
Mining Accident News No.0802

Saturday 12 January 2008

Magnate under fire over mine death (1)

A man has died after a building accident at a mining site in Western Australia.

The accident occurred at 4pm (WST) on Friday during construction of an iron ore processing plant at Fortescue Metals' Cloud Break Mine, 150km north of Newman in the Eastern Pilbara region.

The man was an employee of United Construction, which is contracted to undertake works at the mine development.

Fortescue Metals Group spokesman Graeme Rowley said an investigation had been launched immediately into the circumstances of the fatality.

"We wish to express our deepest sympathies to the family of the deceased," he said.

WorleyParsons and Fortescue Metals manage the mine site.

Monday 14 January 2008

Magnate under fire over mine death (2)

AUSTRALIA'S second-richest man, Andrew Forrest, faces a barrage of union criticism over the safety record of his Fortescue Metals Group's Pilbara minesite after the death of a 26-year-old rigger.

The construction union yesterday said health and safety "horror stories" had been flooding in from workers on the West Australian site since the death on Friday of Nigel Taylor and that there was mounting anger over union access to the Cloud Break mine site.

Mr Taylor, from Perth, died after his head was trapped between a steel beam and an elevated work platform or cherry picker.

Married eight weeks ago, he had been on the site for two days.

Mining contractor United Group Resources has withdrawn all cherrypickers from use until they are inspected. Police and Worksafe are preparing reports for State Coroner Alastair Hope.

It is understood Mr Taylor raised the bucket of the cherrypicker towards the beam trapping his head and forcing his body over the controls, which prevented his co-worker from lowering the bucket.

Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union assistant state secretary Joe McDonald said workers told him they were being pushed to unrealistic deadlines.

"There are problems with scaffolding, problems with riggers and there was no job safety analysis," he said.

He said 82 concerns had been raised with management in November, but he refused to supply the list to The Australian, instead highlighting an incident where a large metal plate dropped five stories to the ground.

However, a spokesman for Fortescue denied union claims that they had been refused access to the site and said workers had the opportunity to raise safety concerns at daily meetings. Cameron Morse, from public relations firm Porter Novelli, said FMG had received no application from the union to go on to the minesite but 20 applications to visit FMG's port facilities were approved.

Fortescue shares took a battering last week after speculation the company may fail to make its first iron ore shipment by its target date of mid-May. It also saw Mr

Forrest surrender his short-lived status as Australia's richest man to James Packer.

Fortescue executive director Graeme Rowley said the rail operations were behind schedule but mining and construction had progressed well and they would be on, or ahead, of target. United Group is one of four contractors who work on a fly-in, fly-out roster building the iron ore processing plant at Cloud Break.

The site is managed by Worley Parsons but the CFMEU blames what it says is Mr Forrest's anti-union stance and the continuing use of Australian Workplace Agreements that have the effect of keeping unions offsite.

The fatality comes less than a year after the death of two people on a Fortescue rail camp during Cyclone George.

United Group chief executive Jon Birman said the company would continue to offer support to Mr Taylor's wife Lisa and had offered counselling to workers. He said it was co-operating fully with the investigation.

Thursday 17 January 2008

Worker dies at BHP Billiton's Qld underground metal mine

Investigators are on their way to a mine in remote north-west Queensland after a man was killed in an underground accident.

BHP Billiton Ltd said operations had been halted at the Cannington silver, lead and zinc mine following the accident around 1200 (AEST).

"At this time, the immediate priority for Cannington is to assist the deceased worker's family and our workforce," the company said in a statement.

"Counseling services are being made available."

Acting Queensland Mines and Energy Minister Rod Welford said an investigation team from the department's Mines Inspectorate and the Queensland Police were travelling to the site about 250km south-east of Mt Isa.

"We offer our sincere condolences to the family of the deceased miner at this time," Mr Welford said.

"This is a tragic loss of life.

"It's important to identify what went wrong - we will be finding out not only how it happened, but why it happened."

Mr Welford declined to comment further.

Australian Workers Union (AWU) assistant national secretary Ben Swan said it was not the first accident at Cannington.

"There have been several accidents, including rockfalls and the death of a 19-year-old man in December 2006," Mr Swan said.

But he said the company had declined to allow the union's national director of occupational health and safety, Dr Yossi Berger, to visit the mine.

Friday 18 January 2008

Safety inspection of coal mines in central Kazakhstan kicks off

Almaty. 18 January. Today, the Kazakh Prosecutor-General's Office will start investigating the observance of the law on labour and safety measures in the ArcelorMittal Temirtau company's Karaganda coal mines, which belong to the Indian multi-billionaire Lakshmi Mittal, the Karaganda Prosecutor's Office has said.

Monday 21 January 2008

Heavy rains hit Qld's coal mines

The floods in Queensland are expected to reduce the state's output of coal.

Several mining companies including BHP Billiton and Xstrata say the lowered output could mean higher coal prices.

Rio Tinto says heavy rain has hurt production at its Kestrel mine with employees advised to stay home because of the flooding.

Xstrata says its Newlands mine has been significantly affected, while the Collinsville mine is also experiencing some lost production.



The flooded Ensham open-cut coal mine, south of Emerald QLD, inundated by rising water from Theresa Creek near its junction with the Nogoa River.

Picture: Liam MacKay. January 20.



The dragline at Ensham open-cut coal mine is partly submerged in a sea of floodwater. Workers stranded at the mine were evacuated by helicopter when flood levels exceeded the one-in-100 magnitude.

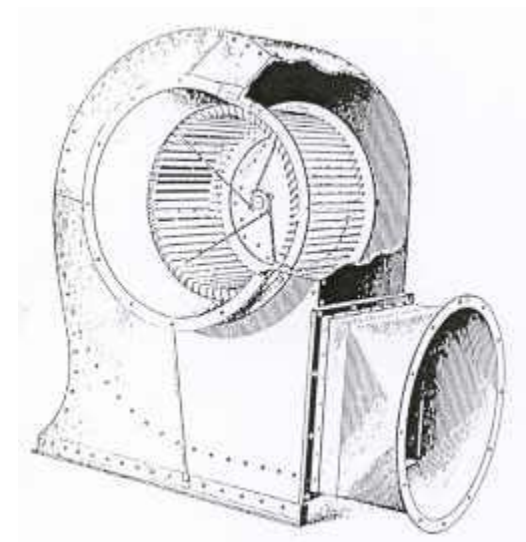
Picture: Liam MacKay. January 20.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

F

fan / fan-house Feature of deep mines and especially coal mines, to provide artificial ventilation. Usually associated with a separate *air shaft* connecting with the underground workings, and consisting of a usually masonry structure housing a centrifugal fan, such as the 'Sirocco' fan. Before mechanical fans were introduced, generally from the 1880s onwards, coal mines used air shafts with furnaces at their foot to produce updraught by convection.



Single-entry Sirocco **fan** (Whitmore 1991).

firedamp Explosive gas such as methane released from coal and producing the risk of explosion in coal mines. The risk led to the ventilation of coal mines by furnace and *fans*, the invention of the safety lamp, and the early introduction of compressed air and electrical equipment.

- Ed.