



Mining Accident News No.1301

26 December 2012 to 31 January 2013

In this issue:

| | |
|---|----------|
| India: Chasnala mine disaster victims remembered | 1 |
| 7 dead in N China coal mine blast | 2 |
| Aggregate Miner Becomes First U.S. Mining Fatality in 2013 | 2 |
| Mining accident in northeastern Colombia kills 3 people | 2 |
| Turkey: Nothing concealed in mine blast | 3 |
| USA: Miner Dies at Nevada Lime Plant | 4 |
| USA: Man jumps in mine shaft; huge team rescues | 4 |
| Quote of the week | 5 |
| 8 dead in NE China mine accident..... | 5 |
| Chinese Gold Mine Accident Kills Nine, Injures 28 | 5 |
| 3 buried in NE China coal mine collapse | 5 |
| USA: Authorities Confirm Fatality from Accident near Loveridge Plant in Fairview | 6 |
| Qld: Miner's arm crushed in coal mine mishap. 6 | 6 |
| USA: Ex-mine official sentenced in W.Va. blast case..... | 6 |
| UK: Mine company and manager to face manslaughter charges..... | 6 |
| Four die at Russian mine collapse | 7 |
| Two dead, 11 trapped in SW China mine accident | 7 |
| All 13 dead in SW China coal mine accident | 8 |
| This week in mining accident history | 8 |
| Kentucky Man is First U.S. Coal Fatality in 20139 | |
| Pakistan official says methane gas explosion in coal mine kills 8 miners in southwest..... | 10 |
| Saskatchewan miners safe but spend day trapped underground by fire..... | 10 |
| Quebec quarry collapse traps two workers as trucks swept away by landslide, rescue efforts underway | 10 |
| Seven Dead in NE China Mine Accident | 11 |
| Worker describes WA mine site as 'disgusting'11 | |
| Mining dictionary | 12 |

Saturday 29 December 2012

India: Chasnala mine disaster victims remembered

Extract from The Times of India, Ranchi, India.

SINDRI: Rich tributes were paid to 375 miners who met their watery grave at Chasnala colliery on this day way back in 1975.

The deafening sound of siren broke the eerie calm at around 1.35pm and hundreds of heads bowed to pay homage to the departed souls. The pain of being separated from their near and dear ones was writ large on the faces of women who lost their husbands and children who lost their parents in the worst-ever mine accident of the country.

Family members of the miners who died in the accident paid homage by offering puja at the Shaheed Smarak built in their memory. General manager J K Bhowmik led the team of colliery officials in laying the wreaths.

CITU leader S K Bakshi along with trade union leaders, mining staff and workers followed suit.

At 1.35pm on December 27, 1975, there was a blast in the joint horizon of pits 1 and 2 in the deep mines of Chasnala colliery that damaged the barrier separating the mine from the water body lying just above the pit. Nearly 5 crore gallons of water gushed in the mine and all the 375 mine personnel, both officials and workers, met their watery grave inside the mine.

Pumps were brought in from Poland, Russia and US to drain out water from the inundated mine but to no avail. Ministers from the Centre and state kept camping at Chasnala to expedite rescue operation. But the first dead body could come out only on the 26th day of the accident with the help of Russian pumps. Many bodies were rendered beyond recognition and many of

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them were identified with the cap-lamp allotted to them for entering the mine.

A case of criminal negligence was lodged against the colliery officials but most of them got acquitted for want of proper evidence and many of them died during trial.

GM Bhowmik said, "The company was taking all measures to avoid recurrence of such incidents and ensure safety of the miners. We are monitoring the gas level and temperature in the mine round the clock with the help of sensors and all the miners are provided with safety gears before entering the mine."

JVM MLA and AITUC leader Dhullu Mahto who arrived late demanded the colliery management to clear the pending cases of appointment to the kin of those who lost their lives in the accident within a month and threatened of a chakka-Jam if the management failed in complying with the demand. He also demanded the colliery management not to lodge cases against villagers lifting coal for their personal use. Instead, cases should be lodged against racketeers lifting coal through trucks and wagons, he added.

Monday 7 January 2013

7 dead in N China coal mine blast

Extract from Xinhua, China

Seven workers died in a gas explosion in a coal mine in North China's Shanxi province, work safety authorities said Monday.

