

# Mining Accident News No.0902

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Friday 9 January 2009

## WA: Mines Dept investigates super pit death

PERTH - The West Australian mines department is investigating the death of a dump truck driver at the nation's biggest gold mine at Kalgoorlie.

A 53-year-old woman died in hospital in Perth on Wednesday after falling off her truck at the Super Pit on Tuesday, ABC Radio reported on Thursday.

It is believed the woman received severe head injuries after falling while cleaning the windscreen of a Haulpak truck on 6 January 2009.

She was airlifted to Royal Perth Hospital on 7 January 2009, but died soon after.



It is believed the woman was cleaning a Haulpak truck window when she fell

Police suspect the woman may have suffered a brain aneurysm, but it is not known whether it contributed to her fall.

Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines (KCGM) said staff on site were receiving counselling.

"This is a tragedy and we are devastated at the loss of a colleague," Acting Registered Mine Manager David Nicholson said in a media statement.

"Our deepest sympathies and condolences are with the family and friends at this difficult time."

KCGM is a joint venture between Barrick Gold Corporation of Canada and Newmont Mining.

It received approval for a 1,300 metre expansion at the Super Pit and was granted a five-year lease extension last year by the state government.

In February last year, the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) asked the company to implement a rigorous pit wall performance monitoring system before expansion went ahead.

The woman's death is the fourth at a WA mine this financial year.

Department of Mines and Petroleum investigators travelled to the site on

Wednesday and the company said coronial investigations would follow.

## South African Mine Deaths Fall to Lowest on Record

*Extract from Bloomberg, USA*

Mine deaths in South Africa, the world's largest precious metals producer, fell 23 percent last year to the lowest since records began in 1904, after the government started temporarily closing mines, a labour union said.

While the decline to 170 deaths is "significant," it is "still not a cause for celebration," the Johannesburg-based National Union of Mineworkers, which produced the statistics, said today in an e-mailed statement. The government has yet to issue the official death toll.

Inspectors started suspending operations at most mines that recorded a fatal accident after the death toll rose to 221 in 2007, the first increase since 2002. In October 2007, a nationwide safety audit was ordered by the national president after more than 3,000 workers were temporarily trapped underground at Harmony Gold Mining Co.'s Elandsrand mine. Workers last year started holding a day of mourning after most deaths.

AngloGold Ashanti Ltd. made "history" by achieving a fatality-free quarter last year, Sietse van der Woude, a safety specialist at the Chamber of Mines, which represents most mining companies that operate in the country, said from Johannesburg today. AngloGold's Savuka mine is the deepest in the world at 2.35 miles (3.8 kilometers).

### World's Deepest

Over the past century more than 54,000 miners have been killed in South Africa's gold mines, which are the deepest and amongst the most dangerous in the world. During white rule, which ended in 1994, companies took advantage of cheap black labor meaning that today South African mines use more workers than many of their counterparts elsewhere.

Official government records, kept by the Department of Minerals and Energy, started in 1904 when 382 gold miners were killed.

In last year's worst accident, nine workers fell 58 meters (190 feet) to their deaths at Gold Fields Ltd.'s South Deep mine on May 1. Gold Fields said a lift known as a cage, used in South African mines to transport workers down shafts that can be more than two miles (3.2 kilometers) deep, fell when a cable snapped.

In 1995, in the worst accident in the gold mining industry, 105 workers plunged more than 2 kilometers to their deaths at the Vaal Reefs Mine, then operated by a unit of Anglo American Plc, after a cable supporting a cage was severed by a runaway ore train.

South Africa's Chief Inspector of mines, Thabo Gazi's telephone was on voicemail when Bloomberg News contacted his Pretoria office today. His department inspects mines after fatalities occur and suspends operations until it is satisfied with safety measures.

### Regulation Concerns

"We are concerned about the way it's done sometimes," the chamber's Van der Woude said. While effective regulation improves safety, "some of the actions taken didn't always contribute to good safety and health."

