



Mining Accident News No.1303

1 to 31 March 2013

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Friday 1 March 2013

Carbon monoxide poisoning kills 11 in N China coal mine

Extract from Xinhua

Eleven people die due to carbon monoxide poisoning after a forcing fan caught fire under a coal mine in north China's Hebei Province, local authorities said Friday.

The accident occurred at 8 p.m. on Thursday in a coal mine in Huailai County of Zhangjiakou City, the publicity department of Zhangjiakou City said.

The mine belongs to Zhangkuang Group, a subsidiary of Jizhong Energy Group Co., LTD.

Thirteen miners were working under the mine when the accident happened.

Two miners are still missing, the publicity department said.

Saturday 2 March 2013

Eight dead in SW China colliery blast

Extract from Xinhua

Eight miners have been confirmed dead in a colliery blast on Friday in southwest China's Yunnan Province, local government said.

The accident happened around 2 p.m. at the Liangshuigou Coal Mine in Muzhuo Township of Zhenxiang County, according to the county's publicity bureau.

An initial probe has indicated a gas blast in the mine.

Operation of the coal mine has not resumed after the Spring Festival, but the mine manager organized 20 miners to work in the mine without any safety check. Twelve of them had been lifted out of the mine before the accident.

NOTE: Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual sender, and are not associated with ANY organisation, individual or publication

The manager of the colliery has been in police custody.

Sunday 3 March 2013

Death toll rises to 12 in N China mine fire

Extract from Xinhua

The death toll from a coal mine fire in north China rose to 12 after one of the two missing miners was confirmed dead, local government said Sunday.

All the 12 died due to carbon monoxide poisoning after a forcing fan caught fire under the Aijiagou coal mine in Huailai County, Hebei Province.

Rescuers are still searching for the last missing miner.

The accident occurred at 8 p.m. on Thursday when 13 workers were doing maintenance work in the mine.

WA miners sacked for Harlem Shake

Extract from thewest.com.au

Up to 15 workers at the Agnew gold mine in the Goldfields have been sacked and banned for life from every Barminco project in the world after performing the Harlem Shake dance craze on site.

The workers lost their six-figure salary jobs days ago for performing the stunt in the underground pit during a work break a week earlier.

A YouTube video showing the eight workers performing the convulsive dance has gone viral.

The Harlem Shake is the latest craze to sweep the world, with up to 4000 videos uploaded on the internet every day.

One of the sacked workers, who would not be named, accused Barminco of being too heavy-handed, claiming the tradesmen were only "having a bit of fun".

But a dismissal letter shows Barminco considered the stunt a safety issue and a breach of its "core values of safety, integrity and excellence".



Deep trouble: Miners sacked for Harlem Shake. Picture: YouTube

The letter noted that Barminco would not allow the dancing workers "to be subcontracted by Barminco at any site domestically and globally" and said the electrical contractor did not have any other vacancies.

The unnamed worker said up to 15 people were sacked, including a handful who watched the stunt as it was performed but who did not participate.

Some were considering legal action to get their jobs back. One of the breaches included the failure of some workers to wear protective equipment, however the sacked worker said the shirts had been removed to ensure the Barminco name did not appear in the video.

Management had heard about the stunt from other workers and both Barminco and Hahn conducted their own investigations.

A spokesman for Barminco said management could not be contacted late yesterday.

Quote of the week



"The world is full of willing people, some willing to work, the rest willing to let them."

Robert Lee Frost (1874 – 1963)
American poet

Monday 4 March 2013

WA: Concern at end of mine worker health research

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

A health researcher says data from hundreds of thousands of mine workers which is crucial to determining the long term health implications of working in WA's mining industry is no longer being collected.

What's more, accessing the data that has been collected over the past 15 years is proving difficult, meaning it's yet to be subjected to independent analysis.

Lin Fritschi is an epidemiologist from the WA Institute of Medical Research at the University of Western Australia.

She's concerned the WA Department of Mines has stopped a program monitoring the long term health of mine workers without proper analysis of the information or thorough consultation with health experts.

"We're concerned the Mine Health Surveillance was stopped without a full public consultation," she said.

"It was announced on the 12th of January and stopped on the 13th, we're worried there wasn't a full thinking through of it."

The program involved conducting health assessments on workers who are regularly exposed to dangerous chemicals such as those contained in diesel emissions.

Cancellation of the study is of particular concern for health experts after the World Health Organisation recently classified diesel emissions as a cause of cancer.

"We think they should use the mine health data they have collected to properly evaluate whether the mine health scheme should remain in place," Professor Fritschi said.

"If the data proves useful, then they should consider continuing the program."

More than 11,000 WA miners work underground and are exposed to diesel emissions in a confined environment on a daily basis and there are guidelines in place recommending companies keep that exposure within safe limits.

The Department of Mines said it stopped the program because its analysis of the data found the program neither prevented nor detected ill health at an early stage and therefore wasn't helpful.

The department's Mike Rowe refutes claims the studies weren't thoroughly analysed and says that information is publicly available.

