

Mining Accident News No.0905

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Wednesday 4 February 2009

Chile: Accident in Los Pelambres mine leaves three dead

Extract from El Mercurio emol.online, Chile

The company announced that it has decided to immediately shut down production plants in the area until further notice.

SALAMANCA, SPAIN.-The Los Pelambres Mining Company has reported the death of three workers belonging to the company Movitec, after they suffered an accident inside of the mine. The incident was confirmed to have taken place at approximately 11:30 p.m. last night.

Those who perished were identified as Jaime Godoy Gonzáles, Cristián Quezada Salinas and Osvaldo Cortés Carrizo, who were in a truck when the accident took place. The cause of the accident is still being investigated by the corresponding authorities.

In a press release, the Los Pelambres Mining Company stated that it had decided to immediately shutdown production plants in the area until further notice in order to aid investigation efforts and discover the details behind what caused the tragedy that has "prompted the entire organization and its affiliates to go into mourning".

Additionally, the company expressed its "deepest condolences for the families of the workers that lost their lives during this time of pain" and reiterated its "firm dedication to worker safety as a top priority in the management of the company".

U.S. mining deaths drop to all time low in 2008

Extract from The Ely Times, USA

ARLINGTON, Va. - Preliminary data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) released last month show that mine fatalities in 2008 fell to an all-time low recording a 31 percent drop from 2007. Metal/non-metal mines recorded the lowest level of fatalities in that sector of mining since statistics were first recorded in 1910, and the fatality level in coal mines was the lowest recorded number since 2005.

"Although these numbers demonstrate continuing improvements at our nation's mines, they also represent significant loss to the families and friends of 51 miners," said Richard E. Stickler, acting assistant secretary of labour for mine safety and health. "We must continue to be vigilant in our efforts to bring all miners home safe and healthy at the end of every shift."

Stickler pointed to a number of milestones the agency reached in 2008, including the first-ever

completion of all mandated safety and health inspections, the first-ever issuance of a pattern of violation notice, the implementation of eight final rules, and the successful collection of delinquent penalties from several scofflaw mine operators.

Of the 51 fatalities reported, 28 of the victims were at surface operations, while 23 miners died in underground mining accidents. Fifteen workers died in accidents involving powered haulage - 10 in coal mines and five in metal/non-metal mines - which was the leading cause of fatal mining accidents in the U.S. during 2008.

In 2008, MSHA assessed 198,700 civil penalties for violations of mine safety and health legal requirements, compared with 130,100 in 2007. The dollar amount of assessed penalties more than doubled in that time frame, from \$74.5 million in 2007 to \$194 million in 2008. The number and dollar amounts of civil penalties in 2008 are the most ever assessed in a single year.

Seventy-four flagrant violations were assessed in 2008, compared with 15 in 2007. They were assessed at a total for each year of \$11,474,400 and \$2,588,200, respectively.

A detailed summary of MSHA's enforcement and assessment activities, along with the mining industry's safety and health performance between fiscal year 2000 and 2008, is available at www.msha.gov. MSHA gathers mining fatality data from the 50 states, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. To view these statistics, go to www.msha.gov. Under the "statistics" heading, click on "fatality charts."

USA: Widow puts price on heartache

ARCH Coal could have to pay a widow over US\$37m (about \$57m) for the loss of her miner husband.

The miner died in January 2008 when the truck he was operating backed over a dumping point and continued down a slope at a highwall

operation at Cumberland River Blue Ridge mine in Virginia, USA.



The widow claims the mine is responsible for the incident with her husband having had just 12 days of experience at the time of the incident. He was also on his fourth night shift when the incident occurred.

The Office of Mine Safety and Licensing found Cumberland River had not followed state regulations. It says a safety barrier at the highwall mine's dump site was made of damp soil and varied between 17 inches and 46 inches in height, but did not keep the truck's wheels from rolling over it.

Arch Coal says it does not comment on pending litigation.

Thursday 5 February 2009

Bauxite refinery worker dies after being struck by hose

A MAN has been killed at the Sherwin Alumina bauxite refinery in Gregory, Texas.



The Nueces County Medical Examiner's office has reported the man died after being struck by high-pressure hose.

The US Department of Labour Mine Safety and Health Administration is investigating the incident.

The 40-year old worker was contracted to the company through HydroChem Industrial Services.

Friday 6 February 2009

Worker dies in accident at S.Africa's ARM mine

Extract from Reuters India

JOHANNESBURG - A worker died at African Rainbow Minerals' Khumani iron ore mine in South Africa when a truck he was driving collided with another, the National Union of Mine Workers and the company said on Friday.

ARM spokesman Jan Steenkamp said production at the mine was continuing as usual, but the area where the accident occurred had been closed for investigation.