A total of 17 people were working in the Sijiazhuang Coal Mine in Xiyang county when the blast occurred at around 3 pm Monday, according to the provincial coal mine safety administration.

Seven died at the scene, and another ten workers escaped unharmed, it added.

The mine has a designed capacity of 5 million tonnes.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

Aggregate Miner Becomes First U.S. Mining Fatality in 2013

Extract provide by Sharpe Media, LLC

A Western Kentucky aggregate worker has become the first mining fatality in 2013.

According to MSHA, the victim was injured in a highwall accident Jan. 7 at Lafarge North America's Three Rivers Quarry in Livingston County. He died Saturday. The company has not released the victim's name, and no further information was available from MSHA today, a federal holiday.

"Our deepest condolences go out to the employee's family and the employee's Lafarge colleagues," the company said in a prepared statement. "Lafarge is cooperating with authorities during their investigation, and we await the result of the investigation pending any further comment."

The quarry has been under Lafarge's control since December 2011. The mine was recognized with a Sentinels of Safety award for its outstanding safety record that year. According to a company press release announcing the award, Three Rivers Quarry had received the award five times previously. The mine had been operated by Martin Marietta Materials and its predecessor, Martin Marietta Aggregates, from 1995 until 2011.

The 112-person operation experienced five non-fatal days lost in 2012, giving it a rate significantly above the national average.

Tuesday 8 January 2013

Mining accident in northeastern Colombia kills 3 people

Extract from Colombia Reports, Colombia

The first recorded mining accident of 2013 claims the lives of three people in the northeastern Colombia, local media reported on Tuesday.

A mine in the town of Paipa in the Boyaca department collapsed "Apparently [because] there was an explosion due to [an] accumulation of gas," Carlos Ivan Marquez, the National Director of Risk Management, reportedly told W Radio after examining the mine.

According to local media, the department's Director of Civil Defense said that the coal mine trapped three people inside and due to "reckless" overcrowding, authorities were forced to ventilate the entire shaft in order to find the victims' bodies. The director also said that the pit had all the necessary permits and was fully operable.

However, multiple news outlets pointed out that the Boyaca department is home to many mines where locals have allegedly been known to ignore the government's required safety measures.

Thursday 10 January 2013

Turkey: Nothing concealed in mine blast

Extract from Daily News, Turkey

Claims of negligence and shortcomings in work safety filed after a coal mine blast in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak which killed eight miners will be thoroughly investigated, Energy Minister Taner Yıldız said yesterday.



Muharrem Yapıcı, who was killed in a coal mine blast in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak Jan 7, is laid to rest with a ceremony in his hometown. DHA photo

While replying to journalists' questions at Parliament, Yıldız underlined that nothing had been concealed in regards to the mine blast that

occurred in Zonguldak on Jan. 7 and killed eight workers.

The accident was not a subject to be manipulated for political reasons, Yıldız said, adding that they were not authorized to tolerate those who behaved with fault or negligence. Being speculative and manipulative before the case is clarified will be an injustice to those who are working properly, Yıldız said.

All questions will be answered as soon as the details of the accident were clarified, Yıldız said. "Nothing is being concealed. The rules in tender specifications are explicit," he said.

A report recently revealed the sub-contractor used was not actually a mining firm, but a construction company. "Everyone has to obey the rules regardless of sub-contractors, private sector or public sector members," Yıldız said in response to questions on his thoughts about the discovery.

Previous mine accidents

According to data provided by the Chamber of Mining Engineers, a total of 80 mine accidents took place in Turkey last year, killing a total of 61 workers and leaving 91 injured.

In 2011, 77 workers died and 117 were injured in 86 mine accidents; while 105 died and 93 were injured in 61 accidents that happened in 2010.

A total of 3,053 people died and 326,208 people left injured or disabled due to mining accidents in Turkey between 1955 and 2012.

Turkey's worst mining disaster on record is a gas explosion that killed 263 workers near Zonguldak on Mar. 3, 1992. Most mining accidents in Turkey have occurred in Zonguldak, one of Turkey's richest areas for coal.

Turkey has the worst safety record in terms of mining accidents and explosions in Europe and the third worst in the world, according to reports.

USA: Miner Dies at Nevada Lime Plant

Extract provide by Sharpe Media, LLC

For the second time in three days, a non-coal worker has died as a result of a mining accident.

