

Mining Accident News No.0906

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Friday 13 February 2009

Work camps linked to the mining sector aren't safe for women

A MAN has raped a 19-year-old woman at a work camp in Goonyella, Queensland.

Both the man and woman are employees at Incitec Pivot's ammonia nitrate facility at Moranbah.

The facility provides ammonium nitrate, primarily used as an ingredient for explosives for the Queensland coal mining industry.

The woman was in her unit at the camp when the 28-year-old attacker broke in and assaulted her.

Police say the woman was staying at the camp as she was not a Moranbah resident.

This is the second alleged sex attack on a woman at a work camp near Moranbah in the past seven months. A 49-year-old woman was also allegedly raped at Anglo Coal's Grosvenor Village Accommodation on Industrial Avenue, near Moranbah North mine.

The surrounding communities are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of the camps.

The man appeared at Moranbah Magistrate's Court on 11 February 2009.

Saturday 14 February 2009

Fourth day of underground blaze

Extract from BBC News, UK

A fire which began in an underground storage site in Corsham three days ago is unlikely to be out till Sunday at least, Wiltshire Fire Service said.

The blaze, contained in a former mine up to 100ft (30m) below the surface, is believed to have been started by an electric forklift.

Crews are using liquid nitrogen to extinguish the flames.

Nigel Thomas, commercial director of Leaffield Logistics, which owns the site, said smoke was the main problem.

"It's been a situation where we can't commit mines rescue employees to the site of the fire because of the smoke," he said.

"The nitrogen will remove the capacity for oxygen to feed the fire, finally remove any doubt that there's a fire there, then we will move into the mine sometime [over] the weekend."

The Monk's Park site, which covers 18 acres, is used by Leaffield Logistics to store surplus MoD equipment.

The company said no explosives were kept in the former mine.

Eight dead in SW China coal mine accident

Extract from China Daily, China

GUIYANG -- Eight miners were killed Friday in a gas and coal eruption at a mine in southwest China's Guizhou Province, local work safety officials said.

The outburst happened at 1:36 a.m. at the Zhihe mine in Zhijin County when 33 miners were working underground. Twenty-five miners managed to escape, said officials of the Guizhou provincial work safety bureau.

Most of the victims were migrant workers from neighboring Chongqing.

Their relatives are en route to the mine, a spokesman with the rescue headquarters said.

The accident also injured one miner, who was being treated at a local hospital, the spokesman said. "The injured miner was in a coma but has regained consciousness," he said.

The mine was ordered to halt production on January 19 for safety reasons, but it resumed production without approval Thursday.

Local authorities are investigating the cause of the accident.

Four Colombian miners die in coal mine accident

Extract from Reuters UK

BOGOTA, - Four coal miners were killed and two injured on Saturday in an accident at a mine in central Colombia, one of the country's worst such incidents in months, an official said.

"At the moment, they're carrying out a rescue operation to retrieve the bodies but by Monday or Tuesday we should have more details about the cause," said Adriana Cuevas, an emergency official.

She said an explosion of gases was the likely cause of the accident at the small mine in the province of Boyaca.

Last August, a methane explosion killed eight miners in an illegally operated coal mine in neighbouring Cundinamarca province.

Colombia is among the world's top five coal suppliers.

Two rescue workers killed in coal mine blast in Siberia

Extract from RIA Novosti, Moscow, Russia

KEMEROVO, - Two rescue workers were killed on Saturday in an explosion at a coal mine in southwest Siberia, an official from the Kemerovo region administration said.

A team of rescue workers descended in the Voroshilov mine in the town of Prokopyevsk in the the Kuznetsk coal basin, or Kuzbass, to investigate the cause of a high concentration of carbon monoxide underground.

"The accident occurred at about 10:14 a.m. Moscow time (07:30 GMT) on Saturday, after 172 mine workers were evacuated from the mine following a gas leak warning," the official said.

The work at the mine has been suspended until the end of an investigation into the accident.