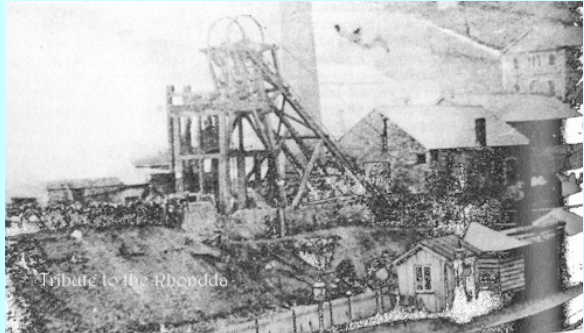
The government is too focused on punishment to the detriment of preventative behavior, relying on "too much stick and too little carrot," he said.

While the decline in South African mine production last year contributed to the "remarkable" reduction in deaths, improved safety measures also helped the number of fatalities per hour to decrease, Van der Woude added.

Miners in South Africa are regularly killed in accidents ranging from rock bursts, where pressure causes rocks to explode, and partial mine collapses caused by earth tremors.

South Africa is the world's second-biggest producer of gold after China and the world's largest platinum producer. Most fatal mining accidents in the country occur at gold or platinum mines because of their depth.

**This week in mining accident history**

Some noteworthy accidents	
19 January 1967 Strongman Mine, Greymouth, NZ	Underground coal mine explosion. Shot hole charge fired igniting fire damp (methane) in old workings.  <b>19 died</b>
13 January 1879 Dinas Colliery, Rhondda, Wales, UK	Explosion underground coal mine, fire damp  <b>63 killed</b>
	

**4 confirmed dead, 9 remain missing in SW China coal mine flooding as rescue underway**

*Extract from Xinhua, China*

GUIYANG, - The local work safety watchdog confirmed Friday that four people were killed and another nine remained missing in a coal mine that flooded ten days ago in southwest China's Guizhou Province.

According to Guizhou Provincial Administration of Work Safety, as of 4 p.m. Friday, four bodies had been retrieved. Rescuers are still searching for the other missing people by pumping water from the draft.

The flood occurred on December 31 at the Baiyanglin coal mine, which was illegally operating in Anshun City. Twenty people were working in the pit. Seven of them escaped safely but 13 others were trapped.

With about 3,000 cubic meters of water in the pit, chances of survival were slim, the rescue headquarters told Xinhua after the accident.

A spokesman with the administration said the rescue work had been difficult when water-mud mix crammed the draft.

Preliminary investigations found the mine, with a capacity of 30,000 tons a year, was under renovation. It had no work safety certificate and the production permit had expired.

In September and December 2008, local authorities ordered the mine to stop production, but it continued operation.

**12 miners killed in Arctic Russia mine explosion**

*Sourced from SteelGuru, Gurgaon, Haryana, India*

Mining Journal reported that at least 12 people died in a blast at a Soviet era mine in Arctic Russia that extracts raw materials for fertilizer production.

Ms Irina Gretskaya a spokeswoman for the ministry in the Arctic city of Murmansk said that "At the moment we know that 12 people died. 5 were injured and they are in hospital."

She said that "There were 18 people in the mine when the accident happened so we do not know about one miner. The reasons are still being investigated."

The mine is operated by a company called Apatit, a major Russian producer of the phosphate mineral apatite used in making fertilizer. Apatit is part of the PhosAgro fertilizer group.

Russia's mining safety watchdog, Rostekhnadzor said that it had launched an investigation into the blast at the Rasvumchorrsky mine. A recovery operation to retrieve bodies is under way.

Last year 110 people died in a blast in a Siberian coal mine Russia's worst mining accident in recent years.

Saturday 10 January 2009

## **South Africa: Worker killed as mining industry awaits safety report**

*Sourced from Daily Dispatchonline, SA*

A MINEWORKER was killed when an airpipe fell on him at the Impala Platinum mine in Rustenburg, the National Union of Mineworkers said yesterday.

