at about 4 pm on Monday, and forecasts predict the snow will not stop until Wednesday.

The lowest temperature in the early morning of Tuesday in Qitaihe will be -11 C, according to China Meteorological Administration.

Local authorities have mobilized more than 300 experienced miners to join the rescue operation, according to Li.

The rescuers are divided into five teams and work day and night, according to Qu Yuguo, a veteran miner participating in the rescue operation.

Twenty-two miners were working underground when the accident occurred. Six managed to escape.

Rescuers later found two workers, who were close to the ground. They were sent to Qitaihe City People's Hospital where they are in stable condition, according to their doctor Wang Qingbin.

The police have placed the mine's owner, Xiao Lidong, in custody, and frozen the mine's assets.

A preliminary investigation has found the mine transgressed its approved mining boundary, and miners accidentally drilled into a nearby pit that had been shut down and was flooded with water, Li said.

Zhang Hongyi, a nurse at the hospital, said the injured miners are receiving psychological counselling.



Thirty-seven-year-old Sheng Naidong, a miner rescued after the accident, receives treatment at Qitaihe City People's Hospital on Monday. [Photo by Zhou Huiying/China Daily]

Wang Yaquan, one of the two miners rescued after the accident, said he and his colleagues heard a strange whistling sound when working in the pit on Saturday night before the water burst into the shaft.

He spent 10 hours trying to get out of the mine, meeting rescuers when he was 20 meters away from the exit.

The central government has pledged to close about 20,000 illegal and unsafe mines by 2015 in an effort to ensure safe mining, Yang Dongliang, director of the State Administration of Work Safety, told a conference on mine safety in September.

Wednesday 5 December 2012

China: 17 miners dead in Yunnan accident

Extract from Xinhua

Seventeen people have been confirmed dead after a coal mine accident in Fuyuan County in southwest China's Yunnan Province Wednesday, according to the local government.

At 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday, an accident of coal and gas outburst happened in a shaft of the Shangchang Coal Mine in Huangnihe township of Fuyuan, said the press office of the county government.

Sixty-six miners were underground when the mishap occurred and 49 of them escaped unscathed from the mine, according to preliminary investigation.

Friday 7 December 2012

China: 4 miners rescued after being trapped for 5 days

Extract from Xinhua

Four miners who have been trapped in a flooded coal mine in northeast China for more than five days were rescued early Friday morning, rescuers said.

As of 10 p.m. Thursday, more than 4,000 cubic meters of water have been pumped out of the Furuixiang Coal Mine in Qitaihe City of Heilongjiang Province, and the water level in the mine has dropped about 20 meters, according to the rescuers.

The four miners were found alive at about 1:20 a.m. after two working platforms were connected. They were lifted out of the mine at

about 5:30 a.m. and were instantly sent to a local hospital.

Rescuers are still searching for seven others who have been missing after the mine was flooded on Saturday.

A total of 22 miners were working underground when the accident occurred. Six miners escaped, with another two escorted out of the mine at noon Sunday. Three miners have been confirmed dead.

MSHA Releases Preliminary Report of Fatal Mine Accident

Extract from WDTV, USA

MSHA released a preliminary report Thursday about the incidents leading up to the fatal mine accident at Robinson Run Preparation Plant last Friday.

In the report, we find out that there were actually four employees directly near the area of the accident on Friday and that there were 180 working somewhere at the mine.

The report indicates that four individuals were working in the saddle dam area of the slurry impoundment when a massive failure occurred.

A section of that area that was about 650 feet long, 20 to 25 feet above the water surface and 70 feet back from the water's edge, broke and slid into the impoundment.

Two miners noticed that a failure was about to occur and they turned to run. They were both pulled into the water. One of these miners swam to the shore and the other one was rescued by Nutter Fort Fire and Rescue. One bull dozer worker was further back from this area and was not affected. The other bull dozer operator, who is still missing, was the innermost worker. He was inside the machine when it submerged into the slurry.

Divers may enter the pond this weekend to try to reach him. MSHA officially lists that there's one fatality in the accident.

There's no word on what quite caused this accident. The Associated Press said some people familiar with the process of expanding a dam, which is what crews were working on, said it's likely someone pushed too far, too fast.