The Voroshilov mine and other mines in Kuzbass have recently underwent safety inspections following a minor methane gas

blast at the Voroshilov mine last June, when seven miners received burns of varying degrees.

Tuesday 17 February 2009

Anglo's SAfrica coal mine halts output after death

Extract from Reuters

JOHANNESBURG - Anglo American Plc's South African coal unit said on Tuesday it had shut a coal mine for one day after a worker died at the facility, but could not immediately quantify the lost output.

Anglo's Johannesburg-based spokesman, Pranill Ramchander, confirmed reports by the Solidarity trade union that the worker died in hospital after being hit by a vehicle on Monday at Anglo's Goedehoop coal mine in Witbank, east of Johannesburg.

The Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) and the mine's management were conducting investigations into the cause of the accident, Ramchander and the union said.

"I can confirm we had a fatality," Ramchander said. "We had to shut the mine down today (Tuesday), but we will resume production tomorrow. I can't immediately quantify how much output is likely to be lost."

Coal is ranked as the third most dangerous mining sector in South Africa after gold and platinum, Solidarity said, quoting figures supplied by the DME.

The DME has been routinely closing down mines on a temporary basis after a fatality, to put pressure on mining companies to improve safety.

A recent report showed that mines in South Africa, the world's top source of platinum and a major producer of gold, have a "disappointing" level of safety compliance.

The long-awaited safety audit on 355 mines nationwide revealed that mine safety compliance was at 66 percent, and the country's parliament has made amendments to

laws that govern mines to introduce stricter safety measures and bigger fines to negligent mine managers. The amendments are yet to be signed into law.

Mine Foreman Expected to be Arraigned on Charges

Extract from WSAZ-TV, Huntington, WV, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - A mine foreman from a coal mine where two men died is expected to be arraigned on criminal charges Tuesday.

The indictment accuses David Runyon of knowingly violating safety standards because he didn't have mandatory evacuation drills at the Aracoma Mine.

Runyon is also charged with falsifying records to show that the drills were conducted in 2005.

The two men died when a conveyor belt caught fire back in January 2006.

Runyon faces up to 17 years in prison and a \$700 thousand dollar fine.

The arraignment is set for Tuesday at 2:00pm in federal court.

WA: Mine safety jeopardised by blatant cost-cutting exercise

THE MINING and Energy division of the Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU) has accused Jabiru Metals of compromising mine health and safety.

The company allegedly has made its mine supervisor redundant and changed the job title to allow them to hire someone else and cut costs.

The mine 60km north of Leonora, Western Australia now hosts a shift co-ordinator in place of the mine supervisor who was made redundant.

The miner claims it needed someone more multi-skilled after their underground development stopped which cut their number of operators from around 10 to 4. The shift co-ordinator works as well as manages.

The union claims this was a blatant cost-cutting exercise. The mine is now effectively running without a mine manager.

The group says multi-skilling is all well and good, but we're talking about pretty heavy equipment here. It is concerned about the safety of the miners.

Wednesday 18 February 2009

Truck driver crushed to death at coal mine

Content provided by AAP

NEWCASTLE - Operations at a Hunter Valley mine have been shut down after a load of coal crushed a truckie to death.

Mine owner Xstrata Coal said the contractor died while operating a coal reject truck on the surface of the Ravensworth Underground mine near Singleton.

The 59-year-old Singleton man arrived at the mine about 2.20am (AEDT) on Wednesday, police said.

"The coal loaders' chute was activated a short time later, dumping a large amount of coal onto the cab of the truck," police said in a statement.

"The truck driver was crushed in the incident and died at the scene."

Xstrata Coal said the mine had ceased operations while an investigating was under way.

"Our priority is to provide the necessary assistance and support for the family and colleagues of the deceased and our thoughts are with them at this difficult time," Xstrata Coal NSW chief operating officer Mick Buffier said in a statement.

"We are currently working with the Department of Primary Industries, police and emergency services to determine how this tragic incident has occurred."

A WorkCover NSW representative is also due to visit the scene on Wednesday.