Spokesperson Lesiba Seshoka said the man had been with other mineworkers ferrying the airpipe when the accident happened on Wednesday.

"The Department of Minerals and Energy issued a section 54 to the company following a loco inspection by them and the union," Seshoka said.

Impala Platinum spokesperson Bob Gilmour confirmed the incident, saying the shaft has since been closed as per directives of the section 54 regulations.

He said mine officials and the department would meet again on Monday.

Monday 12 January 2009

## **China: Coal collapse kills five**

*Extract from Shanghai Daily, Shanghai, China*

A MOUNTAIN of coal collapsed beside a mine in Yunnan Province on Saturday, killing five and injuring five, Xinhua news agency reported yesterday.

The collapse happened about 5:30pm in Dahe Town, Fuyuan County of Qujing City.

Nine workers were buried under the coal and one fell from a protective wall to his death, Xinhua said. The government is investigating the accident.

Friday 16 January 2009

## **USA: Fines of \$265,000 levied in 2007 death of trucker**

*Extract from The Salt Lake Tribune, USA*

The December 2007 death of truck driver David Whiting outside an Emery County coal mine has resulted in fines of \$265,000 against the mine's former owner and the trucker's company.

But it is questionable whether the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration can collect the portion -- \$215,000 -- assessed against then mine owner C.W. Mining Co., which is in Chapter 7 bankruptcy. C.W. Mining was an operation of the polygamous Kingston family.

MSHA announced the fine Friday, citing four safety violations by C.W. Mining that led to Whiting being crushed to death outside the Bear Canyon mine Dec. 12, 2007. He is survived by a widow, Layci, and three children.

Whiting, 31, of Elmo, was driving a coal-haul truck for Trimac Transportation Services Inc., which has an office in Cleveland, Utah. Trimac was fined \$50,000 by MSHA for not providing Whiting with site-specific hazard training prior to the accident.

Around dawn on a snowy morning, Whiting's coal-haul truck became stuck on a slick, steep stretch of gravel road leading to the mine in Huntington Canyon.

An MSHA report, released last June, said C.W. Mining employee Ivan Ortega drove a front-end loader to the location, parking it about six feet uphill of Whiting's truck. Ortega did not put blocks behind the loader's wheels, however, and it slid backward as Whiting was trying to attach a chain to his truck. Whiting was crushed between the two vehicles, MSHA concluded.

MSHA inspectors determined the mining company had not inspected the front-end loader that day, allowing it to be used in an unsafe operating condition. In addition to those violations, MSHA also cited C.W. Mining for Ortega's failure to turn the machine's wheels into a bank or to use blocks to stop a slide.

Charles Reynolds, former president of C.W. Mining, said Friday he had not seen MSHA's announcement, and was uncertain how the

company could pay the fine since it has sold the mine and is in bankruptcy.

"C.W. Mining has no means or capacity of doing anything other than through the [U.S. Bankruptcy Court] trustee," said Reynolds, now production manager for another Kingston family property, Hiawatha Coal Co., which bought the mine June 24, 2008.

Calls Friday to Whiting family attorney Sonny Olsen and to bankruptcy court trustee Kenneth Rushton were not returned.

Trimac spokesman Neil Voorhees also could not be reached for comment. After MSHA's report came out last summer, he said Trimac was putting drivers nationwide through site-specific hazard training.

## **WA: Fuse devices should feature safety warnings: Coroner**

A WA coroner has recommended safety warnings be provided with all fuse devices following the death of a 32-year old BHP Billiton miner in 2006.

Mark John Quinn was killed in February 2006 when a projectile exploded in the barrel of a cannon he was assembling at the Perseverance Mine in Western Australia.

Deputy State Coroner, Evelyn Vicker, says she is "surprised the fuse devices were not supplied with relevant product information to educate miners how to use the equipment".

Vicker is recommending information sheets with detailed diagrams be provided with fuses to indicate how equipment should be safely handled.

