

Mining Accident News No.0815

Monday 4 August 2008

Extracts from ABC News Online at: www.abc.net.au

Mine safety expert to attend Beaconsfield inquest

The inquest into the death of a Beaconsfield Gold miner will resume this morning in northern Tasmania.

Larry Knight was operating a machine 925 metres below ground when he was killed in the 2006 Anzac Day rockfall that trapped two other miners for a fortnight.

Last week the inquest heard from nearly a dozen miners who were concerned about the ground conditions and safety in the level where the rockfall occurred.

Today a safety expert, Professor Michael Quinlan is expected to take the stand.

OHS expert critical of Beaconsfield mine safety

An occupational health and safety expert has criticised the owners of the Beaconsfield gold mine in northern Tasmania for poor communication and reporting systems.

Professor Michael Quinlan is giving evidence to the inquest into the death of miner Larry Knight.

In August last year Professor Quinlan finished a report as part of the Mellick investigation into the rock fall which killed Larry Knight and trapped two others, on Anzac Day 2006.

He said safety concerns at the mine were usually only reported to underground manager, Pat Ball, who he described as a 'strong personality'. Professor Quinlan said Mr Ball had been known to dismiss concerns about seismic activity and workers had little or no alternative avenues for raising concerns if they were unhappy with Mr Ball's response.

Daily thought

Some people are like slinkies - not really good for anything but they bring a smile to your face when pushed down the stairs.



The Beaconsfield Mine inquest heard miners were reluctant to go over their manager's head with safety concerns.

Professor Quinlan said miners were reluctant to go over Mr Ball's head and report problems to senior management meaning many concerns about seismic activity and stability were not picked up.

Many miners have testified about another rockfall six months before the fatal incident and Professor Quinlan found the mine's risk assessment in response to that earlier rockfall was inadequate. He says while Beaconsfield Gold stopped mining and hired independent consultants to investigate, it did not seek information from miners about unreported rockfalls or update its OH&S priorities.

Professor Quinlan said management continued to list rockfalls as only the fifth biggest danger in the mine, despite increasing seismic activity. He says rockfalls are the biggest cause of Tasmanian mining deaths in the past two decades

Thursday 7 August 2008

Companies, federal agency faulted in Utah mine tragedy

Extract from Los Angeles Times

The collapse of the Crandall Canyon mine one year ago was so extensive that federal officials found no other mining disaster in the last 50 years to compare to it.

Hundreds of coal pillars, overloaded by aggressive mining that carved out too many voids, collapsed within seconds on Aug. 6,

2007, entombing six miners nearly half a mile underground. Satellite radar images show that a 69-acre section of the mine caved in – the equivalent of about 63 football fields.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration said the mine was “destined to fail” because the mining company made critical miscalculations and didn’t report early warning signs. But the agency itself also was faulted by its parent agency, the Department of Labor, for lax oversight before the collapse and for its handling of a haphazard rescue effort that left three more people dead.

Regulators say the rescue tunneling should never have been attempted because it only made the mine more unstable.

At each step of the way, starting months before the disaster, Crandall Canyon was doomed, according to 1,400 pages of government and congressional reports.

A day of reckoning came two weeks ago, with the Department of Labor scolding the mining agency, asserting that it had rubber-stamped a risky mining plan and launched an ill-conceived rescue effort that left nobody clearly in charge.

Earlier that day, the mining agency blamed a subsidiary of Ohio-based Murray Energy Corp. for unauthorized coal digging and its engineers for a series of blunders related to Crandall Canyon’s supposed stability.

Federal prosecutors are considering criminal charges. The mining agency cited Murray Energy affiliate Genwal Resources Inc. for negligence. Engineering firm Agapito Associates Inc. of Grand Junction, Colo., was cited for “reckless disregard.” The companies were fined \$1.8 million, the largest fines ever levied on a U.S. coal-mining operation.

The mining agency found that long-wall mining had weakened both sides of the tunnels that collapsed, even before Genwal Resources took over in 2006.

