

Mining Accident News No.0910

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Monday 23 March 2009

Survival chances slim for 13 trapped miners in central China

Extract from Xinhua, .China

CHANGNING, Hunan, -- Rescuers said survival chances are slim for 13 miners who have been trapped in a flooded mine for more than 50 hours in central China's Hunan Province.

Rescuers added two more pumps to get the water out but it only dropped 50.5 cm from late Sunday night till about 9 a.m. Monday. That's compared with a 5.6-meter drop on Sunday, said Yan Yinchu, deputy director of Hunan Provincial Work Safety Administration.

Experts estimated that floodwater in the mine could reach more than 200,000 cubic meters.

The mine's complicated terrain and accumulation of debris had also made the rescue more difficult, he said.

More than 100 rescuers and volunteer miners are continuing their efforts to rescue the trapped. Local police were required to identify the 13 trapped miners as soon as possible.

The flood occurred around 5 p.m. Saturday in a private mine in Sanjiaotang Township, Changning City. The mine was in the process of merging with another mine and was closed down by the local work safety administration on March 7. However, illegal production began days after a check by authorities on March 16 to make sure the mine was still closed, said Li Yuechu, an information official of Changning.

The mine managers fled the scene without reporting the accident to local authorities.

Peng Qingchun and Liao Lunsheng, shareholders of the mine, were captured.

Wednesday 25 March 2009

Poland: Quake at a Silesian colliery

Extract from Polskieradio.pl

One miner died and three others were injured as a result of a powerful earth movement in the Rudna copper mine in Polkowice, south western Poland, this morning.

According to Edyta Tomaszewska, the spokeswoman of the Local Mining Authorities, the incident occurred 1100 meters below the ground level at 1.03 a.m. Twenty three miners were on the spot at the time of the accident, most of them manage to evacuate safely.

The deceased miner leaves behind a wife and three children. The injured ones were transported to a local hospital.

A team of experts is currently working in the scene of the accident to examine the circumstances of the accident.

South Africa: Harmony worker killed at Virginia mine

Extract from miningweekly.com

JOHANNESBURG – A mineworker died at South African mining company Harmony Gold's Virginia operations this week, the JSE-listed firm reported on Wednesday.

The team leader died in an accident involving a winder stator at the Brand 2 shaft, in the Free State.

Harmony Gold said that it had, together with the Department of Minerals and Energy, launched an investigation in the accident.

Work had been stopped at the affected winder reclamation until the completion of the probe. The company's production would not be affected, as Brand 2 is not an operational shaft.

Last week, Harmony Gold also reported a fatality at the mill section of its Central Plant, in the Free State. An employee died when a rusted walkway on which plant workers were standing to clean pipes gave way.

The South African mining industry has reported around 37 deaths this year alone.

Thursday 26 March 2009

DJ Zambia Govt Probes Chambishi Copper Mine Accident - Union

Extract from The Wall Street Journal (WSJ.com)

The safety department at Zambia's Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development is investigating an accident at Chambishi Copper Mine on Tuesday which left one miner dead, a union official told Dow Jones Newswires Thursday.

"Investigations will establish whether management is adhering to safety measures," Sikufela Mundia, president of the National Union of Miners and Allied Workers, said by telephone from Kitwe, on the Copper Belt, adding that the investigation will conclude in around a week's time.

The mine is owned by NFC Africa Mining, a unit of China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group Co. Ltd. (8306.HK). Company officials declined to comment.

The Zambian government has, in the past, warned Chinese investors to improve safety at their mines or risk closure. In January, the

safety department ordered the closure of Chinese-owned Collum Coal Mine following a spate of fatal accidents.

Chinese mining companies are unpopular with both unions and politicians in Zambia, who accuse them of having poor labor policies. Michael Sata, Zambia's main opposition leader, threatened to throw them out of the country during the 2006 presidential campaign.