BHP Billiton was fined \$50,000 in 2007 after admitting it failed to provide a safe working environment.

Saturday 17 January 2009

## **China: Coal mine deaths fall to 14-yr low**

*Extract from China Daily, China*

The number of people killed in illegal coal mines last year was the lowest for 14 years, but the industry remains a major source of workplace fatalities, the administration of work safety said on Friday.

Across the country, 413,700 accidents and 91,172 deaths were reported last year, the first time since 1995 that the death toll had fallen below 100,000, it said.

The numbers of accidents and fatalities were both down by more than 10 percent on 2007, which had 506,000 accidents and 101,480 deaths.

Both figures have fallen for the past six years in a row, the administration said.

Zhao Tiechui, who supervises coal industry safety at the administration, attributed the lower numbers to the concerted efforts to close down illegal mines and better law enforcement.

While coal production was up 7.5 percent last year, to about 2.72 billion tons, the number of accidents fell significantly, Zhao said.

The administration said the number of traffic accidents, firework accidents and other industrial accidents also fell significantly last year, due to improved supervision.

Announcing the start of the Year of Work Safety, Luo Lin, head of the administration, said more measures will be launched this year to ensure accident rates continue to fall.

Despite the overall decline in accident and fatality numbers, Luo said the number of serious accidents last year was up by more than 35 percent on 2007.

A total of 707 lives were lost in 38 "serious" coal mine accidents, he said.

According to government figures, almost 80 percent of China's 16,000 coal mines are operating illegally.

The work safety administration closed 1,054 illegal mines last year and plans to shut a further 1,000 this year, Luo said.



Although the administration has for many years set a target to bring the number of illegal mines below 10,000, Luo admitted it was a difficult job.

Last year, illegal mines produced 35 percent of the nation's coal, but accounted for 73 percent (21,000) of mining deaths in the industry, he said.

"Coal mines often experience the most serious accidents because so many of them are operating illegally. The industry also sees the most frequent covering-up of accidents," Zhao said.

Almost 3,500 officials were investigated and 425 were arrested last year for negligence in relation to mining accidents, Luo said.

The scandal linked to the collapse of an iron ore reservoir at a mine in Shanxi province resulted in 34 officials being dismissed, he said.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Wang Jun, the former director of the State administration of work safety, was appointed governor of Shanxi.

"Illegal production and cover-ups are still too frequent in the industry, and some local governments and corporations remain ignorant of their responsibilities with regard to work safety," Luo said.

The administration needs to build a more solid base in order to see a "significant" drop in the number of accidents next year, he said.

Sunday 18 January 2009

## South Africa: 167 Carltonville miners trapped

*Extract from The Times, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa*

Work is underway to rescue 167 underground workers who are trapped underground at the Blyvooruitzicht gold mine near Carletonville, the mine said.

Some 275 people, mainly maintenance and essential services employees, were working on six different levels between 2,294 metres and

2,882 metres below surface at No 5 Shaft at 10pm on Saturday, when lightning struck an Eskom electrical sub-station and a mine sub-station, said mine spokesman James Duncan.

The lightning strike damaged the sub-stations and causing a complete power blackout to the shaft. Power cables caught fire, causing smoke to enter the shaft and underground working places. The fire was rapidly extinguished.

One hundred and eight workers were brought safely to surface. Six were hospitalised for smoke inhalation and later discharged.

Two avenues were being pursued to bring the remaining 167 employees, currently safe in underground rescue bays, to surface.

Efforts were being made to repair the lightning-damaged sub-station and if successful this would provide rapid means to bring the 167 workers to surface.

"In addition, two proto teams comprising a total of ten specially trained rescue workers are on their way to the 167 people via Blyvooruitzicht's No. 4 Shaft in order to lead them to safety," said Duncan.

## Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

### P

**placer mining** The American synonym for alluvial mining.



Placer gold winning at Ivalojoiki, near Kultala, in 1898. Photo: Emil Sarlin, GTK.