

Mining Accident News No.0828

Monday 10 November 2008

TAS: Beaconsfield mine collapse inquest resumes

Extract from ABC News, Online



The Anzac Day rockfall occurred on level 925. (ABC News: Jacqui Street)

The inquest into the death of a miner at Beaconsfield more than two years ago is hearing submissions from the lawyer representing the man's family.

Kamal Faroque, who represents the Australian Workers Union and Larry Knight's family, has told the inquest the support systems on the level of the deadly rockfall were inadequate.

Mr Knight died in the rockfall at the Beaconsfield Gold Mine April 2006.

The inquest resumed this morning.

It had adjourned in September after nine weeks of hearings with nearly 40 witnesses.

TAS: Inquest told mine's support systems failed

Extract from ABC News, Online

The inquest into the death of a miner at Beaconsfield has been told a failure of ground support contributed to the Anzac Day rockfall two years ago.

The inquest is hearing final submissions from the lawyer representing Larry Knight's family.

Mr Knight was killed in the rockfall which trapped two other miners for a fortnight.

This morning, Mr Knight's widow Jacqui Knight and his brother Shane sat together listening to their counsel make his submission.

Kamal Faroque told the inquest the support systems on the level of the deadly rockfall were insufficient.

He also told the court spacing between bolts designed to support the rock was inadequate.

He said a failure of ground support contributed to the rockfall which killed Mr Knight.

The inquest is expected to hear from the Counsel assisting the Coroner Michael O'Farrell tomorrow.

USA: Trial starts today in Aracoma Mine fire wrongful death case

Extract from the Charleston Gazette, WV, USA

LOGAN, W.Va. -- Opening arguments are scheduled to start this afternoon in a wrongful death lawsuit against Massey Energy and its President, Don Blankenship, over the January 2006 fire at Massey's Aracoma Alma No. 1 Mine.

Logan Circuit Judge Roger L. Perry is to preside over the jury trial, set to start nearly three years after miners Don Bragg and Ellery Hatfield were killed in the conveyor belt blaze.

Windows of the two miners sued Richmond, Va.-based Massey, its Aracoma Coal Co. subsidiary, and Blankenship, alleging that safety took a backseat to coal production at the Logan County mine.

"Don Blankenship, and the Massey corporations under his leadership, have a long history of negligence, hostility and/or reckless and wanton indifference to labor safety and working conditions," the original, 18-page lawsuit filed in December 2006, stated.

Massey is already facing proposed fines of \$1.5 million for 25 major violations cited by the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, and a federal criminal investigation of the fire is ongoing.

The state Office of Miners Health, Safety and Training fined the company \$70,000, the maximum of \$10,000 each for seven violations state inspectors said contributed to the deaths. State mine safety chief Ronald Wooten has also sought to strip top Aracoma mine managers of their licenses to work in the industry.

Among other violations, federal and state inspectors cited Massey for missing ventilation walls that investigators said were a major cause of the Jan. 19, 2006, fire.

The missing ventilation walls, called stoppings, allowed smoke from the conveyor belt fire to enter the mine's primary escape tunnel. By law, such tunnels are supposed to be kept isolated from conveyor belt tunnels because of the dangers of fire and smoke that belts create in underground mines.

During the Aracoma fire, a crew of workers ran into smoke in their escape tunnel and had to find another way out. Bragg and Hatfield became separated from the group, got lost, and eventually succumbed to the smoke.

Investigators also blamed Massey for a host of other serious violations, including everything from not fixing a misaligned conveyor belt that started the fire to not performing required safety checks, failing to quickly warn miners of the growing blaze, and not having a fire hose available that fit the mine's water supply lines.

South Africa: Two die in Witbank mine accident

Extract from Independent Online, Cape Town, South Africa

Two mineworkers, aged 43 and 49, died and a third was injured following an accident at an Xstrata coal mine near Witbank, Xstrata Coal said on Monday.

Spokesperson Songezo Zibi said Gabriel Manyeli, 43, a continuous miner operator, and Solwako Magagula, 49, a cable handler, died on Saturday after inhaling noxious gas.

The mine was evacuated and the two men were taken above ground but could not be

resuscitated. A third miner was hospitalised and was reportedly out of danger.

Xstrata stopped all underground operations and sealed the mine until further investigations by Xstrata Coal and the Department of Minerals and Energy's Inspector of Mines, Zibi said.

Solidarity spokesperson Jaco Kleynhans said on Monday the men died after they drilled into an old section of the mine containing carbon dioxide gas.

Carbon dioxide forms naturally in the old sections of coal mines, Kleynhans said.

Carbon dioxide is heavier than air and displaces air upwards when released in a mine.

"The open channel between the old and new sections meant that all the oxygen was displaced out of the space where the mineworkers were drilling," Kleynhans said.