"What we found was the system itself was not actually being a good detector of early health changes," he said.

"In fact we weren't finding any and also we were not getting respiratory diseases like silicosis et cetera."

However, Professor Fritschi says when directed by the department to find the information on its website, she's only able to view a one page sheet of data.

"Every time we ask for the data they just point us to a one sheet poster, which are very superficial analysis of some of the data," she said.

"They certainly haven't given any evidence the data has been used to their full capability."

Responsibility

The Department of Mines says it isn't abandoning its responsibility to miner health by stopping the program.

Rather, it's shifting to a risk-based approach, which puts more onus on mining companies.

"The responsibility has always been on the industry," Mr Rowe said.

"The mine health program which was introduced in 1995 was good for its time, really it's now time to move on.

"What we're asking the companies to do is identify those particular risks and to assess the exposures and companies are happy to do this."

The monitoring of miner health over the past decade has been complemented with another program, called the CONTAM system, which the department says will continue.

That system monitors the level of exposure workers have to chemicals being emitted from atmospheric contaminants such as diesel exhaust fumes.

Mr Rowe says under its guidelines, miners are expected to keep the exposure level within reasonable limits.

"Our CONTAM system is being maintained and updated, we're certainly not abrogating our responsibility to the safety of the workers and that's why we're looking at the risk based health surveillance system and the CONTAM system," he said.

But Professor Fritschi says she's concerned the risk based approach will not be anywhere near as thorough.

"The other system that they (the department) say is replacing it, is CONTAM, and as far as we know, there is no analysis of the data to look at exposures and trends," she said.

"We're concerned that the biological monitoring only occurs in a restricted range of workplaces."

She also believes the Mine Health Surveillance program shouldn't have been cancelled until the data had been independently analysed.

"The mine health program was started because people were concerned about the health of miners and we don't know if any problems have come from that data because from what we know it hasn't been analysed properly," she said.

"We think the department should give the Mine Health data they have collected to an expert to properly evaluate the Mine Health scheme.

"There is much they can look at to ensure that miners aren't being harmed and if the data proves useful, or even if some aspects of the scheme are useful, they should consider continuing the program."

It's a view supported by the head of WA's Cancer Council Terry Slevin.

He says the department's primary role is to manage the industry, not health research.

"The department of mines administers the mining process in Western Australia," he said.

"It's not reasonable to expect them to have a high level of expertise in doing sophisticated epidemiological analysis.

"Clearly commitment has been made to the safety of mine workers, otherwise these two systems wouldn't have been created in the first place.

"So taking that next final step to make sure all of the hard work with the data collection translates into the best possible use of that data is the sensible and responsible thing to do."

Access

Professor Fritschi has negotiated with the department for permission to use the existing data as part of a research project.

She says it's taken a long time to get permission but actually accessing the data is still proving difficult.

"We have applied for the data but we haven't yet got it and it isn't exactly clear what processes there are to give people like us access to these data," she said.

"Mike Rowe has said we can have the data but has put lots of caveats on it and said there would be problems in interpreting it."

Mr Rowe says the department has to be mindful of protecting personal information.

"You can't just give out personal medical records to researchers, so we get the data out, we've had meetings with them and shown them what data we can get out and one looks very, very promising in the research they're undertaking," he said.

But Mr Slevin says WA has one of the best health databases in Australia with the ability to protect identity which should overcome those concerns.

"Through the WA Link database, by which health information is connected to other data sources to gain a more thorough understanding of a whole range of health related research questions," he said.

"That mechanism can also be used in a way that protects peoples' privacy but also gets a far better understanding of the nature of the exposure, the prospect of that actually contributing to specific outcomes, whether it's lung cancer or anything else for the people in that study."

Mr Rowe says there is also concern about the quality of the data due to the vast number of people who have collected the information over the years.

"There is three sets of data, the chest x-rays which are very good, the hearing data which was done in conjunction with Work Cover requirements and one area which the data is not too good is the lung function testing," Mr Rowe said.

Professor Fritchi says she thinks it's astonishing the department would spend so much public

money on the program without making sure the methods used were sound.

But she says she's used to interpreting poor data.

"The only point in collecting data is to use it to keep evaluating whatever the data collection is for," she said.

"So they should have been looking at this all the way along and saying 'whoops our data isn't good quality, we need to improve that'.

"They have said the quality of the data is not good, we're epidemiologists, we're used to dealing with data that's not perfect, data that's collecting on a large number of people by a large number of people is never perfect."

Mr Rowe says a number of research organisations have contacted the department for the information and he's working with them to release it.

In the meantime, he maintains worker health isn't being put at risk without the surveillance program.

"We don't want to make a mandatory system for something we've shown doesn't give us the best value or best insight," he said.

"It's moving with the times. We're still having our inspectors going out and assessing the risks, talking to the companies, so it's an evolution."

Thursday 7 March 2013

QLD: Investigation continues into Mount Isa mine death

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Counselling will be offered to colleagues of a worker who died at a mine site at Mount Isa in north-west Queensland yesterday.

