

Sunday 26 October 2008

USA: Massey cited in railroad crossing death

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- The death of a Massey Energy worker in a railroad crossing accident earlier this year won't count as a mining-related fatality, federal authorities have decided.

However, Massey was still cited in the incident, and has agreed to pay a \$2,250 fine in a settlement with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Ricky Collins Sr., 44, of Williamson, was killed in the March 27 incident on a steep, or "humpback" railroad crossing on W.Va. 27 near Stollings, Logan County.

A Massey truck had become stuck when it tried to pull a "low boy" trailer over the crossing, officials said. Collins, an employee of Massey's Mass Transport subsidiary, was attempting to free the trailer when he was struck by a piece of metal, according to company officials.

Officials from the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration investigated to see if the accident should be counted as a mining-related death. Earlier this month, MSHA's Fatality Review Committee issued a two-page memo that concluded it was not. MSHA and OSHA are part of the U.S. Department of Labor.

According to that memo, the Mass Transport truck was hauling two highwall-miner cars from the factory to Massey's Freeze Fork Surface Mine when the trailer became separated from the tractor. Collins was overseeing re-attaching the trailer to the tractor.

"He was struck in the head by a metal shim that broke loose as a loaded trailer was being jacked up to reconnect it to the tractor (truck)," the MSHA memo said. The site of the accident was more than six miles from the Freeze Fork Mine, MSHA said.

"Based on the results of MSHA's investigation, the committee members concluded that

[Collins'] death should not be charged to the mining industry because the accident did not occur on mine property and did not result from activity on mine property," MSHA said.

After its investigation, OSHA concluded that Massey "did not furnish employment and a place of employment which were free from recognized hazards that were likely to cause death or serious physical harm to the employees."

OSHA investigators determined that safer ways to re-attach the trailer to the tractor were not being used, and that the company could have used a different type of trailer that does not bottom out when going over railroad crossings, documents show.

Federal officials cited the company for a serious violation and proposed a \$2,250 fine. In a settlement with OSHA, Massey agreed to pay the fine.

On the Web:

Read the MSHA report online at www.msha.gov/Fatals/NonChargeables/2008/C-2008-09.pdf

QLD: Man rescued after coal mine drop

Extract from Sydney Morning Herald, Australia

Firefighters have rescued a bulldozer driver from his cab after it crashed about 20m down a sheer embankment west of Toowoomba.

The large bulldozer landed on its roof at a coal mine near Oakey, west of Toowoomba on the Darling Downs at about 1.15pm on Sunday.

The bulldozer's precarious position required an excavator to stabilise the vehicle from above while the rescue took place.

Firefighters, using vertical rescue equipment, scaled down to the cab of the bulldozer to retrieve the driver.

He was in contact with rescuers via radio throughout the 90-minute ordeal.

He was treated at the scene for heat exhaustion.

Monday 27 October 2008

USA: Deadly Mine Fire Lawsuit Goes To Court

Extract West Virginia MetroNews, Charleston, WV, USA

Jury selection begins this morning in Logan County Circuit Court in a lawsuit filed by the two widows in the Aracoma mine disaster.

The widows of Don Bragg and Elvis Hatfield say the attitude of Massey Energy subsidiary Aracoma at its Alma No. 1 Mine was production over safety and that attitude contributed to the January 2006 deadly fire.

Massey Energy, A.T. Massey Coal and Massey President and CEO Don Blankenship are defendants in the case. Blankenship tried to have himself removed from the lawsuit, but was denied by a Circuit Judge Robert Perry.

The lawsuit cites two memos from Blankenship six days apart in October 2005. In the first, Blankenship tells mine officials to stay focused on producing coal. Blankenship wrote, "This memo is necessary only because we seem not to understand that coal pays the bills."

The next memo came six days later that the plaintiffs allege Blankenship wrote to apparently explain the first memo. He wrote, "I would question the membership of anyone who thought that I consider safety to be a secondary responsibility."

Jury selection starts this morning and could last for most of the week. Testimony in the trial is scheduled to begin Nov. 10.

USA: Feds list WV accident as mining fatality

Extract from WZTV, Nashville, TN, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) -- Federal regulators are listing a West Virginia machinery accident as a coal mining fatality.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration says 61-year-old bulldozer operator James O.

Woods died Oct. 4, 15 days after suffering spinal injuries at Massey Energy's No. 1 Surface mine in Nicholas County.