The latest incident took place Monday morning around 11:30 at Lhoist North America of Arizona, Inc.'s Apex Quarry and Plant north of Las Vegas in Clark County. The victim, who has not been identified, was pronounced dead at the scene, according to the *Las Vegas Sun Times*, which referenced a remark from Capt. Cedric Williams of the North Las Vegas Fire Department.

The *Las Vegas News-Review* quoted Ken Gillespie, the company's director of operations, as saying Lhoist "deeply regrets" the death. A call to Lhoist's corporate headquarters in Texas was not immediately returned.

MSHA has not yet released a preliminary report, but in a posting on its website, described the fatality as a "machinery" accident.

Lhoist has operated the plant since 1986, according to MSHA's database. The non-fatal days lost (NFDL) rate at the 129-person Apex operation, a lime plant, has exceeded the national average in eight of the past 11 years. The rate fell just above the national average last year and was below it in 2011. A total of three NFDL accidents were reported in those two years.

The fatality is the second in the U.S. metal/non-metal sector within three days. An aggregate miner died at a Western Kentucky quarry site Saturday after an injury he sustained in a highwall accident 12 days earlier

Sunday 13 January 2013

USA: Man jumps in mine shaft; huge team rescues

Extract from UPI

A Flagstaff-area rescue involving many emergency workers saved the life of a man who jumped down a 100-foot-deep mine shaft, Arizona officials said.

The 28-year-old Union City, Calif., man, who suffered a broken leg and arm and severe hypothermia during the all-night rescue after he hiked illegally to the bottom of the crater Thursday and jumped feet-first down the shaft in Meteor Crater, was hospitalized in stable condition, the Arizona Daily Sun reported.

The man said he jumped to "appease the gods," the Coconino County Sheriff's Office said.

The newspaper did not provide the man's name.

Officials said an employee at the privately owned meteor crater site saw the man hiking down the crater, climbing on objects and removing posts. The employee called the sheriff's office Thursday at 4 p.m. local time and then watched through binoculars as the man jumped down the shaft.

"We would have preferred to do this in the daylight, but we didn't think he would survive that long. So, once again, our rescuers put themselves in harm's way to help their fellow man," said sheriff's office representative Gerry Blair.

Involved in the rescue were the Coconino Sheriff's Office rescue team, the Flagstaff Fire Department, a team of more than 30 volunteer and paid workers from a search and rescue team, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office deputies and a technical mine rescue team.

"This rescue took place under the worst conditions," Blair said of the zero-degree wind chill and 70 mph wind gusts.

"Bringing this individual up out of the crater was nothing short of a feat of strength," said Flagstaff Fire Department Capt. Jeff Bierer of the 600-foot trek up the crater once the more-than-200-pound man was lifted out of the mine shaft.

Investigators said they think the man is a semi-truck driver, His 18-wheeler was found in the Meteor Crater parking lot.

Quote of the week



"A sense of humour is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done."

Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th President of United States (1890-1969)

Monday 14 January 2013

8 dead in NE China mine accident

Extract from Xinhua, China

Eight people died and three others were injured on Saturday in a coal mine accident in northeast China's Liaoning Province, local authorities said Sunday.

The accident happened around 10:30 p.m. in the Wulong Coal Mine in the city of Fuxin. The mine is owned by the Fuxin Mining Group.

Tuesday 15 January 2013

Chinese Gold Mine Accident Kills Nine, Injures 28

Extract from the Journal of Turkish Weekly, Turkey

MOSCOW, (RIA Novosti) - Nine people were killed, 28 more injured and one person went

missing due to a carbon monoxide poisoning at a gold mine in northeast China's Jilin Province, Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday.

The agency said citing local authorities that the accident happened at 4:00 a.m. local time at a gold mine in the town of Huadian.

There was no information available on the number of miners working in the mine at the time of the accident and on the condition of the injured people.

The mining industry in China is one of the most dangerous in the world due to poor work safety standards and intensive work schedules. Hundreds of lives are lost annually in accidents at mines in the country.

UPDATE: (15 Jan 2013) Ten people are now reported as killed by the carbon monoxide from the fire, local authorities said Tuesday.

The publicity department for the city of Huadian said faulty wiring is believed to be the cause of the fire that broke out at the Laojinchang Gold Mine, China's Xinhua news agency reported.

Fifty-seven miners were working inside the mine at the time.

The blaze resulted in a dense buildup of both carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, officials said.