Investigations are underway into the fatal incident.

A man contracted to work for Incitec Pivot, the owner of the Mount Isa acid plant, was working near Xstrata's copper smelter when the fatal incident occurred.

A joint statement from Xstrata and Incitec Pivot says counselling and ongoing support will be made available for those involved.

Mine inspectors from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines will be conducting an investigation, along with Xstrata, Incitec Pivot and police.

Police say the investigations could take some time to finalise.

Police Superintendent Russell Miller says it is understood the contractor came from overseas.

"I can't say too much other than there was a load on a crane has apparently come loose, and caused the death of this young fellow over there," he said.

"Unfortunately he is not from Australia, and I understand at this point of time we are still trying to contact relatives overseas."

A report will then be prepared for the coroner.

The Australian Workers Union says it has been contacted about the incident but cannot comment due to the ongoing investigation.

QLD: Kiwi dies in Australian mining accident

Extract from New Zealand Herald

A New Zealand man has reportedly died in an Australian copper mine.

The contractor for Incitec Pivot Limited was fatally injured in an accident near the Xstrata Mount Isa Mines' copper smelter in northwest Queensland on Wednesday morning, ABC News reported.

The man was former Waikato man Jordan Taurima, the *Waikato Times* reported.

The Hautapu Rugby Club paid tribute to Taurima on their Facebook page.

"RIP Jordan Taurima, We will sadly miss seeing and playing alongside you in the Red & White Jersey. On behalf of Hautapu Sports Club we send our thoughts and prayers to Jordans whanau & friends. Proud to Play for Hautapu!!"

Xstrata, Incitec Pivot, Queensland Police and the Queensland Department of Mines are investigating the accident, ABC News reported.

WA: Miners' underground Harlem Shake dance harmless, says lawyer

Extract from www.perthnow.com.au

THE lawyer for one of the sacked "Harlem Shake" miners who broke into a dance craze in a WA underground mine says the 30-second dance that cost 15 employees their lucrative jobs did no harm.

West Australian mining contractor Barmenco made worldwide headlines earlier this week when it sacked more than a dozen workers from the Agnew gold mine after their YouTube version of the internet's latest dance craze went viral.

Citing safety issues, Barmenco sparked a national debate as to whether they were heavy handed in sacking the employees, posting on its company Facebook page that "safety takes unconditional priority at all times ... and we will not make any exception to this".

Barmenco said rigid safety rules were needed in the inherently hazardous underground environment.

It has been revealed one of the sacked miners, Stephen Dixon, had referred his case to Fair Work Australia.

His lawyer John Hammond has told Fairfax Radio his case will focus on whether the men breached safety regulations.

Those taking part had considered safety before making the video, and had performed it during a meal break, Mr Hammond said.

"Around town, opinion seems to be very, very split as to whether or not these miners should have been sacked," he said.

"In making these comments I am talking about what people think politically. Everywhere you go people are discussing whether it was right or

wrong for the company to have sacked those who engaged in what was a 31-second dance.

"Mr Dixon did consider safety. They left their steel capped boots on, they left their headlamps on and left the self-rescuers on before they engaged in the Harlem Shake.

"Doing a dance on the spot, jumping up and down gyrating, to me personally, was not a harmful act."

Mr Hammond said 14 or 15 men had been sacked over the dance, eight who actually danced and six or seven who watched.

He said no one would disagree with Barmingo that safety was paramount in mining, but it was yet to be seen whether the men contravened any safety requirements.

Mr Dixon said he was a dedicated worker, not a clown, and the workers had been anxious about their job security when they performed the dance to "let off steam".

More than 10,000 Harlem Shake videos - based on the track by electronic musician Baauer - had been posted online by the middle of last month. The internet "meme" was originated by five teenagers from Queensland, registered on YouTube as TheSunnyCoastSkate.

Tuesday 12 March 2013

Seven rescued, 18 trapped in NE China colliery flood

Extract from Xinhua, China

Seven miners had been rescued and 18 others remained trapped in a mud-rock flow accident that happened Monday in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, the provincial work safety authority said early Tuesday.

The accident occurred at 2:30 p.m. at a shaft of the Zhenxing Coal Mine located in the city of Hegang, according to local authorities.

The seven miners were on a tunneling team and the 18 others worked for coal excavating, said deputy chief engineer Yan Lizhang of Hegang

subcompany of the Heilongjiang Longmay Mining Holding Group.

Zhenxing Coal Mine was started in December 1990. It had been designed to produce 600,000 tonnes of coal a year, and the production capacity was assessed to be 420,000 tonnes in 2007.

The rescue work is still under way.

21 killed in colliery accident in SW China

Extract from Xinhua

Twenty-one miners were killed and four others were missing in a coal and gas outburst Tuesday evening in a coal mine in Guizhou Province in southwest China, local authorities said early Wednesday.

The accident occurred at around 8:00 p.m. Tuesday at Machang Coal Mine, which belongs to Gemudi Company of Guizhou Water & Mining Group.