"There is no reason to stop production as this is an open-cast mine....but the area has been barricaded off and we are waiting for representatives from the Department of Minerals and Energy to arrive to start the investigation," he said.

Mines in South Africa, the world's top source of platinum and a major producer of gold, have a 66 percent level of safety compliance, a recent safety audit of 355 mines nationwide revealed.

Minerals and Energy Minister Buyelwa Sonjica said at the release of the report that tougher penalties were needed.

Stricter safety laws passed by parliament last year which threaten jail time, as well as heavy fines for mine bosses, have caused concern among South African mining companies.

The amendments to the Mine and Safety Act 1996 will give the state the power to impose

fines of up to 1 million rand (\$101,000), up from 200,000 rand, or five years in jail for mine bosses who ignore safety regulations.

The amendments are yet to be signed into law.

Saturday 7 February 2009

USA: Driver dies when truck flips at mine

Extract from Charleston Gazette, WV, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A contract truck driver was killed Friday morning at a Massey Energy strip mine in eastern Kanawha County, state and federal officials said.

William Wade, 70, of Bloomingrose, lost control of his truck on a haul road at Massey subsidiary Elk Run Coal Co.'s Republic Energy Surface Mine, said Jama Jarrett, spokeswoman for the state Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

Amy Louviere, spokeswoman for the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, said the truck was traveling downhill on the paved road.

"An eyewitness saw the truck travel a short distance up an embankment and then flip over," Louviere said. "The driver was ejected from the truck and was fatally injured when he was pinned under the cab."

Louviere said the driver died "at about 12:50 p.m. after efforts began to rescue him from his trapped position."

Jarrett said state officials are not yet sure if Wade was ejected or if he tried to escape before the truck overturned.

Wade was employed by Medford Trucking, a contractor for the Massey operation.

The death is the first to be counted as a 2009 mining fatality in West Virginia and the United States. However, officials have not yet decided if they will count the earlier death of a worker in a vehicle accident as he drove home, taking a shortcut across a strip mine haul road.

Jarrett said state investigators and MSHA would examine the truck today to see if there was a mechanical failure.

Sunday 8 February 2009

USA: Drumlummon Mine must pay \$1,150 in fines

Extract from helenair.com, Montana

Marysville, Helena, Montana - Mining is dangerous, and even before the Drumlummon Mine starts to produce ore again, it's had a few scrapes.

The most hazardous incident occurred Nov. 2, when three men working in the mine suffered from minor carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mine Safety Officer Seibert "Smitty" Smith said on that day, two miners and a mechanic were working underground using a piece of diesel equipment that put out a lot of smoke.

"They started getting headaches and felt they were getting sick," Smith said last week, adding that one man vomited. "They called me and told me about it, and I had them transported to the hospital."

Two of the men had 5 percent carbon monoxide in their blood; the third man, a smoker, had 10 percent. They weren't admitted to the hospital, and it took less than an hour for the gas to leave their bodies.

Officials from the Mine Safety and Health Administration — where Smith previously worked — went to the mine and took gas readings to make sure the air was clear. The company working at the mine, RX Exploration, also installed ventilation fans and is using a cleaner biodiesel fuel now, and company guidelines say vehicles not in use must be shut down.

The most recent records from MSHA denote 23 code violations from inspections on April 4 and Oct. 16 at the mine; no citations were issued during a follow-up spot inspection Nov. 3. The company paid about \$1,150 in fines.

Most of the violations were relatively minor, like not having appropriate barricades, guardrails or warning signs, or not filing a report on time.

Smith said most of the violations came during a time when a different contractor was running the mine cleanup. He said since he came on board in October, they've been working on bringing all aspects of the operation up to code.

And while technology may have improved in the past century, underground mines are still dirty, wet, cold and dangerous. Before entering the mine, Smith demonstrates how to use the emergency air canisters strapped to everyone's waist, and cautions that the chemicals involved might burn the lips but under no circumstance should it be pulled away.

If "something" happens, everyone convenes in the area of refuge, where food and water are stockpiled and a telephone line connects to the surface.

The names of all who enter the mine are recorded in the contractor's trailer, with 2-inch brass tags hung on a wall, just in case an accident happens and they need to know how many people are below.

It's a testament to the reality that while men and high-tech equipment may burrow deep into the mountainside, fate, luck, safety training and survival tactics remain an integral part of mining.

Quote of the week

Concern for man and his fate must always form the chief interest of all technical endeavours. Never forget this in the midst of your diagrams and equations.

Albert Einstein

This week in mining accident history**Jeansville, Pennsylvania Mine Disaster February 4, 1891**

Article from *The Cranbury Press New Jersey*,
13 February 1891

MINERS DROWNED**An Engineer's Mistake Results in a Frightful Disaster.****Two Score of Men Perish at Jeansville, Penn.**

Eighteen men entombed in watery graves mark the result of the most awful mine horror that has ever occurred in Hazleton (Penn.) coal region. Jeansville, the pretty little mining village of J. C. Haydon & Co., two miles across the mountains from that place, is the scene of the disaster.