A preliminary accident report says Woods was operating a bulldozer that rolled several times. Woods worked for contractor Battlecreek Co.-Tri-Mountain Corp.

A working telephone number for Battlecreek could not be located and a Massey spokesman did not immediately return messages Monday.

Richmond, Va.-based Massey operates mines in West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky.

MSHA says 25 people, including eight West Virginians, have died in coal mining accidents this year.

Wednesday 29 October 2008

China Journalists Demand "Hush Money" at Coal Mine

Extract from China Digital Times.net

A mining accident, in which one miner was killed, didn't get reported in the Chinese media after reporters, and scam artists posing as reporters, received hush money from the mine owner, according to a recent report in Beijing News.

The mine did not report the death to the local government in northern Shanxi province when the accident happened in September, the Beijing News said. The owner was fined 8,000 yuan (\$1,170).

"Around 40 or 50 'journalists' came here for money," the newspaper quoted an official at the mine as saying. They demanded sums of up to 10,000 yuan for not publicizing the death.

China's coal mines are the world's most dangerous, killing nearly 3,800 people last year, as high demand for energy from a booming economy pushes managers to cut safety corners.

Scams involving journalists and people posing as journalists to demand hush money are common in China.

The case last year of newspaper employee Lan Chengzhang, who was beaten to death at a local mine, highlighted the issues of illegal mines and media corruption in media discussions.

USA: Wyoming man dies in haul truck accident

Extract from Gillette News Record, Gillette, WY, USA

A 49-year-old man died Tuesday in a haul truck accident at a coal mine north of Gillette. The man's name has not been released.

Clovis Point coal mine will close while the incident is being investigated by Black Hills Corp. and the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The crash happened at about 5:15 p.m. at Clovis Point coal mine off North Garner Lake Road. Two haul trucks were working in the pits removing overburden, or topsoil, when one backed into the other, Undersheriff Scott Matheny said.

The cab of one of the trucks collapsed, pinning the man's legs and crushing his hips, Matheny said. He was rushed to Campbell County Memorial Hospital.

He was to be transferred to Wyoming Medical Center in Casper but died either before or while being airlifted, Matheny said. No one else was hurt in the crash.

This is Wyoming's first coal mining death since December 2005, said Amy Louviere, MSHA spokeswoman. In that case, a 49-year-old man died from injuries he suffered at Bridger underground coal mine in Sweetwater County. It's the 26th coal mining fatality nationwide in 2008.

Clovis Point is owned by Wyodak, a subsidiary of Black Hills Corp. It is known to most by its old name, KFx Inc.

Thursday 30 October 2008

Twenty-nine miners trapped in northwest China coal mine gas explosion

Extract from Xinhua, China

XI'AN, Twenty-nine miners are believed to be trapped after a gas explosion at a coal mine in northwest China's Shaanxi Province late on Wednesday.

The blast occurred at around 8 p.m. at in the shaft at the Yaotou mine in Chengcheng county, in central Shaanxi, and emergency workers launched a rescue operation shortly after, said a provincial government spokesman.

The blast was reported to officials shortly after it occurred and the provincial government reported it to the State Administration of Work Safety the same evening, said the spokesman.

No further details were yet available, he said.

21 trapped in third China mine accident in 24 hours

Extract from China Daily, China

ZHENGZHOU - Twenty-one miners were trapped after a coal mine flooded in central China's Henan Province. It was the third major mine accident in China on Wednesday.

A rescue operation began after Mazhuang colliery, in Jiyuan city, flooded at 7:15 pm Wednesday, when 28 miners, of whom seven escaped, were working below ground.

The licensed mine has an annual production capacity of 150,000 tonnes.

The accident brings the number of miners trapped in three separate coal mine accidents to 57.

Rescuers are working to free seven miners trapped in another mine flood in Shanxi Province, while 29 miners are believed to be trapped after a gas explosion in a pit in neighbouring Shaanxi Province (see Extract above).

USA: Improving mine safety remains a priority

Extract from West Virginia Record - Charleston, WV, USA



By **GOV. JOE MANCHIN**

CHARLESTON -- I recently travelled to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration's Mine Safety Academy in Beckley to visit with state and federal mine safety inspectors and rescue teams, and to look at the state's new mine rescue stations.