Eighty-three miners were working underground when the accident took place, and 58 of them managed to get to the ground safely.

Rescue operation is under way and the cause for the accident is under investigation.

WA: Mines dept probes Pilbara death

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

The Department of Mines and Petroleum is investigating the death of a 54-year-old Rio Tinto employee whose body was found in his donga in the Pilbara four days after he died.

The department says it appears he died from natural causes at the mine near Tom Price but it is awaiting post-mortem results to confirm whether that is the case.

It is also investigating whether Rio Tinto has systems in place for the supervision and accountability of off-shift workers and whether there is a procedure for dealing with staff who do not turn up to work.

Wednesday 13 March 2013

USA: Underground fire at Monongalia County mine

Extract from WAJR

CONSOL Energy evacuated its Blacksville No. 2 Mine in Monongalia County Tuesday after detecting smoke coming from an air shaft.

All miners were evacuated and no one was hurt, according to company and mine officials.

Smoke was seen coming from the Orndoff Shaft in Greene County, Pa. The mine is located on the Pennsylvania and West Virginia border.

The U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration issued a statement Tuesday saying there appeared to be a fire burning underground at the mine. A mine rescue team and backup team went underground to try to find the source of the flames, but withdrew after finding heat and smoke, MSHA said.

The crews were in heavy smoke and had to leave the underground mine, MSHA said. As of 5:25 p.m., no one was in the mine, according to MSHA. MSHA Coal Mine Safety and Health personnel were at the mine at the time and issued a 103(k) order to withdraw miners.

Investigators are on the scene.

The mine was evacuated at about 2 p.m.

Blacksville No. 2 employs about 650 miners and is represented by the United Mine Workers of America.

Friday 15 March 2013

USA: Miner identified in fatal coal mining accident

Extract from coalvalleynews.com

RACINE -- A Boone County coal miner has been killed in a mining accident, according to mining officials and previously published reports.

Asa Fitzpatrick, 63, of Kermit, was killed on Wednesday, March 13, according to a news

release from the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

Fitzpatrick was killed from injuries he received when a piece of the mine fell from the ceiling while he was preparing to install a rib bolt. Fitzpatrick was a roof bolt operator with 40-years of experience. He worked at the Newton Energy, Inc. Peerless Rachel Mine in Racine. The mine is controlled by Patriot Coal Corporation and has a little more than 130 workers.

A rock fell from the roof of the mine and struck him, according to a news release from the Mine Safety and Health Administration. The miner, a roof bolter operator on the Unit 1 section of the mine, was brought to the surface and taken to CAMC General Hospital in Charleston, but died as a result of his injuries, it was reported.

The accident happened around 5:45 p.m., Wednesday, March 13, officials said. No other details have been released and the incident remains under investigation.

Delegates Joshua Nelson (R-Boone) and Randy Smith (R-Preston) asked all West Virginians to join in a moment of prayer, silence, and remembrance at 11 a.m. Thursday, March 14, to honor Fitzpatrick.

"It is always heartbreaking to learn about the passing of a fellow coal miner. I am joined by my friend and fellow coal miner Delegate Randy Smith in requesting that all West Virginians observe a moment of prayer or silence at 11 a.m. today [Thursday, March 14] to honor and remember this fallen hero," said Delegate Nelson. "We cannot begin to understand the pain this miner's family is feeling. I hope they find comfort in the days ahead. I hope all West Virginians will keep them in their thoughts and prayers. This serves as a reminder that the coal that is mined by our fathers, brothers, and sons does not come without risk and we should do all we can to protect and honor our hard-working coal miners."

Nelson and Smith joined others on the floor of the West Virginia House of Delegates to participate in a moment of prayer and silence.

This mining death comes just weeks after a mine safety "stand down" was ordered by West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin. It is the fifth mining death in just over a month in West Virginia.

Tomblin was prompted to issue the order he said after the fourth coal miner death in two weeks in West Virginia in February. That man died in Raleigh County when he was killed by an underground scoop.

The governor's office has not released a statement regarding this latest mining death.

A closure order was issued to the mine operator. MSHA District 4 personnel responded upon notification and an accident investigation is under way.

According to the MSHA website, this is the first fatality at a mine in West Virginia since the safety stand down, and the fifth West Virginia mine-related death in 2013.

16 rescued in NE China mine accident

Extract from People's Daily Online, China



A rescued miner is sent to a local hospital after a rock outburst took place at the Junde Coal Mine in Hegang City, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, March 15, 2013. (Xinhua/Wang Kai)

HARBIN, -- Sixteen miners had been rescued and four others remained trapped underground in a coal mine accident in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, the rescuers said Friday night.

Rescue workers broke through the tunnel around 9 p.m. Friday and assisted the 16

miners, whom they had established contact with, out of the shaft about 10 p.m., said Ren Shangyin, deputy head of the Junde Coal Mine where a rock outburst took place early Friday.

The rescued miners were immediately sent to two local hospitals and were in stable condition, according to medical staff from the hospitals.

Rescuers are trying to contact the other four miners who remain trapped.