3 buried in NE China coal mine collapse

Extract from Xinhua, China

Three people were buried underground when a coal mine collapsed in northeast China's Liaoning Province on Tuesday, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at noon when three workers were doing repairs underground at the Zhangdang Coal Mine, a private coal mine in Fushun City whose production has been suspended for maintenance reasons, said an official with the provincial administration of coal mine safety.

Rescuers have arrived at the scene to search for the three buried workers and an investigation is underway.

USA: Authorities Confirm Fatality from Accident near Loveridge Plant in Fairview

Extract from WDTV, USA

CONSOL Energy officials confirm a fatality from the accident near the Loveridge Preparation Plant in Fairview. We're told the person was an independent drilling contractor. CONSOL said state and federal agencies have been notified. They're expected to be at the scene tomorrow.

The following is an email from CONSOL:

At 6:10 PM Monday evening, CONSOL Energy was notified by a surface drilling contractor that one of its employees who was performing work independent of CONSOL Energy was fatally injured outside the vicinity of the Loveridge Preparation Plant.

State and federal agencies have been notified and are expected on-site at the location of the incident tomorrow.

Thursday 17 January 2013

Qld: Miner's arm crushed in coal mine mishap

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

An investigation is underway into how a mine worker crushed his arm at the Broadmeadow underground coal mine near Moranbah in central Queensland.

On Sunday night, work colleagues noticed the man had not returned underground after going to collect equipment.

A search discovered he had trapped his left arm between a cable reel and the cable reeler.

Paramedics freed him and he is in a stable condition in the Mackay Base Hospital.

State Government mines inspectors are investigating the incident.

USA: Ex-mine official sentenced in W.Va. blast case

Extract from Associated Press

A former superintendent at West Virginia's Upper Big Branch mine where 29 miners died in a 2010 explosion was sentenced to nearly two years in prison Thursday on a federal conspiracy charge.

Gary May pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Beckley last March to charges he defrauded the government through his actions at the mine, including disabling a methane gas monitor and falsifying records.

In addition to his 21-month sentence, U.S. District Judge Irene Berger fined May \$20,000.

May had asked for leniency. Federal sentencing guidelines recommended 15 to 21 months in prison, although prosecutors pushed for a sentence at the high end. They said the guidelines didn't account for the risk to miner's lives created by May's actions.

Friday 18 January 2013

UK: Mine company and manager to face manslaughter charges

The company that owns Gleision colliery and the person who managed it at the time of the deaths of four miners in a flooding incident in September 2011 are to face manslaughter charges, South Wales Police has announced.

MNS Mining Ltd has been summonsed on four counts of corporate manslaughter and mine manager Malcolm Fyfield on four counts of gross-negligence manslaughter, following the Police investigation into the deaths at the Gleision Colliery in Cilybebyll on 15 September 2011.

The four men – Philip Hill, 44; Charles Breslin, 62; David Powell, 50; and Garry Jenkins, 39 – died after becoming trapped in the mine when it flooded.

MNS Mining Ltd and Fyfield, 57, will appear at Neath Magistrates Court on 1 February 2013.

Detective Chief Inspector Dorian Lloyd of the South Wales Police Specialist Crime Investigations Team, who led the investigation into the deaths, said: "Upon completion of [our] investigation and following consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service, the mine manager, Malcolm Fyfield has today (18 January) been charged with four counts of gross-negligence manslaughter.

"In addition, a prosecution for four offences of corporate manslaughter against the owners of the mine, MNS Mining Ltd, is proceeding.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all members of the local community for their continued support and understanding throughout this process. In particular, I would personally like to thank the families involved for their unwavering patience and courage and request that their privacy is respected at this very difficult time."

Paul Verrico, principal associate at Eversheds, commented: "The tragic events at Gleision colliery deeply affected the whole of the local community; in many ways, that disquiet is reflected in the charges facing the mine manager and MNS Mining Limited.

"At trial, the case may explore the 'senior manager test', as it does not appear from [information held at] Companies House that the mine manager was a director of the company."

The flood and its tragic consequences prompted the HSE to issue a safety alert at the time, reminding the mining industry of the precautions to be taken against preventing inrushes of water in underground mines.

The effect of under-resourcing on the attempt to rescue the four miners was highlighted by the Shadow Welsh Secretary, who called on the Government to think twice about removing or weakening mines safety legislation, and demanded proper resourcing of the Mines Rescue Service.