At first, city-block-size coal barriers – 450 feet wide and three-quarters of a mile long – protected both sides of the tunnels from the

extensively mined “gobs” beyond the barriers. The mountain reacted to those gobs by transferring more weight onto the barrier pillars. But Genwal’s aggressive mining whittled the barriers to as narrow as 135 feet.

As early as March 2007, pillars started unexpectedly collapsing. The mining agency said Crandall Canyon failed to notify the agency of the early danger signs, but the company and its lawyers dispute that.

Other government reports say the agency was given enough information about a devastating but nonlethal collapse on March 10 but failed to act or even inspect the damage.

USA: W.Va. cites Consol in fatal coal mining accident

CHARLESTON -- Mine operator Consol Energy has been cited for a safety violation that contributed to a fatal coal mining accident in June, a state mine inspector said Wednesday.

Veteran miner Gary Hoffman, 55, was struck and killed June 5 by a loaded rail car at Consol's Robinson Run No. 95 mine, state mine inspector Alan Lander said at a briefing of the state Board of Coal Mine Health and Safety.

Hoffman was pulling two cars weighing a combined 43.32 tons when the locomotive he was driving began to slide, Lander said.

Investigators couldn't determine whether Hoffman jumped, fell or was thrown from the careening 20-ton locomotive before he was struck in the head by the rear of the second car. Consol was cited for a contributing violation because one of the locomotive's two sanders was plugged and unable to drop sand on the tracks, Lander said.

Friday 8 August 2008

USA Alaska: Contractor fined \$115,000 for deadly construction accident at Nome mine

Extract from newsminer.com

FAIRBANKS — A contractor was fined \$115,000 for safety violations related to the July 2007 deaths of two ironworkers during a construction project at Alaska Gold Co.'s Rock Creek Mine in Nome.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration levied the penalty against Alaska Mechanical Inc. for inadequate training and unsafe equipment use.

According to MSHA, contract ironworkers Tyler Kahle, 19, and Craig Bagley, 28, were killed by blunt force trauma when a manlift they were on fell over. They were among Alaska Mechanical crews constructing the mine mill and related processing facilities. Open pit mining had not started.

In a prepared statement, Alaska Mechanical Chief Financial Officer Kurt Imig said that nothing has been so hard in 33 years of business as the workers' deaths.

"We deeply feel for the families, coworkers and friends that have been hurt by this accident," Imig said.

MSHA spokesperson Amy Louviere said the monetary fines are the only penalty attached to the citations. Surface mines are generally inspected twice each year, while underground mines are evaluated quarterly, she said.

MSHA official Richard E. Stickler said in a release that management policies and procedures fell short of the company's responsibility to train employees before they are assigned to operate equipment.

The victims were bolting a metal roof to the mill building, MSHA said. Near the end of their shift, they were getting ready to ride the lift to the ground when it became unsteady. The lift

basket hit the side of the mill, toppling a boom. Both men were tied off to the basket.

The federal investigation found the manlift hadn't been set on solid ground and that the hydraulic cylinder for the lift wasn't designed for load-bearing support while the boom is in operation. Investigators also said the manlift operator wasn't properly trained.

Imig said that the company still questions the causes of the accident, despite MSHA's investigation.

"There are a lot of questions. They (inspectors) look and say training was inadequate for the operator. We don't know how they came to some of their conclusions yet," Imig said. "We definitely want to focus on the future, and part of focusing on the future is knowing what happened in the past."

Alaska Mechanical Inc. specializes in large industrial facilities and has offices in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Imig said the company has had no serious accidents.

Saturday 9 August 2008

At least 31 killed in Burkina Faso mining accident

Extract from Salon.Com, article by [Brahima Ouedraogo](#)
Associated Press Writer

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso, West Africa - At least 31 people died Saturday in a mudslide at an illegal gold mine in Burkina Faso, state-run radio said.

Miners dug through the mud to try to rescue survivors and pull out bodies in the mining village of Boussoukoulou in southwest Burkina Faso, state radio said. Heavy rains were blamed for the landslide.