Twenty miners were trapped in the Junde Coal Mine in the city of Hegang when the accident happened around 5:20 a.m. Friday.

The coal mine, with designed annual output capacity of three million tonnes of coal, is owned by the state-owned Heilongjiang Longmay Mining Holding Group.

Wednesday 20 March 2013

19 rescued from Polish mine accident

Extract from Hong Kong Standard

Some 19 miners were rescued from a Polish copper mine after being trapped underground by a cave-in, a spokesman of the mine operator said Wednesday.

The miners were trapped 600 meters below ground at the Rudna mine, about 400 km southwest of the Polish capital, when an earthquake triggered a collapse in the mine late Tuesday night, KGHM spokesman Dariusz Wyborski said, Xinhua news agency reports.

There had been no contact with them for two hours as the tremor cut communication lines, the spokesman said.

The rescuers reached the miners after tunneling through huge rocks, he added.

The mine, which has been in operation since 1974, is in the Silesia region, near Poland's borders with Germany and the Czech Republic.

Thursday 21 March 2013

USA: Consol believes it has put out mine fire on Pa-WVa border

Extract from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Consol Energy said it believes it has extinguished the underground mine fire along the Pennsylvania-West Virginia border that it has been battling for 10 days.

The fire at its Blacksville No. 2 mine was discovered March 12.

According to a Consol release this afternoon, the company has completed development of a mine reentry plan. That plan is under review by the Mine Safety and Health Administration and state and United Mineworkers union officials.

Lynn Seay, a Consol spokeswoman, said the company is "confident" the fire is out, based on its monitoring of gases in the mine.

As a precaution, it will continue to monitor the mine atmosphere over the weekend to determine when it is safe to reenter the mine.

The fire has idled 650 workers since it was discovered.

NSW: Ballina man first fatality at CSA's Cobar copper mine

Extract from Northern Star, NSW Aus

INVESTIGATIONS are ongoing into the death of a Ballina man in an accident at a mine at Cobar in central western NSW on the weekend.

Detective Inspector Luke Rankin from the Darling River local area command identified the man yesterday as 41-year-old Jeremy Junk.

Det Insp Rankin said the accident happened about 4.30am Saturday as Mr Junk was working in a kibble (a large bucket used to lift items or people in mines) approximately 1km underground at the CSA copper mine near Cobar.

Mr Junk sustained severe head injuries when his head collided with a platform, Det Insp Rankin said.

After being treated at the scene by an emergency response team and paramedics, Det Insp Rankin said Mr Junk was taken by ambulance to Cobar hospital, where he was pronounced dead a short time later.

Cobar Weekly managing editor Sharon Harland said Mr Junk was employed as a contractor and police told the ABC yesterday the man had been working at the mine for about 18 months.

Police told the ABC the mine was generally "big on safety" and it appeared the death was the result of an unforeseeable accident.

Ms Harland said there had been no serious accidents before Mr Junk's death in the mine, which runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week and employs more than 300 people.

The Department of Trade and Investment said the situation is under investigation.

This week in mining accident history

22 March 1911

Hazel Mine

Canonsburg, Washington County, Pa, USA

Underground coal mine

Man trip derailed and roof collapse

9 killed

The accident of March 22, 1911 occurred at the beginning or at the outby end of No. 8 double parting on No. 2 main about a mile from the foot of the slope. A trip consisting of five cars filled with miners was going into the mine.



File photo: man trip at coal mine

When they reached this parting the first car jumped the track and was dragged about 40 feet when it crashed into the left rib knocking off chunks of coal. A little beyond this point it struck the left post of the second set of a stretch of timbered entry. The forward corner of the car was splintered and the end of the brake rod bent in, which caused the middle of it near the brake to bend outward. The resistance of the post to the cars advance caused the second car to be shunted off to the opposite side of the track. This car struck the center post of the same set knocking it forward and allowing the two 40 pound rails, which acted as the collar of the set, to fall across the car. The withdrawal of the support of the roof precipitated a large fall of rock, which also fell on the car. One huge piece became caught between the outby end of the car and the roof near the next set, and this brought the whole trip to an abrupt stop. There were ten men in the second car and nine of them were dead when the men from the other cars were able to get them out from under the rock. The tenth man was sitting very low in the car and a huge piece of rock arched from the man next to him to the corner of the car and so saved him from being injured. There are three causes contributing to the accident. The primary one was the high speed at which the trip was moving.

The timbering of the entry at this point consisted of sets independent of each other made up of two posts one at either rib and a central post with a collar of two 40 pound rails extending from rib to rib. The rib posts were partly set into the rib but not wholly so. The tee iron was not fastened to the posts in any way but simply wedged against the top. When the car hit the outside post it knocked it forward but may not have caused the rails to fall. However, the withdrawal of the center post by the second car let down the rails, which fell across the end of the second car and the death of some of the miners was in all probability due to the rails.

In regard to precautions to be taken to prevent similar accidents, the first one is without doubt to run the trips at less speed.