Chinese mining company rejects CFMEU safety claims

CITIC Pacific Mining has rejected the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union's (CFMEU) claims that it put workers at risk at its iron ore mine.

The CFMEU says the miner jeopardised the safety of miners by allowing up to 16 miners to travel on a grader at its Cape Preston mine in the Pilbara.

The workers were loaded onto the machine while floodwaters blocked local roads and stopped mining operations.

The miner claims while workers were carried on the vehicle risk assessments were done every step of the way and it is certainly not a common practise.

Worksafe Western Australia says it has received a complaint about transport safety at the mine and paid a visit to the site.

Kentucky man killed in southern Illinois when lumber falls on him at mine

Extract from WQAD - Moline, IL, USA & Associated Press

CUTLER, Ill. — Authorities say a Kentucky man was killed when lumber he was unloading at a southern Illinois coal mine shifted and tumbled onto him.

Perry County sheriff's investigators say 27-year-old Jarod Kacer of Hopkinsville, Ky., died at the scene of the accident shortly after noon Tuesday at Knight Hawk mine near Cutler.

Kacer was a driver for Kacer Farms Trucking, a family-owned business near his hometown.


The investigation continues.

Quote of the week

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

Aesop

This week in mining accident history

Date Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)	Victim / Incident
16 Feb 1894 McLeod's Claim Gladestone QLD Underground gold mine	William McLeod killed. Deceased was stoping out quartz near the surface when the hanging wall gave way, crushed him to death.
28 Feb 1928 Bell Island Newfoundland, Canada Underground iron ore mine	Samuel Cobb killed. Dynamite blast.
	
<p>Bell Island Mine No. 3 Slope, ca. 1900. Bell Island miners at opening of No. 3 Slope, about to descend for the 6:00 p.m. shift. Candles on hats are to light their way underground.</p>	
27 Feb 1879 Craighead Colliery Blantyre Parish, Scotland	<p>Fatal accident On Wednesday night, a brusher, 33 years of age, named William Black, residing at Henderson's Buildings, Stonefield Blantyre, was killed in Craighead Colliery, Blantyre (Messrs Wm Baird & Co). He had fired a shot and was redding up, when a stone from the roof weighing 5 tons fell upon him. Death was instantaneous.]</p>
27 Feb 1879 Craighead Colliery Blantyre Parish, Scotland	<p>Fatal Accident On Wednesday night while William Black, 36, residing at Henderson's Buildings, Springwell, Stonefield, was employed "brushing" at Craighead Pit, belonging to Messrs Baird, a heavy fall of stones etc, took place, and killed him on the spot. Deceased leaves a widow and 5 children.</p>

Thursday 19 February 2009

USA: Workers return to mine

Extract from Uniontown Herald Standard, Uniontown, PA,

Employees at Foundation Coal's Emerald Mine near Waynesburg returned to work Monday, one week after the mine was evacuated because of a potentially explosive mixture of methane gas and oxygen that was discovered in a sealed portion of the mine.

About 600 employees were evacuated from the mine at 11 a.m. Feb. 9 after monitoring equipment in a sealed portion of the mine detected the explosive combination of methane and oxygen, according to Rick Nida, manager of investor and media relations at Foundation Coal Corp.

Nida explained that methane naturally builds up in sealed areas of mines and Foundation Coal captures the gas and sells it as natural gas. If too much oxygen enters a sealed area with a buildup of methane, however, the mixture becomes explosive, he said.

The combination becomes explosive when the level of methane is 4.5 to 17 percent methane and the amount of oxygen is more than 10 percent, he said.

A barometric pressure change on Feb. 9 caused oxygen-containing air to get sucked into the mine, he explained.

"When that situation occurs, you have to evacuate the mine," Nida said.

Officials from the U.S. Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration were then notified and they issued the evacuation order. Nida said workers injected and pumped nitrogen, an inert gas, into the mine throughout the later part of the week to force the oxygen out.

"This action ultimately got the methane and oxygen levels back into balance," he said.