The accident comes after a June government order for unofficial mines to close until Sept. 30 because of the risk of accidents during the rainy season, when hastily dug tunnels can easily collapse.

The government estimates at least 200,000 miners work at unregulated gold mines in Burkina Faso, risking their lives by descending

down deep mine shafts for gold to eke out a meagre living.

Unlike large industrial mines, they are not registered with authorities and because there are thousands of such mines in West Africa, officials do little to enforce safety regulations.

"They (miners) hide and go for mining by night. This is the problem with traditional mining," Seka Ki, the director general of mining at the Ministry of Mining and Energy, told The Associated Press.

"That is why we do not promote traditional mining."

China says mine accidents down in first 7 months

Source: Reuters

BEIJING, - Fewer people died in China's often deadly mines in the first seven months of 2008 compared with the same period last year, a safety official said on Saturday, but warned that the situation remained serious. The death toll was 1,631 in the January to July period, a fall of 24 percent, spokesman for the State Administration of Work Safety, Huang Yi, told a news conference.

"Of course, coal mining is still a dangerous activity in China. The safety situation remains serious," he said. "Although the number of accidents has dropped, there is still an effect on society."

China has the world's deadliest mining industry, a problem especially pronounced in the coal mining sector as mine owners push production beyond safety limits in the face of huge demand from a booming economy and soaring profits.

A total of 3,786 Chinese coal miners died in gas blasts, flooding and other accidents in 2007, down 20 percent from 2006.

Officials have said that China, undergoing rapid industrialisation, may need another decade before there is a drastic fall in mine and other industrial deaths.

There has been a spate of tragedies recently since Beijing, eager to boost coal output to

cope with a power shortage, called on local governments to speed up approvals for the resumption of output at small mines which had been closed for safety reasons.

A coal shortage is pushing China into its worst power crisis since 2004, when rolling blackouts hit much of the country.

Monday 11 August 2008

Macedonia: Mol notified of the mining accident late

Extract from makfaxonline, Independent News Agency

The Ministry of Interior (Mol) was not notified in time of the accident in the "Dobrevo" mine, for which it announced investigation.

Because the Mol Stip was not notified timely about the accident, in which one miner got killed, and another heavily injured, the on-scene investigation was performed Monday.

"Mol Stip works on establishing what were the circumstances of the accident and on determining eventual responsibility for the late reporting of the event to competent authorities", is said in the communication.

The police was not informed about the accident neither by managers of the "Dobrevo" mine, owned by "Idominerals and Metals" company, nor by medical institutions in Probistip and Stip.

The investigation concluded that the miner D.S., after midnight on Sunday, from yet undetermined causes fell into a vent around 15 meters tall. After the shift supervisor Goce B. noticed he was gone, he went to check on him, but also fell into the vent.

Other employees intervened and pulled out the injured, after which D.S. was transported to Skopje, and Goce B. to Probistip ambulance, and later to Stip hospital, where he succumbed to injuries later that night.

Tuesday 12 August 2008

USA: Mining accident injures Three

Extract from wdtv.com

The investigation continues in Barbour County after a mining accident sends three people to the hospital.

It happened around 1:40 Tuesday morning at the ICG Wolf Run Sentinel Mine when three miners were hit by a mobile scoop underground.

Mine Safety and Health Administration Communication Specialist, Jama Jarrett, says the three workers were struck by a scoop, which is used to haul mining materials.

One miner was taken by helicopter to Ruby Memorial Hospital with serious conditions, while the two other were transported to Ruby by ambulance.

MSHA officials say the miner flown to Ruby is in serious, but stable condition; while the other two are in stable condition at this time.

MSHA has also placed a closure order on the area of the mine where the accident occurred until the investigation into how it happened is complete.

Investigators with the State Mine Safety Office have been on scene at the Sentinel Mine trying to determine what happened.

Two of the three miners injured were believed to be "red hat miners," meaning they hadn't been working at the mine very long.