Again, had the sets been tied together by some means, the likelihood of the failure of one set would have been greatly decreased. A guard rail along the post set in the rib would prevent a wild car from knocking out the posts.

(From the U.S. Bureau of Mines Report, by L.M.Jones.)

Sunday 24 March 2013

USA: Utah miner killed in accident just missed death in 2007

Extracts from Fox News & Sharpe Media, USA

Elam Jones came close to death in a central Utah mine accident once before. He was preparing to begin his shift at the Crandall Canyon mine in August 2007 when a cave-in struck the section where he was to have worked, killing six miners and three rescuers.

The 28-year-old coal miner was not so lucky Friday. A tunnel roof collapsed at the Rhino Mine about 10 miles west of Huntington, killing him and sending a co-worker to the hospital.

Even though the earlier accident occurred only a few miles away, Jones loved his job and did not view it as particularly dangerous, said his mother Julie Jones, a Huntington city councilwoman.

"He loved the mine he was at and the men he worked with. They were family," she told The Associated Press on Saturday. "He always said he could get hit going to Salt Lake and get killed in a car wreck."

He also was a member of the ill-fated rescue team at the Crandall Canyon mine. Three rescuers died while trying to save the trapped miners. He later spoke at a vigil for those who died and were injured there.

"He told me that he had to be there. Those were his buddies," his mother said.

Jones also was an experienced outdoorsman who survived two avalanches and a serious ATV accident, his mother said.



Julie and Derk Jones talk about their son Elam Jones in Huntington, Utah. (AP)

A father of two young children, Jones' roots in coal mining went back four generations on his mother's side and three generations on his father's side. His father works for a nearby coal mine.

Coal miners love what they do because they consider themselves the "heartbeat of America," Julie Jones said. The coal they provide to power plants provides jobs for everyone and allows people to use microwaves, televisions and countless other things, she added.

"Elam was proud to be a coal miner," his mother said. "Unless you're a coal miner, you wonder why they do this. It's in their blood."

Friday's accident was the latest in a string of disasters to strike Huntington, a closely knit town of over 2,000. They include the Crandall Canyon mine tragedy as well as a 75-square-mile wildfire that triggered flooding, road closures and threats to the town's water supply last year.

"I've had people come up to me and say, 'How much more can one community take?'" Huntington Mayor Hilary Gordon said. "I guess we'll take whatever gets dished out and take it one day at time."

Elam Jones' life centered on his wife and boys, ages 4 and 5, Gordon said. He was an avid hunter, fisherman and snowmobiler who "lived life to his fullest," she added.

"He thought it was a safe job," the mayor said. "To say it's just one of those things sounds trite.

But one (miner) gets buried and the other doesn't. I don't think there's ever a good answer as to why these things happen." The injured miner, Dallen McFarlane, was treated and released from Castlevue Hospital in Price.

The mine is part of the Castle Valley Mining Complex. Preliminary information showed that a roof fall occurred on a pillaring section of the mine after a large rock fell, according to federal mine safety officials. The Mine Safety and Health Administration was investigating.

Messages left with the mine's operator, Rhino Resource Partners, were not returned. The Kentucky-based company bought the mining complex in August 2010.

According to MSHA's database, there have been no fatalities since 2002 at the 67-employee mine. The mine has had several owners over the last decade. Currently, it is owned by Kentucky-based Rhino Resource Partners, L.P.

One non-fatal days lost (NFDL) injury was reported at the mine last year, giving it a NFDL rate of less than half the national average. A roof fall without injuries occurred at the mine last Oct. 7.

The mine received \$10,014 in MSHA fines for 61 alleged violations last year. MSHA has assessed 23 tickets written this year at \$1,029. Sixteen additional citations remain un-assessed.

The fatality is the eighth in the U.S. coal sector so far this year. Two metal/non-metal miners have also died.

Worker dies in accident at Chile's Codelco site; mining halted

Extract from 500finance.com

SANTIAGO – A worker was crushed to death on Saturday in an accident at Chilean state miner Codelco's Radomiro Tomic open-pit mine, leading to the suspension of mining operations, a company spokesperson said.

Nelson Barria, 37, was working with heavy machinery when a sudden landslide buried him under rocks and earth.

Barria had worked at Radomiro Tomic since 1998 and leaves behind a widow and two children, aged seven and 11, Codelco said in a statement on its website.

Codelco immediately suspended extractive mining operations following the accident although "plant operation and production" was not affected, the spokesperson told Reuters.

The company, the world's No 1 copper producer, is injecting \$4.4-billion for development at Radomiro Tomic after finishing an initial expansion phase in 2010. The project is undergoing a feasibility study and is due to be finished by 2017.

The mine's output reached about 313 000 t of copper in the first nine months of last year.

Codelco is pursuing an ambitious, long-term investment plan of roughly \$28-billion to boost output at its aging mines. It aims to produce more than two-million tons of the red metal by 2021, a big leap from last year, when it produced less than 1.7-million tons.