At 10:50 o'clock on a recent morning two miners, PATRICK COLT and CHARLES BOYLE, were at work in a breast of the mine of J. C. Hayden & Co., at Jeansville. They were drilling a hole and struck a vast body of water. In a few moments the entire slope was flooded, and eighteen men had perished in the rush of the waters.

There were twenty-five men at work in the slope at the time of the accident. One of the seven who escaped said that at first there was a rumble like the sound of an approaching train. In a moment there was a fierce blast of wind and the lamps were extinguished. There was a cry; "For God's sake run for your lives!"

WILLIAM BRESLIN, who escaped, said he cried out to a companion named JAMES GRIFFITHS to run. GRIFFITHS'S light went out, and that was the last BRESLIN saw of him. BRESLIN tried to run for the bottom of the slope, but made slow progress in the dark. Then BOYLE and JOHN NOLINS came running out of the gangway toward him. NOLINS'S lamp was burning, and by its aid they reached the bottom and then clambered up the slope. The water came on with a rush, and in less

than five minutes the water had raised 624 feet to the mouth of the slope, the pitch of which is eighty-three degrees.

JOHN WATKINS and JOHN MORGAN also escaped. They heard the cries of BOYLE and COLT to fly, and with great presence of mind they ran to an old air course and bursting open a brattice inside, made their escape. They dragged a frightened Hun with them and saved his life also. He was too frightened to make a move to escape, and with great courage MORGAN and WATKINS dragged him along at the risk of their own lives.

BOYLE and COLT, the two miners who tapped the deadly flood, strangely enough were saved from death. The water forced them along, and at last, as they were being shoved past an air way, BOYLE pulled COLT in and the two managed to escape.

The scene of the disaster was in the lower life or working of J. C. Hayden & Co.'s No. 1 slope. The upper gangway was worked out five years ago, and eighteen months ago the pumps were taken out. The workings gradually filled up with water. Many of the old miners knew of the presence of the water and trouble had been feared. None of the workmen had had any idea that the lower workings were driven so close to the water. As quick as the news of the disaster reached the surface hundreds of people flocked to the mine, but as there was nothing to see they soon left, and the scene around the mine was totally different from the heartrending scenes usually witnessed on such occasions.

It will take at least a week to pump out the water, the colliery owners say, but experienced miners think that it will take a month. Pumps are now taking 1500 gallons a minute from the mine. The accident is charged by some people to the oversight of the mining engineers in not notifying the workmen of the proximity of such a great body of water. J. C. Hayden & Co. are very wealthy operators. The same company operates mines at Mahanoy City, Penn.

Monday 9 February 2009

Labor safety committee notes decreased accident rate in Ukrainian mines

Extract from KyivPost, Ukraine

The head of the State Committee of Ukraine for Industrial Safety, Labor Protection and Mountain Supervision Serhiy Storzhak has noted decreasing levels of accidents in the coal industry of Ukraine in 2008.

According to him, last year the most devastating accidents involving deaths were caused by mine collapses and gas emissions on Chervonolymanska and Duvanna mines.



Storzhak said that the accident index in 2008 was 2.23% per 1 million tons of coal.

"According to the monitoring results, the majority of mines lack new technologies for mining deep coal layers. This is a characteristic feature of most small private mines," Storzhak said.

According to him, the committee has greatly changed its structure in Donetsk region.

"We have drastically changed the structure of Donetsk territorial department, providing maximum independence to Donetsk Mountain district," he said.

Apart from that, according to Storzhak, the role of the district head has increased and funding will be implemented through a separate procedure, "which would save [money for] our

projects regarding the salaries of monitoring inspectors in the most dangerous mines".

He also said that Donetsk structure would be a pilot project, which is to be introduced in other regions in which no structural changes were made.

5 Peru miners buried alive after explosion in Lima

Extract from Living in Peru, Lima, Peru

Five Peru mining workers were buried alive early Sunday after a tunnel collapsed and trapped them 200 meters (656 feet) below the earth.

It was reported that the accident took place in the Limean province of Huarochiri at El Carmen mine.

According to Casapalca mining company, the workers were buried alive after a "natural rock explosion" took place as the miners were extracting minerals.

Those trapped in the mine have been identified as 32-year-old Lucio Chipana, Edgar Villarreal (44), Alex Taype (22), César Herrera (20) and Carlos Corpus (35).

While several brigades of rescue workers have been organized and working around the clock to rescue the miners, none of them have been located yet.

Labor Minister Jorge Villasante affirmed that 17 tons of earth have already been moved in efforts to rescue the trapped men.