Sunday 20 January 2013

Four die at Russian mine collapse

Extract from Kyiv Post

At least four miners died when fumes filled the shaft where they were working in Russia's main coal-producing region on Sunday, Russian news agencies reported.

Searches for another four missing men had to be suspended after levels of methane in the mine in the Kuznetsk Basin reached dangerous levels, the RIA and ITAR-Tass news wires said. Sixty-nine miners managed to escape, they added.

Russia's coal mines have a poor safety record and President Vladimir Putin warned operators to improve standards as he announced a multi-billion dollar investment in the sector last year.

Moscow has ambitious plans to boost coal output despite weak world prices and competition from cheap natural gas resources from shale.

The Kuznetsk Basin in west Siberia, about 3,500 km (2,200 miles) east of Moscow, mined 192 million tonnes of coal in 2011, about 57 percent of Russia's total output.

Two dead, 11 trapped in SW China mine accident

Extract from Xinhua, China

An outburst of coal and gas occurred at the Jinjia Coal Mine under the Panjiang Investment Holding Group in southwest China's Guizhou Province.

The accident, which happened Friday afternoon, has left two people dead and 11 others trapped.

Rescue teams and investigators are on-scene.

Wednesday 23 January 2013

All 13 dead in SW China coal mine accident

Extract from Xinhua, China

All the 13 miners trapped by a coal mine blast in southwest China's Guizhou Province were confirmed dead, rescuers said Thursday, seven days after the accident.

The last body was retrieved at 7:30 a.m. Thursday after rescuers cleaned 381,000 cubic meters of gas and 1,400 cubic meters of coal out of the shaft at Jinjia Coal Mine, said a spokesman with the accident rescue and relief headquarters.

The accident happened around 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 18, trapping 13 at a shaft of the coal mine in Panxian County, Liupanshui City. High density of gas in the shaft had hampered rescue before the bodies were recovered.

With annual production capacity of 1.8 million tonnes, Jinjia is a state-owned coal mine operated by the Guizhou Panjiang Clean Coal Co. Ltd.

An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway.

This week in mining accident history

27 January 1891

**Mammoth No.1 Mine
Mammoth, Pennsylvania, USA
Underground coal mine
Explosion of fire-damp
116 killed**

**Over a Hundred Killed
A Disastrous Explosion of Fire-Damp
Miners Suffocated in the Mammoth Shaft of the Frick Coke Company – Sixty Bodies Recovered and the Mine on Fire**

Pittsburg, Penn. Jan. 27 – A special from Scottdale, Penn, says: By an explosion of fire-

damp in the Mammoth shaft of the H. C. Frick Coke Company 110 sturdy miners were hurled into eternity and a number seriously injured.

The explosion occurred this morning shortly after 9 o'clock and it is supposed was the result of the ignition of a miner's oil lamp. The after damp which followed the fire-damp explosion suffocated nearly every workman. A few men realizing the awful situation fell to the ground thereby preventing the gas from striking them. The persons not killed are in such a critical condition that their deaths are momentarily expected. Up to this writing sixty bodies have been recovered, all without a sign of life. The mine is on fire and it is feared that the rest of the bodies will be cremated.

The fire which broke out after the explosion was soon extinguished by the immense fans which were put in operation. The gas was about all driven from the pit, and the work of rescuing the entombed miners was commenced. General Manager Lynch of the H. C. Frick Coke Company is on the scene helping to devise means to recover the dead workmen. His assistance is invaluable, as he has had many years' experience in mining operation. After sixty of the bodies had been taken out a new fire started, and this is still burning.

The Mammoth plant embraces 509 ovens, and is one of the largest plants in the coke region, but it is hard of [sic] access. It is situated near the United Works, where an explosion recently destroyed the entire shaft. The affair has cast a gloom over the entire coke region, and to-night hundreds of miners are flocking to the scene of the disaster offering assistance. The appalling loss of life in the Dunbar disaster is more than overshadowed by the destruction of life in this calamity. The news spread throughout the entire coke region with great rapidity, and everybody was awestricken. The coffins have already been ordered for eighty persons from Mount Pleasant undertakers, and it is understood that the Frick Company, the owners of the plant, will bear the expenses of the same. The only man who

escaped from the fatal mine was Mine Boss Eaton.