Monday 25 March 2013

Chilean miner trapped almost 1,000 feet underground after mine collapses

Extract from Associated Press

Authorities in Chile say rescue workers are trying to free a man trapped 300 meters (984 feet) underground following a collapse in a mine in the same Atacama region where 33 miners were buried for 69 days in 2010.

Regional mining secretary Mario Lopez Cid says the 42-year-old miner survived the collapse in the Victoria mine, 25 miles (40 kilometers) from the city of Vallenar, by taking refuge in a secondary tunnel.

Lopez said Monday on his twitter account that the trapped miner, Mario Torres Lopez, was responding to sound signals made by rescuers.

Firefighters and special police units were trying to clear the rubble in the collapsed man by hand.

In August 2010, between Vallenar and Copiapo, a mine collapse trapped 33 workers and their rescue became news worldwide.

Wednesday 27 March 2013

USA: Missouri Man Dies in Quarry Accident

Extract provided by James Sharpe, Sharpe Media, LLC

A 61-year-old miner was killed at a Missouri quarry when he was buried under rock during routine blasting operations.

William Sievert died at the scene of a blast at 3:50 p.m. Wednesday at Fred Weber, Inc.'s North Stone Surface Mine in St. Louis County, authorities said. According to officials, Sievert, who resided in St. Peters, was operating a bulldozer when he was buried in a rock blast. His body was recovered after midnight. MSHA has not yet released a preliminary report.

Described in a statement released by the company as a "long-time member of the Fred Weber family," the victim had 24 years' service with the firm.

"This is a sad day for all of us at Fred Weber, Inc., the company said. "We will know more about the cause or causes of the accident as the investigation unfolds. For now, please keep all of those affected by this tragedy in your thoughts and prayers."

According to MSHA's database, the company has been operating at the site since 1986. Since 2002, the operator has reported 18 non-fatal days lost accidents at the mine, which employed 46 people last year. MSHA fines have not exceeded \$500 in each of the last two years.

The fatality is the third in the metal/non-metal sector this year. Eight coal miners have also died.

Chile trapped miner Torres Lopez rescued unharmed

Extract from BBC News

A Chilean miner has been brought to the surface after spending 52 hours trapped 100m underground in a collapsed mine.

Mario Torres Lopez is said to have emerged unscathed from the Victoria mine, in the northern Atacama region.

Rescue teams found out he was alive when he used a hammer to bang on metal tubes running through the shaft to communicate with them.

Three years ago, 33 miners were rescued from a mine in the same region after being trapped for 69 days.

The freed miner told a local radio station, Cooperativa, he was working when the rubble covered the exit.

"I was trapped but got out through a hole above and stayed in an area that was more spacious, waiting for the rescue," Mr Torres Lopez said.

Authorities said that, although he was not deep underground, the rescue operation took a long time as there was little room for manoeuvre.

'Great joy'

Mr Torres Lopez confirmed he had communicated by tapping on shaft tubes.

"I started hitting and they too, so we made contact. It was a great joy, because (I knew) I was going to see my son, my mum, my family. I'm happy," he told Radio Cooperativa.

The Victoria mine lies some 40km (25 miles) from the city of Vallenar.

In 2010, 33 miners were brought back to the surface of the San Jose copper mine after a mammoth 69-day rescue operation in the same area of northern Chile.

The miners' return to the surface through a small shaft was broadcast around the world.

After the San Jose rescue, the Chilean government tightened mine security measures

across the country, but injuries and deaths due to tunnel collapses and rockfalls remain a common problem.

Thursday 28 March 2013

4 Workers Missing at Kemerovo Mine after Flood

Extract from Moscow Times

Rescue teams continue to search for four miners who have been missing at the Osinnikovskaya mine in the Kemerovo region since it was hit by massive flooding on Tuesday evening.

The incident occurred when a wall separating the bottom of the mine from the niche collapsed, causing 34,000 cubic meters of water to flood the mine when 143 workers were present, Interfax reported.

One hundred thirty nine of the miners were able to evacuate, with three suffering moderately severe injuries, while another four are still missing. Rescue teams are currently searching for the four missing miners.

According to a statement posted on the regional Emergency Situation Ministry's website, two pumps are being delivered to the accident site to drain the water.

Kemerovo region Governor Aman Tuleyev is currently overseeing the rescue operation.

The accident was likely caused by safety procedure violations, the statement posted on the governor's website said.

In the immediate aftermath of the flooding, Tuleyev ordered managers of all regional mines to check their compliance with mandatory safety regulations.

The Osinnikovskaya mine is owned by the Evraz Group, whose spokesman told Interfax that the mine will ship coal to its consumers from its warehouse while production is halted.

Friday 29 March 2013

SW China Mine Accident Kills 1, Injures 2

Extract from Xinhua, China

One person was killed and another two were injured after a gas accident occurred in a private coal mine in southwest China's Guizhou Province on Friday afternoon, local authorities said.

The accident happened at about 4 p.m. in Zhijin County. A miner died on the way to hospital and the two injured are receiving treatment in a local hospital, according to the county work safety bureau.

It is not immediately known if the accident was a gas outburst or a gas blast.