MSHA lifted the evacuation order early Monday and the employees were able to return to work, Nida said.

"(Mine officials) anticipated that it could take as long as two weeks to remove the threat of a potential explosion, but we're pleased to see that it was taken care of in only a week and that Emerald Mine was able to resume its normal production on Monday," he said.

The temporary loss of coal production did not and will not interfere with supply contracts Foundation has with its customers, he added.

Sunday 22 February 2009

One killed, one injured in central China coal mine cave-in

Extract from Xinhua, China

ZHENGZHOU, -- One person was killed and another injured in a coal mine cave-in in central China's Henan Province, local authorities said on Sunday.

The accident happened at around 4 p.m. Saturday, when 34 people just finished their shift in the shaft of the Yangcheng No. 2 Coal Mine in Dengfeng city.

Thirty-two miners escaped while two others were trapped, said Li Weiguang, Dengfeng's vice mayor.

One of the trapped died after being pulled out and rushed to hospital. The other, who suffered a broken arm, was transferred to a hospital in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan and some 90 kilometers away from the mine.

The mine was collectively owned with an annual output of 600,000 tons. It was undergoing an overhaul.

Dengfeng is the location of the famous Shaolin Temple.

China mine accident leaves 73 miners dead

Extract from RIA Novosti, Russia

BEIJING, - At least 73 miners died and dozens of others were trapped underground in a blast that hit a coal mine in northern China, the

official news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.

The accident occurred early on Sunday at the Tunlan Coal Mine in Gujiao city, some 50 km (30 miles) away from Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province, when 436 miners were working underground. More than 300 miners managed to escape, the agency reported.

According to the agency, 113 miners were hospitalized, with 21 of them in critical condition. Rescue work is continuing.

China's mining industry is considered one of the world's most dangerous, with accidents killing up to 7,000 workers annually. A major gas blast at Liaoning's Sunjiawan mine in February 2005 killed more than 200 miners, making it the worst mining tragedy in China for at least 15 years.

Monday 23 February 2009

Beaconsfield inquest verdict

HOBART, TAS- The coroner investigating the death of Beaconsfield miner Larry Knight will deliver his findings on Thursday, almost three years after the disaster.

Mr Knight was killed by an underground rockfall while working at the Beaconsfield gold mine in northern Tasmania on April 25, 2006.

Coroner Rod Chandler heard nine weeks of evidence from almost 40 witnesses in Launceston before adjourning in November last year to consider his findings.

A spokesman for the coroner says Mr Chandler will reconvene the inquest in Launceston on Thursday at 11am (AEDT) to deliver his findings into the fatal rockfall.

In his final submission to Mr Chandler in November, counsel assisting the coroner Michael O'Farrell said that despite best endeavours, flawed assumptions and a failure to address previous rockfalls by the mining company and its manager led to Mr Knight's death.

Mr O'Farrell concluded that it was incumbent on Allstate Explorations NL and manager Matthew Gill to fully assess risks that could cause injury or death.

Lawyers for the Knight family and the Australian Workers Union (AWU) in their final submission asked Mr Chandler for a finding against Allstate Explorations and its parent company Beaconsfield Gold NL.

Lawyer Kamal Farouque told the coroner that Allstate's management failures contributed to Mr Knight's death.

Mr Farouque said Mr Gill was ultimately responsible for deficiencies in the mine's ground supports.

Lawyers for Mr Gill, Allstate Explorations and Beaconsfield Gold, in their final written submission, said that if there was any degree of fault on the part of their clients it was not enough to conclude that it caused Mr Knight's death.

David Neal, SC, told the inquiry a number of times that the fatal event was unforeseen and unforeseeable.

Miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb were rescued 14 days after being trapped almost a kilometre underground by the rockfall that killed Mr Knight.

Allstate Explorations was the managing joint venture partner in the mine with Beaconsfield Gold.

Allstate Explorations went into administration and had its shares suspended in 2001.

Beaconsfield Gold took over management of the mine in February 2007, paying out creditors before buying Allstate in July 2007.