Among those killed are John Beverage and James Boles, formerly of this place. The former resided here for many years and was held in high esteem by everybody. He was a road man in the shaft. Ex-Mine Inspector Keighly, the Superintendent of the fatal shaft, is nearly distracted. It is a singular fact that misfortune seems to have followed him, his experience in the Hill Farm disaster resulting in the tendering of his resignation as Mine Inspector.

Master Workman Peter Wise, ex-Master Workman R. D. Kerfoot, James McBride, Mike Disman, John R. Byrne, Secretary Parker, and James Keegan, all prominent labor leaders, left to-night for Mammoth to render any assistance in their power, financially or otherwise, to the stricken and bereaved families. It has been estimated that there are sixty wives and families left wholly dependent on the charity of the world by this disaster. In fact, they are almost penniless, as the plant has not been running full for some time, and work has been exceedingly scarce since the dullness in the demand for coke. Every means possible will be resorted to to supply the widowed mothers and their children with the necessaries of life. The Frick Company will be liberal in this direction, and it is understood that a subscription paper will shortly be circulated to obtain money to support the unfortunate families.

Master Workman Peter Wise addressed the following letter to the miners and cokers of the region to-night:

Scottdale, Penn. Jan 27, 1891

To the Members of the Knights of Labor and Workingmen of the Coke Region

The sad news of a disastrous explosion at Mammoth Mines has just reached me and I fear many families have been left destitute. I therefore appeal to you to promptly render what aid you can to assist the families of your brethren who have been killed. The Master

Workman and committees at each works will kindly take the matter in hand and act as a relief committee. Let the committee select a "check member," and each miner run as many wagons as he can under the circumstances contribute, and arrangements will be made with the companies to pay the amount, and thus prompt aid can be given.

Drawers can adopt the same plan, and day men can contribute from their day's work and have the same deducted in the office. This aid will be separate and apart from any public contributions, and will be forwarded to district officers, who will apply it to the relief of those for whom it is contributed.

(from "The New York Times," New York, NY, 28 Jan., 1891.)

Most of those killed were of Eastern European extraction and many were faced with either starving or working in unsafe mines.

And...the State inspectors found in favour of the Company....so they had no obligation to the survivors...

"State mining inspectors declared that the H.C. Frick Coke Company was not at fault in the Mammoth Mine disaster, as was usually the case, claiming that the mine had been adequately ventilated, but that a sudden concentration of gas in one part of the shaft entry mine sparked the explosion. One mine inspector testified that while a number of miners appeared to have been killed by the force of the explosion, "a great majority of the bodies showed clearly that they died from the effects of after-damp."

Monday 28 January 2013

Kentucky Man is First U.S. Coal Fatality in 2013

Extract provide by Sharpe Media, LLC

An Eastern Kentucky contract welder killed in an accident Saturday has become the first U.S. coal mining fatality in 2013.

According to preliminary reports from MSHA and the state Energy and Environment Cabinet, Jerry A. Watts, 52, of Slemp in Perry County was trying to remove a damaged portion of the center push blade on a Caterpillar D10R bulldozer at about 11:25 a.m. when a jack slipped, causing the liner to strike Watts in the head.

He was pronounced dead by Leslie County Coroner Greg Walker.

Watts was employed by Watts Welding & Fabricating of Slemp. The accident occurred in the parking lot at the Begley Resources #1 surface mine at Short Creek, which is owned by T & T Energy, LLC.

MSHA's database reports zero hours of work for the Watts firm since 2002. The agency has assessed \$465,249 in fines at the 35-person mine Begley mine since it became operational in 2011.

Pakistan official says methane gas explosion in coal mine kills 8 miners in southwest

Extract from Associated Press

A Pakistani mining official says a methane gas explosion in a private coal mine in the southwest has killed eight miners.

Senior mining inspector Iftikhar Ahmed said two miners were found unconscious after Monday's blast, in Duki village.

He said two miners were still missing and rescue workers were trying to reach them.

Ahmed said dozens of miners angered over the incident rallied there Monday, demanding action against the owner.

He said the miners accused the owner of ignoring safety measures and that authorities have opened an investigation to determine what caused the blast.

Such incidents are common in Pakistan, and miners usually blame owners for deaths.

The mine where the latest incident took place is 50 kilometers (30 miles) northeast of Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan province.