The mine is a private one with an annual production capacity of 150,000 tonnes.

The cause of the accident is under investigation.

83 workers buried in landslide in Tibetan mining area

Extract from Xinhua, China

A major landslide hit a mining area in Tibet Autonomous Region on Friday morning, burying 83 workers, local authorities said.

The landslide happened at about 6 a.m. in Maizhokunggar County of Lhasa, the regional capital. The victims, including two Tibetans, were workers from Tibet Huatailong Mining Development Co. Ltd, a subsidiary of the China National Gold Group Corporation.

The affected area of the landslide, caused by natural disasters, is 3 kilometers long, with about 2 million cubic meters of mud, rock and debris, according to the publicity department of the regional government.

More than 1,000 rescuers, including police, firefighters and medical personnel, are working at the site, which is at an altitude of 4,600 meters.

A mass of rolling rock from the mountaintop sliced a massive excavator in two, a witness told Xinhua.

The broken stones buried the workers' camp, which is 2 km away from the mountain pass. A 2-km-long, 50-meter-wide and 100-meter-deep stone belt is lying in the valley, a Xinhua reporter saw.

Five excavators, five pick-up trucks and an SUV are also buried in the debris, said Zou Yuming, deputy head of the Maizhokunggar County government.



Around 3,500 rescuers were searching for survivors and 300 pieces of large machinery had been mobilised.
Getty Images/ChinaFotoPress

About 200 large vehicles and equipment, 15 sniffer dogs and 15 life-detector machines are being used in the rescue.

The rescue will be very difficult due to the size of the affected area, said an official from the regional fire department.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang on Friday ordered top efforts to rescue workers buried in the landslide.

Xi and Li have told local authorities to spare no efforts in rescuing the buried workers and preventing secondary disasters.

They also urged that the cause of the landslide be determined promptly.

A work team led by officials from the State Administration of Work Safety, Ministry of Land and Resources and State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission is rushing to the accident site to guide rescue efforts.

Saturday 30 March 2013

28 dead, 13 injured in NE China coal-mine gas blast

Extract from Xinhua, China

A gas explosion Friday night at a northeastern Chinese coal mine killed 28 people, China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Thirteen people were rescued after the blast, which happened around 10:40 p.m. (10:40 a.m. ET), a spokesman with the provincial work safety and supervision bureau told Xinhua.

Their injuries are not considered life-threatening, the spokesman said.

The incident occurred at the Babao Coal Mine in the city of Baishan, which is part of Jilin province near the North Korea border.

The rescue effort was finished by mid-Saturday morning, the spokesman said.

At that point, the cause of the explosion was still under investigation.

According to Xinhua, the affected mine is state-owned under the Tonghua Mining group.

Sunday 31 March 2013

Hopes fade for Tibet landslide survivors

Extract from ABC News Online, Aus

Chinese search and rescue teams are losing hope of finding survivors of a huge landslide that crashed down a Tibetan mountain, burying scores of mine workers.

Officials say 66 miners remain missing after a further 15 bodies were found on Sunday.

Two bodies had been found on Saturday, almost 36 hours after the massive landslide buried the workers under two million cubic metres of earth.

Around 3,500 rescuers were searching for survivors and 300 pieces of large machinery had been mobilised.

Many workers were said to be digging with their bare hands while battling snow and altitude sickness.



Rescuers battling bad weather, altitude sickness and further landslides are losing hope in finding survivors.
Photo China Daily

The disaster struck when a huge section of land tumbled onto a mine workers' camp in Maizhokunggar county, east of the Tibetan capital Lhasa, at 6:00am Friday (local time).

Wu Yingjie, deputy secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China, said given the scale of the disaster the miners' survival chances were slim.

"The rescuers are conducting an inch-by-inch search, but they still cannot locate the missing miners," Mr Wu said.

"The two rescue priorities for now are searching for the buried and preventing subsequent disasters."

Heightened safety concerns

The chance of further landslides has heightened safety concerns after cracks, one of them measuring one meter wide and 15 meters long, were reported on the mountain.

Teams using sniffer dogs and radar combed the mountainside on Saturday, battling bad weather, altitude sickness and further landslides.

One of the trapped workers, 19-year-old He Yuan from Guizhou, recently went to the mine to earn money to support his family and sick father.

"He Yuan is the only son of my sister," his uncle Yuan Song was quoted as saying.

"How can she survive without him?"

China's new president Xi Jinping and new premier Li Keqiang had ordered "top efforts" to rescue the victims from the mine, which produces copper as well as other metals.

In recent years China has discovered huge mineral resources in Tibet, including tens of millions of tonnes of copper, lead and zinc, and billions of tonnes of iron ore.

Mountainous regions of Tibet are prone to landslides which can be exacerbated by heavy mining activity.

The landslide came on the same day as a gas blast in a coal mine killed 28 people in the northeast China city of Baishan.

Mining dictionary

A guide to coal mining terminology

C

Canopy

A protective covering of a cab on a mining machine.



Eimco with operator's canopy