Allstate Explorations remains a subsidiary company of Beaconsfield Gold. Its shares remain suspended from trading.

Three officials ousted following fatal China coal mine gas blast

Extract from Xinhua, China

TAIYUAN, -- Three coal mine officials were removed from their posts in the wake of a fatal gas blast that killed 74 miners in north China's Shanxi Province Sunday, said a source from the State Administration of Work Safety Monday.

The three officials were said to be the chief of Tunlan coal mine, the engineer-in-chief and a deputy chief of the coal mine in charge of work safety.

No further details regarding their identities are available at the moment.

The accident occurred at around 2:20 a.m. Sunday, while 436 miners were working underground at the Tunlan Coal Mine of Shanxi Coking Coal Group in Gujiao City, about 50 km away from Taiyuan, the provincial capital.

In addition to the 74 fatalities, the gas blast injured 114 miners, most of whom showed symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, according to rescuers.

Five of the injured workers, who were said to be in critical condition as of Sunday evening, were transferred to two hospitals in Taiyuan. The two hospitals are the People's Hospital of Shanxi Province and the No.2 Hospital affiliated to Shanxi Medical University.

Xiao Chuanshi, president of the No.2 Hospital, said Monday the injured were expected to be fully recovered within three weeks.

Father-to-be killed on BHP mine site

BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) suspended operations at one of its Queensland mines after a man was killed on 20 February 2009.

The coal miner says the employee of an Australian communication solutions provider was killed when the ute he was driving collided

with a piece of heavy machinery at its Blackwater mine.

Sadly, the deceased's wife is eight months pregnant with the couple's fourth child. A spokesperson for the woman says she wanted to thank her husband's employer, management at the mine and the community for their support in the family's hour of need.

Police and investigators from the Department of Mines and Energy are investigating the incident.

Tuesday 24 February 2009

Pan African Says 5 Illegal Miners Found Dead at Consort Mine

Extract from Bloomberg.com

Pan African Resources Plc discovered the bodies of five illegal miners at its Consort mine at Barberton in South Africa on Feb. 21, the company said in a statement today.

Mining resumed on schedule on Feb. 23 and there is likely to be "an insignificant impact on production," the company said. None of its employees were harmed in the fire at the mine, it added.

Injured miners in Shanxi's fatal mine blast out of danger

Extract from Xinhau, China

BEIJING, -- Twenty-one out of the 26 miners who were seriously injured in a fatal gas blast that killed 74 miners in north China's Shanxi Province are in stable condition, according to a senior health official on Monday.

Five others who were previously in critical condition are also recovering.

They have been transferred to two hospitals in the provincial capital Taiyuan -- the People's Hospital of Shanxi Province and the No. 2 Hospital affiliated to Shanxi Medical University.

Xiao Chuanshi, president of the No. 2 Hospital, said the injured are expected to make a full recovery within three weeks.

The blast occurred at around 2:20 a.m. Sunday while 436 miners were working underground at the Tunlan Coal Mine of Shanxi Coking Coal Group in Gujiao City, about 50 km away from Taiyuan.

In addition to the 74 fatalities, the gas blast injured a total of 114 miners. Most of the injured miners showed symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

China plans to close 1,000 small coal mines in '09

Extract from Alibaba News Channel, New York, USA

SHANGHAI - China plans to close nearly 1,000 small coal mines in 2009 as part of a safety campaign and a drive to consolidate the industry, the State Administration of Work Safety said on its website (www.chinasafety.gov.cn).

China has long strived to improve its mine safety record, but many of its small mines are still dangerous and inefficient.

Nearly two-thirds of China's coking coal supply comes from small mines, which have been blamed for the country's poor mine safety record.

The administration said last October that China would need to reduce the number of small mines by more than 4,000 in the next two years, to below 10,000.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

P

pithead The area of working at the top of a coal mine shaft or haulage. It includes the associated structures and machinery used in the retrieval and processing of coal.

- Ed.