This week in mining accident history

7 December 1992

South Mountain No.3 Mine

Norton Virginia, USA

Underground coal mine

Methane explosion

8 killed

At approximately 6:15 a.m., December 7, 1992, an explosion occurred on the 1 Left section of Southmountain Coal Co. Inc.'s No. 3 Mine at Norton, Virginia. Eight miners were killed, and another miner working in an outby area was injured.

MSHA investigators concluded that an open flame from a cigarette lighter found on the mine floor was the ignition source. Persons were smoking in the mine, and the operator's smoking search program was not effective. One cigarette pack containing nine unsmoked cigarettes was found on a victim located at the point of origin, and ten smoked cigarettes were found in his pockets.

The bleeder system of the pillared 1 Right off 1 Left, 2 Right off 1 Left, and 1 Left section was not examined or maintained to continuously move methane-air mixtures away from the active faces. The condition of the mine roof in the bleeder entry had deteriorated to the point that the bleeder entry had not been examined for several weeks. Methane, liberated mostly from the closely overlying Kelly Rider seam, accumulated in the pillared areas of the bleeder entry.

Ventilation controls, both permanent and temporary, on the active working section had been removed, or had not been maintained. This action allowed the methane to migrate from the

pillared area and bleeder entry to the No. 1 entry and in the No. 2 crosscut between No. 1 and No. 2 entries. Other factors included the dip of the coalbed, the drop of the barometric pressure before the explosion, the possibility of water accumulations, and roof falls occurring within the pillared areas and bleeder entry.

The methane was ignited on the 1 Left section in the No. 2 crosscut between the No. 1 and No. 2 entries by an open flame from a butane cigarette lighter.

The methane explosion resulted in sufficient forces and flames to suspend and ignite coal dust in 1 Left. The coal dust explosion continued to propagate the entire distance of the No. 1 West Main entries to the surface area of the mine.

Conditions and practices that contributed to the explosion include:

- Improperly conducted weekly examinations for the No. 3 Mine and the 001 section on November 21-30, 1992. The certified examiner failed to examine the bleeder system in its entirety due to adverse roof conditions.
- An inadequately conducted smoking search program. Smoking material was found with three of the victims, and a lunch container was found to contain two full packs of cigarettes and two cigarette lighters.
- Failure to conduct a thorough preshift examination on the 001 section between 9:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. on December 6, 1992, for the oncoming midnight shift on the 1 Left 001 section.
- Improperly placed and maintained ventilation control devices.
- Failure to maintain the required incombustible content of the mine dust.
- Failure to follow the approved ventilation plan in the bleeder system inby No. 1 Left 001 section.

- The methane monitor on the continuous miner, a device meant to shut down the miner in the case methane levels increased to explosive levels, had been bypassed to speed production.
- Failure to provide the necessary volume and velocity of air in the 1 Left 001 section.
- Failure to conduct weekly examinations of the ventilation system at least every seven days.

These were major violations and the mine should not have been allowed to operate under the circumstances. Still the majority of blame fell away from the company officials and the previously performed half assed State and Federal mine inspections. Investigators supposedly “found” cigarette lighters and cigarettes in one of the fallen miner's dinner buckets. Despite the failures of the system meant to prevent hazardous conditions in the mine the major fault fell to the most probable end ignition source. Many people close to the fallen miners and those who worked for Ridley's mining operations suspect the evidence was planted to place blame on someone who could not defend themself.

Many believe the coal company owner and mine officials should have gotten life in prison, along with some of the Federal and State mine inspectors who failed to enforce regulations meant to keep such tragedies from happening. In the end Ridley Elkins only spent 6 months in jail and his company was fined \$2,000,000, of which \$900,000 was earmarked to go to the families of the fallen miners. Several years later the widows of the fallen miners filed a lawsuit against the Mine Safety and Health Administration for not performing their duty. The story made the papers when a federal judge ruled it was solely the mine owner's fault, yet no further actions were taken against him following that ruling. Ridley Elkins still enjoys life today in Clintwood, Virginia.

Source: *Historical Summary of Mine Disasters in the United States - Volume II & www.thethoughtfulcoalminer.com*

Saturday 8 December 2012

China suspends eight officials over deadly mining accident

Extract from GMA News Online, Philippines

SHANGHAI - China suspended eight officials and arrested two others over a coal mine accident this week that killed 17 people in southwest China's Yunnan province, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Saturday.