Our mobile rescue stations are stationed in strategic locations across the state's mining areas so that we can quickly respond in case of a major mine accident. They offer the latest in technology and should give our rescue teams the ability to get vital rescue equipment on scene more quickly with the resources they need.

It's hard to believe it has been nearly three years since the tragedies at Sago and Aracoma. God bless those we lost then, before and since. I want the people of West Virginia and the nation to know what we are doing to improve miners' health, safety and training. I want to assure our miners and their families that mine safety is still a top priority.

We continue to learn from the past, but it should not take a tragedy to protect our miners'

lives. Today, we are better prepared to handle a mine emergency than we have ever been. Our goal remains zero fatalities. We have a responsibility to protect the lives of those who work to provide the energy we use. We all must do everything we can to make mining safer.

In mine safety, we've accomplished a lot since 2006. We created a mine emergency hotline for reporting mine accidents, in addition to establishing the mine rescue stations in our four regional offices. We have fully staffed mine rescue teams in each of our regional offices and we established the Mine Safety Technology Task Force.

More than 40,000 new SCSRs are now in place in our underground mines. About 245 emergency mine shelters are in place and more on the way - all in place by early-2009.

We continue our work on implementation and approval of communication and tracking systems. We have 10 more underground mine safety inspectors and four more safety instructors. We've increased our mine inspector salaries so we can retain qualified staff. We've required foremen and fire bosses to undergo additional training and we made it easier to shut down problem mines.

Our Legislature has been a true partner in making this possible. They passed regulations that protect our miners and provided the funding for these programs and equipment. We have work to do - we'll always have work to do if we want to reach our goal of zero fatalities. But we are setting the world standard for mine safety.

We don't look forward to the day we have to use our new equipment or to implement the skills our mine rescue teams have learned, but it is reassuring to know that it is here, and we have the skilled people who know how to use it.

Ghana: AngloGold Ashanti Worker Dies in Accident at Obuasi

Extract from *Bloomberg.com*

AngloGold Ashanti Ltd., the world's third-biggest gold producer, said a worker died in an underground accident at its Obuasi mine in Ghana on Oct. 25.

The company is investigating the cause of the accident, which hasn't had an impact on production, John Owusu, corporate affairs manager, said in a phone interview from Obuasi, 80 kilometres (50 miles) South of Kumasi, Ghana's second-biggest city, late yesterday.

"They haven't shut anything down," he said, without providing further details.

Four workers died at Obuasi in 2007, according to the company's annual report. The Oct. 25 death was the first this year at the mine, Owusu said.

AngloGold said in May it was embarking on a \$135 million, three-year project to boost production at Obuasi. Output fell 7 percent to 360,000 ounces in 2007, hindered by electricity shortages and the impact of illegal miners encroaching on mine property, according to the company's Web site.

Ghana is Africa's second-biggest gold producer, after South Africa. Barrick is the world's largest gold mining company.

Friday 31 October 2008

25 feared dead in Indonesian sand mine collapse

Extract from *Antara News, Antara, Indonesia*

Jakarta - Twenty five workers were feared dead after a sand mine collapsed in Indonesia, officials said Friday.

"A huge amount of sand fell down and buried the people on Thursday afternoon. The rescue team found five dead bodies this morning,"

Health Ministry crisis center head Rustam Pakaya was quoted by AFP as saying.

The collapse occurred in Southeast Sulawesi province.

Rescue efforts are ongoing, Pakaya said.

Rescuers pull 23 bodies from China mine after blast

Extract from *Reuters*

BEIJING - Rescue workers have pulled 23 bodies from a mine in northern China wrecked by a gas explosion and are still searching for another 6 missing men, state media said on Friday.

The blast ripped through the shafts of the mine in Shaanxi province on Wednesday evening, when 36 miners were at work.

Seven escaped and the others were trapped, the official Xinhua agency said.

China's mining industry is the world's most dangerous.

A total of 3,786 coal miners died in gas blasts, floodings and other accidents last year as companies, often flouting safety regulations, rush to feed demand from a booming economy.

This mine was a state-owned local operation, with annual production capacity of 330,000 tones, the report said.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

M

mullock Waste, barren or uneconomic rock obtained in the course of mining. The Cornish name 'attle' is sometimes used in South Australia. Either deposited in mullock dumps, or used to backfill worked out stopes.

mullock dump Deposited mullock, generally seen as the long heaps extending from an adit or surrounding a shaft or pit.

- Ed.