Gas-related accidents were not common in South African mines.

This was the 143rd and 144th fatality in South African mines this year, Kleynhans said.

China: Mayor's fate tied to coal mine safety

Extract from China Daily, China

Mayors in Henan province will be suspended or removed from office in the event of large coal mine accidents in their cities, local newspaper Dahe Daily reported on Sunday.

"Mayors will be suspended or removed from office if a large accident takes place involving the deaths of more than 50 persons, or two large accidents involving the deaths of 30-49 persons a year," the newspaper quoted a government circular as saying.

"The responsible personnel might receive administrative sanctions or be charged based on further findings of the investigation," it said.

An Yuanjie, a press official with the State Administration of Work Safety, welcomed the rule.

"No such strict rules have been seen in other provinces," An said.

In some cases, officials colluded with businessmen to form groups with common interests to protect illegal companies and mine owners, even staging elaborate cover-ups.

On Saturday, a police station in Shenmu county of Shaanxi province, accepted 2.19 million yuan (\$320,000) in "sponsor money" from dozens of local coal mine owners, reported Xi'an-based Huashang News.

The provincial government learned the news and asked police to return the money.

The latest tragedy claimed 35 people in an explosion at the Lijiawa mine in Yuxian, Hebei province, on July 14.

It was initially covered up for three months and finally revealed by victims' families on the Internet.

USA: Vermont Warns Residents of Asbestos Danger at Old Mines

Extract from *Insurance Journal, San Diego, CA, USA*

The state of Vermont is warning people to stay away from abandoned asbestos mines in Eden and Lowell because of the health threat posed by asbestos.

Scientists studied health records and death certificates from towns within 10 miles of the mine. They say they found a statistically significant increase in cases of lung cancer and asbestosis.

The study found the odds of dying from asbestosis are more than 12 times as high among people living close to the mine compared to people living further away. The lung cancer risk is also higher.

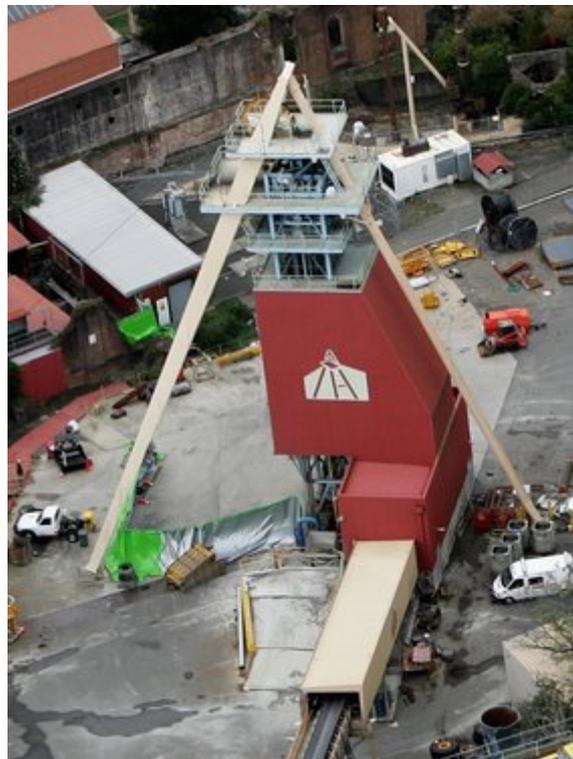
There's a huge pile of waste rock containing asbestos at the site. The area is frequently used by people riding all terrain vehicles.

Health Commissioner Wendy Davis says people should stay away.

Tuesday 11 November 2008

TAS: Inquest told mine collapse not foreseen

Extract from *ABC News, Online*



Mr O'Farrell said that if an event like this could be predicted, then of course the mine would be evacuated. (Getty Images: Ian Waldie, file photo)

Counsel Assisting the Coroner Michael O'Farrell is delivering his final submissions.

Michael O'Farrell has told the court the inquest is not a prosecution, saying it is of no assistance to import notions of criminal justice.

He said if an event like this could be predicted, then of course the mine would be evacuated.

Final submissions will wrap up shortly but findings are not expected until next year.

N. China coal mine accident kills 4, injures 13

Extract from *Xinhua, China*

SHIJIAZHUANG - Four workers were killed and 13 others injured after a conveyer belt snapped at a coal mine in north China's Hebei Province on Monday morning.

The belt, used to transport miners in and out of the pit, suddenly snapped at about 6:30 a.m. at

the Wannian Coal Mine of Jizhong Energy Group Co., Ltd. in Handan City, said a spokesman of the provincial work safety bureau.

Four people died at the scene and 13 others have been hospitalized.

The accident occurred during a shift change, which made it difficult to determine the specific number of workers on the belt at the time, the spokesman said, without giving any further details.