Quote of the week

Innovators and men of genius have almost always been regarded as fools at the beginning (and very often at the end) of their careers.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Friday 27 March 2009

Aracoma foreman to plead guilty in fire investigation

Extract from Charleston Gazette. WV, USA

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A foreman at Massey Energy's Aracoma Alma No. 1 Mine has agreed to plead guilty as part of a continuing criminal investigation of the January 2006 fire that killed two Massey coal miners.

David R. Runyon was charged in January in a five-count indictment with failing to conduct required mine evacuation drills and then lying about it on federal safety reports.

The indictment included two misdemeanor charges -- those concerning failing to conduct the drills -- but also three more serious felony counts, which were for his allegedly faking safety reports to make it appear that the drills had been performed.

Runyon, 43, of Justice, originally pleaded innocent, but on March 20, Assistant U.S. Attorney Hunter Smith filed a motion asking U.S. District Judge John T. Copenhaver Jr. to schedule a "guilty plea hearing" in the case. On Thursday, Copenhaver scheduled that hearing for 11 a.m. on April 9.

The court documents do not detail to which of the charges in the indictment Runyon will plead guilty.

Under federal law, anyone who willfully violates specific mine safety standards can be charged with a misdemeanor criminal charge. But the law allows felony charges against anyone who knowingly makes a false statement on any safety records required to be kept by mine operators.

Each misdemeanor carries a maximum sentence of one year in prison and \$100,000 in fines. Each felony carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and \$250,000 in fines.

The charges against Runyon are the first in what is expected to be a series of criminal charges against various Massey mine managers for their roles in the Jan. 19, 2006, fire that killed miners Don Bragg and Ellery Hatfield.

In January, Massey's Aracoma Coal Co. subsidiary pleaded guilty to 10 criminal safety violations and agreed to pay \$2.5 million in criminal fines. The company also agreed to pay \$1.7 million in civil fines to resolve more than 1,300 civil violations cited by the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Copenhaver has scheduled sentencing for Aracoma Coal at 1:30 p.m. on April 15.

This week in mining accident history

Date Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)
<p>26 March 1896</p> <p>Brunner Mine, West Coast, South Island, New Zealand</p> <p>Underground coal mine</p> <p><i>Source: Wikipedia</i></p>
Incident
<p>The Brunner Mine was one of several mines situated on the banks of the Grey River, at an area known as 'Coal Gorge' between the townships of Stillwater and Taylorville, on the West Coast of the South Island, New Zealand. The town of Brunner (formerly Brunnerton) is nearby.</p>

At 9.30am on Thursday the 26th of March 1896, an explosion deep in the Brunner Mine killed all 65 miners inside, and was labeled the worst mining disaster in New Zealand's history.



It seemed most likely that the explosion was caused by firedamp, a common hazard in coal mines, where a pocket of methane gas is accidentally ignited and explodes. Firedamp is all the more hazardous because of the after effects of the explosion. Gases known as 'afterdamp' –carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide produced by the explosion often prove to be just as deadly and can kill miners untouched by the explosion itself.

“Joseph Scott, the Blackball Mine Manager... believed that the majority (of miners) were killed by the explosion and “not more than half a dozen by the afterdamp”. Robert Russell, believing the explosion to be caused by firedamp, while acknowledging that the explosion force and coal dust flames contributed to the causes of death, believed that “at the end it was the afterdamp gases that killed them (all).” Dr. James McBrearty’s description of many victims frothing at the mouth, suggests asphyxiation by the predominant afterdamp gas, being carbon dioxide. The afterdamp gas carbon monoxide which presented such a problem for the recovery teams must also have contributed to death through poisoning. It was not then fully appreciated that only small quantities of carbon monoxide or white damp could be fatal”.