Tuesday 29 January 2013

Saskatchewan miners safe but spend day trapped underground by fire

Extract from Macleans.ca

More than 300 miners were trapped underground for several hours after a fire broke out at Mosaic's K2 potash mine near Esterhazy, Sask.

The mine was shut down as crews battled the blaze that broke out about 10:35 a.m. Monday.

The 318 miners raced to underground refuge stations for safety.

It took around three hours for emergency rescue teams to put out the fire and another few hours for the smoke to clear.

Brad DeLori says all employees were accounted for and there were no reports of injuries.

About 5 p.m., the miners began coming up to the surface.

DeLori says a piece of mobile mining equipment was the cause of the fire.

Quebec quarry collapse traps two workers as trucks swept away by landslide, rescue efforts underway

Extract from Canadian Press

A risky rescue operation is underway following an apparent landslide that swept several vehicles into a deep quarry, with two workers missing.

They are trapped in gravel at the bottom of a pit described by authorities as nearly 100 metres deep, just east of Montreal.

A third worker managed to escape his excavator with what police describe as minor injuries, after

the vehicle tumbled down the steep embankment.

The torrent of earth swept along two trucks and one excavation vehicle, which collapsed into the quarry Tuesday morning. The excavator had been used to fill the trucks with gravel at the site, which is operated by Maskimo Construction Inc.

“For reasons we can’t explain there was a landslide,” said provincial police spokesman Benoit Richard.

“The two trucks, and the excavator, completely fell — or descended — into the hole.”

One of the vehicles was found empty.

Authorities are having trouble accessing the area and have had to call in a helicopter. The provincial police chopper has arrived at the site to whisk away the worker who escaped.

Richard said the worker is suffering from frostbite and shock.

The chopper has had to navigate a narrow crevasse each time it has dropped off rescuers in the quarry.

“It’s kind of a risky and a tough situation,” Richard said.

The helicopter also dropped off rescue workers in the pit, along with a sniffer dog. The rescuers were seen searching one of the trucks that fell into a bed of grey gravel at the bottom of the quarry.

The vehicle was partially buried in the gravel and was lying almost completely upside down, almost like a toy truck.

Rescuers were apparently trying to dig through the gravel to reach the cab of the truck — but it was found empty.

Richard said a firefighter with a thermal camera was also at the bottom of the mostly-snow-covered pit, searching for the missing workers.

He explained why it was difficult to get to the site.

“The terrain was completely broken — the road too,” he said.

Wednesday 30 January 2013

Seven Dead in NE China Mine Accident

Extract from Xinhua

Three workers have been pulled to safety and another three remain trapped after a coal mine accident killed seven in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, authorities said Wednesday.

The three were lifted out of the mine at around 11 a.m. Wednesday and were in stable condition, according to the Dongning County government.

Three workers entered the Yongsheng colliery to pump out water, but poisonous gas caused them to faint around 10:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Rescuers were sent to the site, but some of them were also affected by the toxic gas.

A total of 12 people have been lifted out of the mine, but seven of them died despite medical treatment.

Rescue work is still underway.

Rescuers said the poisonous gas may have been carbon monoxide.

The private, licensed mine has an annual capacity of 50,000 tonnes.

Thursday 31 January 2013

Worker describes WA mine site as 'disgusting'

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A registered nurse has described conditions at a south-west mine site as 'disgusting' and lodged a formal complaint with the Department of Mines and Petroleum.

Jeremy Clarke was employed to work as a contract labourer at BHP Billiton's Marradong bauxite mine near Boddington early this month.

Mr Clarke claims he was bullied by his supervisor and ordered off site after asking for water and a hat which complied with safety standards.

He says he was shocked by the conditions.

"The conditions out there are inhumane, absolutely inhumane, the conditions that we're working under," he said.

"I'm absolutely astounded that we can still allow people to work in those conditions, it's like come on guys wake up to yourselves."

The Department of Mines sent a safety officer to the site for inspection after receiving the complaint.

It says the officer found some health and hygiene problems needed to be rectified and issued the operator with an improvement notice for the area of the mine Mr Clarke was working in.

BHP Billiton says it received the notice, but is yet to formally respond to the department.

The company says it investigated Mr Clarke's concerns and believes they are unfounded.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

B

Butt cleat A short, poorly defined vertical cleavage plane in a coal seam, usually at right angles to the long face cleat.