An official investigation into the cause of the accident has begun.

TAS: Questions over Beaconsfield mine's duty of care

Extract from ABC News, Online



Mr O'Farrell said management may have failed to properly analyse and consider the risks. (ABC News: Martin Cuddihy)

The inquest into the death of miner Larry Knight has heard Beaconsfield Gold may have failed in its duty of care.

Final Submissions have been heard at the Launceston inquest into the death of Mr Knight in the Anzac Day rockfall at the Beaconsfield mine in 2006.

Counsel Assisting the Coroner, Michael O'Farrell, said the mining company may have failed to properly analyse and consider the risks.

Mr O'Farrell told the inquest it could be found there was an institutional failure or a corporate failure.

He said the employer might possibly have fallen short of its recognised duty.

He also suggested there may be been a failure of the corporation to properly analyse and consider the risks.

Coroner Rod Chandler said he was mindful of the importance of his findings and they would be delivered as soon as possible.

Outside the inquest, Shane Knight said he hoped his brother's death would lead to a safer working environment for underground miners.

"In the end the sense of trying to make it better, weights out and we can see that there's been a lot of, in the past, a lot of problems which haven't been addressed and hopefully from now on they will be," he said.

Wednesday 12 November 2008

Africa: At least 14 small miners dead in Guinea mine collapse

A senior police officer has confirmed at least 14 illegal miners died in the collapse of a gold mine in Guinea.

Extract from Reuters

CONAKRY - At least 14 illegal gold miners were killed in Guinea on Wednesday when disused mineshafts they were working in collapsed, a witness said.

The mine collapse happened near the village of Boireyah, near Siguiiri, 800 km (500 miles) east of Conakry.

"The victims, all men, were killed inside the mines. They were buried underground. There were 14 killed and several injured," Laye Diawara, a resident of Siguiiri who saw the accident site, told Reuters by telephone.

"They were illegal miners. Earlier, soldiers had chased them away from the site but they came back, and that's when the accident happened," Diawara said.

"The people who were on the lookout in case the soldiers came back went to help them, but it was too late for most of them," he said.

A senior police officer confirmed the collapse but did not know how many people had been killed.

"There were people killed in the collapse, but we haven't got precise figures because we haven't yet received a report," said the officer, who declined to be identified.

South Africa's AngloGold Ashanti operates a concession at Siguiri, producing 300,000 ounces of gold a year.

The company's executive vice-president for Africa, Richard Duffy, said in September the mine's output was expected to rise to 500,000 in five or six years.

Anglogold Ashanti's processing plant at Siguiri was under armed guard on Wednesday after demonstrations by local residents demanding better electricity services used tree trunks and barricades to block roads leading to the site.

Residents of different parts of the West African country have staged a string of protests, often targeting mining installations, in the past month to press demands for better public services, in particular mains water and electricity.

Several people have been killed, most shot dead by security forces in the former French colony, where most people live in poverty despite being the world's top exporter of bauxite, the ore used to make aluminium.

10 gold miners killed in landslide in Indonesia

Extract from www.chinaview.cn

JAKARTA, (Xinhua) -- A landslide triggered by heavy rain killed 10 gold miners Wednesday in Indonesia's Southeast Sulawesi province, local media the Jakarta Global Thursday quoted an official as saying.

The accident raised the mining death toll in the area to 60 since early September, official in

Bombana district Musdaddad said, adding that the area was vulnerable to landslide.

Rustam Pakaya, head of crisis center at Indonesian Health Ministry, attributed the increasing large mining death toll in the area to a lack of safety awareness. He said that local authorities should evacuate miners from areas prone to landslide after receiving heavy rain forecast.

"It is a great risk to mine workers if security is not good," he said.

Also on Wednesday, two workers were buried and killed by a landslide at a quarry in East Java province after heavy rain.

This week in mining accident history

Some noteworthy accidents

7 Nov 1896 Hazel Creek Mine Clinton, USA	Miner fatally crushed by machinery 1 killed
9 Nov 1963 Mitsui Miike Japan	Coal dust explosion 458 killed 839 suffer CO poisoning
14 Nov 1996 Gretley Colliery Wallsend NSW	Inrush of water from old workings 4 killed
8 Nov 1997 Nanshan Colliery China	Gas explosion at underground coal mine 24 killed
10 Nov 2003 Oktyabrskaya Mine Arctic Russia	Rock caved into shaft, underground nickel mine 2 killed
14 Nov 2003 Southern China	Gas explosions at underground coal mine 48 killed
8 Nov 2007 Qunli Mine China	Gas leak in underground coal mine 32 killed, 3 missing

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

O

- ore** Rock or mineral deposit containing particular metals or minerals in commercial quantities.
- oxides** Compounds of oxygen with various other elements.

- Ed.