Back in May an 18-year-old red cap miner was killed at the same operation. Adam Lanham was also run over by a scoop.

Wednesday 13 August 2008

Geotechnical advice 'ignored' before rockfall

Extracts from ABC News Online at: www.abc.net.au

An inquest has heard the Beaconsfield Gold Mine ignored the advice of a consultant in the

way it extracted gold days before a fatal rockfall.

The geo-technical experts are continuing to give evidence at the inquest in Launceston into the death of miner Larry Knight.

Mine management consulted geo-technical engineer, Frans Basson, on the risks of mining in the area where Mr Knight later died on Anzac Day 2006. Two other miners were trapped there for a fortnight.

In his February 2006 report, Mr Basson said he expected there to be 'difficult drilling conditions' and potential for rock pillars moving that could result in seismic events. He warned management that the levels 915 and 925 should not be mined simultaneously.



Beaconsfield Gold Mine level 925, where Todd Russell and Brant Webb were trapped for a fortnight underground, and their co-worker, Larry Knight died. (ABC News: Jacqui Street)

Yesterday Mr Basson was shown a map where these levels appeared to have been mined at the same time just days before the fatal rockfall over two years ago.

Mr Basson admitted the overlap went against his recommendation but told the inquest it was a small deviation and may have only had a small impact.

Mr Basson's report also warned that April was going to be 'a hazardous month' but he was surprised by the magnitude of the Anzac Day event. Mr Basson said he wasn't concerned that on April the 23rd, just two days before the collapse, there was 130 seismic events at the mine, or four times the usual number. He said it

didn't mean there would necessarily be a rockfall.

The inquest is continuing.

Thursday 14 August 2008

Rock faults hard to find before fatal mine collapse

Extracts from ABC News Online at: www.abc.net.au

The geologist at the Beaconsfield goldmine has spoken of the difficulty of finding faults in the rock before the fatal rockfall in 2006.

Gold miner, Larry Knight died in the rockfall and two workmates were trapped for a fortnight nearly a kilometre underground.

Beaconsfield geologist, Grant MacDonald, has explained maps of the mine as it was on the day of the collapse.

Earlier this week the inquest heard from a geotechnical expert who had investigated a large fault in the rock at the mine, which he believed caused a seismic event which triggered the Anzac Day collapse.

Mr MacDonald has told the inquest that before the collapse he stumbled across this rock structure on the 990 level, 75 metres below where the rockfall occurred.

He said he drove along and saw ore poking out of the rock.

"I thought 'Struth! Where's that coming from?' he said.

Mr MacDonlad said the mine was concerned it had left ore behind but when he investigated the rock on the 925 level, where the rockfall later happened, he could not find the fault.

Health concerns surround NSW asbestos mine

CANBERRA, - An abandoned asbestos mine in northern NSW could pose a health hazard to locals, the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia has warned.

Foundation president Barry Robson says he took samples from the side of the road which

cuts through the tailings from the Woodsreef mine, north of Tamworth.

The samples were found to contain between 30 and 60 per cent pure asbestos fibre, he said.

"I find it totally amazing that a road access has been bulldozed through asbestos tailings, and it's used by the public," Mr Robson told ABC Television.

"And it's actually the local council and the tourism people here ... encourage people to come up here and drive through these tailings.

"Not one doubt in my mind that this is dangerous."

But Elise Newberry, from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, said she was not aware the mine posed a health hazard.

"I think there's no evidence that's been presented to me that there are problems," she told ABC Television.

"I'm saying the place is as stable as we can make it ... you'll have to ask health experts about safe."

The NSW Health Department released a statement saying the local public health unit would investigate concerns about risks to public health.

Remember

1. You only need two tools in life - WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn't move and should, use the WD-40. If it shouldn't move and does, use the Duct tape.
2. If you can't fix it with a hammer, you've got an electrical problem.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

J

jigs An apparatus used to concentrate ore or separate large pieces (as in washing coal) on a screen submerged in water, either by a reciprocating motion of the screen or by the pulsation of water through it.

- Ed.