Tuesday 10 February 2009

WA goldfield thieves jeopardise mine safety

SIX men have been charged for stealing safety equipment at mines in the West Australian goldfields.

The Gold Stealing Detection Unit says emergency vehicle parts and equipment used to lift workers out of mines were stolen.

KCGM's Super Pit gold mine in Kalgoorlie and Barrick Gold's Darlot mine, north of Kalgoorlie were both targeted by the thieves.

Some of the men worked on the mines and Police say if convicted the employees will never work in the industry again.

Worksafe says the saddest thing about the crime is the many miners safety which was jeopardised.

Wednesday 11 February 2009

Appeals judge orders tougher mine safety rules

Extract from The West Frankfort Daily American

A judge on Tuesday ordered the federal agency that regulates coal mining to strengthen rules designed to make the nation's 38,000 underground coal miners safer by creating better-trained rescue teams.

U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Judge Stephen Williams ordered the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration to reconsider rescue team rules covering small coal mines. Current rules allow teams at mines with fewer than 36 employees to train just once a year.

Williams ruled that violates a federal law passed after the deaths of 12 West Virginia coal miners following a January 2006 methane gas explosion and two other high-profile underground mining accidents that killed seven workers in West Virginia and Kentucky later that year.

Williams also ordered MSHA to eliminate a rule allowing teams of state mine inspectors to substitute work for rescue practice.

MSHA said it will make the necessary changes, which will require state employee teams to train twice a year at small mines and participate in two contests for mine rescue teams, the agency said in a statement. Teams at small mines will be required to train twice a year as well, MSHA said.

United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, whose labour union challenged the rules in court, praised the ruling.

"MSHA attempted to water down the requirement that mine rescue teams train at least twice a year, but the court said no," Roberts said in a statement. "Coal miners and our families have learned the hard way that well-trained mine rescue teams, responding immediately to incidents in the mines, can save lives."

It's unclear how much the added requirement might cost the nation's 600-plus underground coal mines.

A National Mining Association spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Williams did uphold several other portions of the regulations, including a provision that allows training exercises to be substituted for rescue contests.

Thursday 12 February 2009

UK: Mine rescue team tackle Corsham blaze with liquid nitrogen

Extract from This is Wiltshire.co.uk, Swindon, England, UK

The Wessex Mine Rescue team has been tackling the blaze at Monk's Park former underground limestone mine with liquid nitrogen at Leaffield mine beneath the Leaffield Industrial Estate.



Monks Park

Leaffield Logistics, who store naval supplies in the former mine confirmed that nobody has been injured as very few staff were on site when it broke out 60 feet underground.

All staff have since been sent home while the Wessex Mines Rescue check out the extent of the fire, in preparation for the fire fighters to extinguish the fire.

The fire which is thought to be contained within one chamber started yesterday morning and is thought to be slowly lowering in temperature making the situation safer.

A fork lift truck is thought to be the cause of the fire 100ft underground, which was attended by crews from all over Wiltshire yesterday and is being supervised by crews from Chippenham, Trowbridge and a specialist unit from, Devizes.

Wiltshire Fire press officer Louise Knox said: "Yesterday it was deemed to dangerous for them to go down there and as there was nobody in danger, the team decided it would be senseless to take dangerous risks.

Corsham fire fighter Martin Hancock said: "The fire started a couple of hours ago. We are now waiting for the mine rescue to check out the situation before we take any action.

"There are very strict procedures for fires in mines which mean that before we can do anything the mine rescue team have to assess the situation." The former mine has many fire alarms underground, which alerted staff to the fire, who then called for the emergency services.

There are seven fire appliances currently in attendance from Corsham, Calne, Chippenham, Devizes, Malmesbury, Melksham and Cooper.

David Weeks, who is head of communications at the Hanson mine next door to Monk's Park said that the MoD who use the mine for storage, notified him about the fire this morning but has said he has not been affected by the blaze as Hanson site has not been mined for the past four years.

"We received a call this morning and checked the entrance to the mine to make sure everything was alright.

"The mines are all in the same complex however they are separate underground which means our site has not been affected by the blaze."

"The liquid nitrogen is being used to try and extinguish the fire by starving it of oxygen."

The Health and Protection Agency and NHS Wiltshire are working with the fire service and the mine rescue team to give precautionary advice to residents living in the immediate vicinity, advising them to keep windows and doors closed until further notice.

There is also thought to be asbestos in parts of the mine, however experts from the Health Protection Agency have said that the risk from the asbestos to the local community is low.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

P

- pit** A depression, usually 2-3 metres in diameter, wider than it is deep. Commonly seen on alluvial fields where they are the remains of shallow shafts dug to access ore-bearing ground.
- Also known as 'potholes'.
- Also used generically to describe a coal mine.

- Ed.