Rescuers begin the job of removing bodies within the mine
Rescuers entering the mine after the explosion found

themselves suffocating on the afterdamp gasses and had to return to the surface, often unconscious, carried by other rescuers, however the determination was such to find the bodies, and to find any survivors, that the rescuers –mostly miners from nearby mines- would insist on returning to the airless mine as soon as they had been revived on the surface. Miners came from as far as Denniston to assist in the rescue effort, albeit that it took the Denniston miners several days to arrive as they had to travel by sea from Westport.

The bodies of all 65 miners from the Brunner mine were eventually accounted for, including a Mr. John Roberts and three of his sons who were all working that day indicating the close family ties shared by many of the miners and compounding the tragedy for their surviving relatives.

Sunday 29 March 2009

Eight trapped in N China iron mine flooding

Extract from Xinhua, China

SHIJIAZHUANG, -- Eight people were trapped in an iron mine flooding in north China's Hebei Province Saturday night, according to local government sources.

The accident occurred at 9:50 p.m. at the north mining area of Xishimen iron mine in Wu'an city, and 26,000 cubic meters of water flowed into the mine in 20 minutes. When the accident took place, 22 miners were working below ground, and 14 people managed to escape.

Rescuers rushed to the site and started to pump water. Rescue operation is continuing. The iron mine belongs to China Minmetals Corp.

Death toll in SW China quarry explosion rises to seven

Extract from Xinhua, China

GUIYANG, -- The death toll from a quarry explosion on Sunday in southwest China's Guizhou Province has risen to seven as one injured miner died in hospital, according to sources with the Provincial government.

The explosion also left three others injured, and one missing. Experts are making a safe rescue plan to avoid more explosions in the quarry.

A preliminary investigation shows that the tragedy occurred at about 4:50 p.m. in a sand quarry under construction in Zhenfeng County of Buyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Qianxinan.

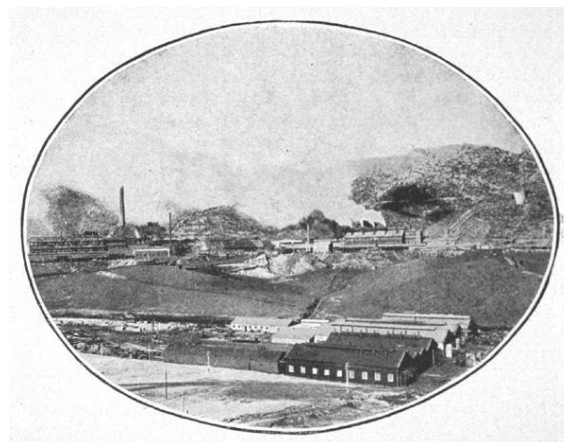
Officials of the Provincial Work Safety Supervision Bureau rushed to the site for rescue effort and an investigation has been launched for the cause of the accident.

Mining dictionary

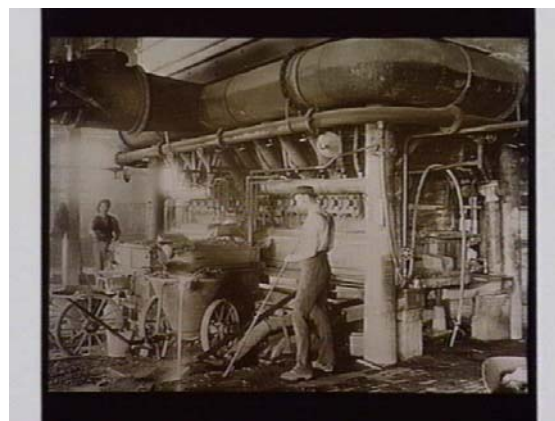
A guide to common mining terminology

P

pyritic smelting A form of copper smelting that utilises the sulphur content of the ore as a fuel. The technique was perfected at the Mount Lyell smelters in Tasmania, but normally only partial pyritic smelting was practiced, with external fuel being added. The process was carried out in blast furnaces.



Mount Lyell Smelters, circa 1917



Topping Floor Mount Lyell Cos Smelter, Queenstown, TAS