The eight suspended officials include Fuyuan county's coal industry bureau chief and the bureau's deputy director, Xinhua said, quoting Fuyuan's publicity office.

China's mines are the deadliest in the world because of lax enforcement of safety standards and a rush to feed demand from a robust economy. But the death toll from accidents has been falling, government statistics show.

On Wednesday, 17 miners were killed when an explosive device was set off, triggering a blast in the gas-filled mine located in the Huangheni township in Fuyuan.

Police have arrested two people over the mine blast. The families of the 17 dead will receive compensation of 990,000 yuan (\$158,900), Xinhua said.

In August, a similar mine explosion in Sichuan province killed 26 miners, marking it as one of the biggest coal mine disasters of the year. (\$1 = 6.2301 Chinese yuan)

China: Death toll in colliery flooding rises to 5

Extract from Xinhua, China

Two more bodies were retrieved seven days after a coal mine was flooded in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, bringing the death toll to five, rescuers said Saturday.

Rescuers recovered the two bodies at around 10 am on Saturday, and they were continuing to search for the five others who remained missing, said a spokesman with the accident's rescue headquarters.

The floodwater has almost been completely pumped out, and rescuers have entered the shaft to carry out rescue work. However, it will still take two to three days for rescuers to clear the way in the severely flood-damaged shaft, according to the spokesman

The accident happened at around 11:40 pm last Saturday when 22 miners were working underground at Furuixiang Coal Mine in Qitaihe city. Twelve of them managed to escape or were later rescued, including four who were found alive five days after the accident.

An investigation into the accident is under way.

Tuesday 11 December 2012

Study finds FIFO workers unaware of entitlements

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A Perth-based psychology researcher says mine workers in central Queensland often feel their employers do not care about their wellbeing.

Murdoch University researcher Libby Price says of the 223 fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) miners surveyed for the study, most felt detached from their employer and less than half were aware of their employee assistance entitlements.

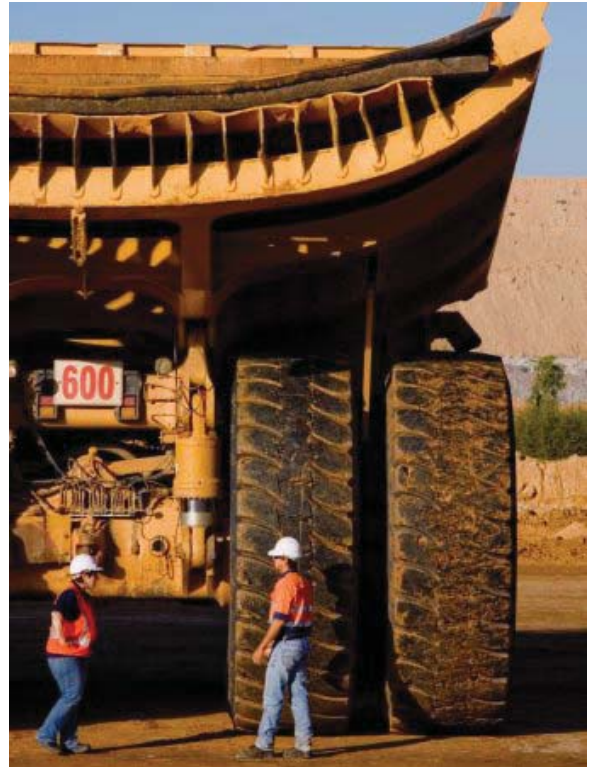
But she says support is available.

"Whether or not they're aware of the support that's available - EAP [employee assistance program] is an easy one - people found that their friends and family were the strongest supports anyway, so I think it's just a case of educating people and letting them know," she said.

She says there are several ways to improve the situation.

"I think education is one of the easiest things that an organisation can do," she said.

"Having said that, I know some people who work really, really hard to educate people about the availability of an EAP and some people just don't want to go.



FIFO miners surveyed for the study felt most detached from their employer. Photo: AAP image, Macarthur Coal.

"One of the biggest things that's come out of this is that communication could so easily improve the situation with regards to that feeling of support."

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

Brushing Digging up the bottom or taking down the top to give more headroom in roadways.

-Ed

