

Mining Accident News No.0911

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Monday 30 March 2009

Tanzania mine collapse kills 11

Extract from BBC News, UK

At least 11 people are feared dead after a collapse at a gold mine in north-western Tanzania.

Miners were using hand tools to dig a shaft when a wall gave way as they reached a depth of around 140m (460ft).

Eleven miners were registered as being inside the pit when Sunday's tragedy happened at the town of Geita.

But officials say the true death toll could be higher as it is common for some prospectors not to bother registering when they descend.

Geita has attracted miners since gold was discovered during colonial times in the early 1900s.

But correspondents say the prospectors' activities are highly unregulated, resulting in dangerous practices.

Mine site safety jeopardised by illegal drug and explosives smuggling

Western Australian police have released details on an operation conducted in March 2009.

The Kalgoorlie-based Gold Stealing Detection Unit and the Australian Federal Police say it suspects miners are trafficking drugs and explosives across Australia.

The authorities targeted passengers baggage on flights to and from mine sites. They say although no miners were caught in possession, the sniffer dogs detected the scent of illegal substances on many incidences.



Detective Senior Sergeant Dom Blackshaw says for a dog to give an indication it's a fairly good indication for us that the bag has come into contact with either drugs or explosives.

Wednesday 1 April 2009

WA: Stop work notices loom over BHP Billiton over failed safety record

MINES and Petroleum Minister Norman Moore has announced that the State Government has taken the unprecedented step of ordering stop work notices for any breach of workplace

conditions related to BHP Billiton sites until the problem is fixed.

The announcement follows high-level talks with BHP Billiton executives to discuss the recent spate of deaths at the company's worksites.

Moore says there have been five fatalities this financial year at sites operated by BHP Billiton, and the State Government will not stand by and let this state of affairs continue.

Mines Inspectors will now issue prohibition notices to BHP under the Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994 - basically a stop work notice - for any breach of work practices or work place conditions that may constitute a hazard to workers.

Until now Mines Inspectors have generally issued improvement notices for breaches of worksite conditions - orders that allowed work to continue while problems were addressed.

The Minister said the new policy was a result of State Mining Engineer Martin Knee taking the unprecedented step of using his discretionary powers under the Act.

Improvement notices will no longer be issued to BHP Billiton. If there is any breach, an immediate prohibition notice will prevent work from continuing at that particular worksite until the problem is resolved.

Quote of the week

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

Marie Curie

Tanzania: Survivors narrate ordeal at mine

Extract from The Citizen, Tanzania

The survivors of a collapsed mine that is feared to have killed some 12 miners after giving way on Sunday in Geita District, said they were "very lucky" as they recounted the ordeal yesterday.

The three artisan miners broke into tears as they told Energy and Minerals minister William Ngeleja who visited them in hospital that they did not believe their colleagues were still alive.

Narrating their ordeal from the Geita District Hospital, the three small-scale miners said they "are very lucky" to survive the collapse.

"I was about to take some crude gold out of the mine when I heard a deafening noise, and I saw billowing dust. Then I heard a colleague of mine crying for help," one of the survivors, Shitenga Bushu, said.

The 22-year-old miner from Mwashata Village in Meatu District was rescued together with Matondo Shaaban, 28, and Matondo Bulili, 24, from Ikindilo Village, Bariadi District, all in Shinyanga Region.

The miners were using hand tools to dig a shaft when a wall gave way as they reached a depth of around 140 metres. The names of only 12 miners seen going underground had been registered outside the mine.

But over a dozen more are believed to have accompanied their colleagues under the sandy pit belonging to Shanta Mine at Mgusu Village.

Heavy rains since Sunday dashed the little hope of rescuing alive those who were still trapped under the rubble of stones.

Mwanza regional commissioner James Msekela said Monday besides the heavy rains the rescue operation had stalled due to lack of equipment.

The mines location, on a hilly and ragged terrain, has also made it difficult for authorities to transport borrowed equipment from the Geita Gold Mine to assist the operation.

According to the three survivors, the miners had been about 20 hours under the sandy soil before the mine gave way on early Sunday morning.

Bulili said his friend who was calling for help had his hand trapped under huge stones. He

said he used a hammer to crush the stones and managed to rescue him.

After rescuing his friend, he proceeded to help two other miners who were also trapped and lying under huge rocks.

The three then dug a hole through a tunnel and escaped from the collapsed mine. Bushu said the incident had left him with "horrible memories of mining."

He cried as he saw his relatives who had believed that he had died after not finding him as news of the collapse spread across the region.

He told the minister, who was accompanied by the RC and some members of a regional security committee, that he would never again return to mining.

But his colleagues, Shaaban and Bulili said though the incident was "frightening" they would not stop mining.

This is the third fatal mining accident in a year to occur in the country. More than 80 small-scale miners died after a mine in Mererani was flooded about a year ago, while six more died in September 2008.

Geita has attracted miners since gold was discovered in the early 1900s. However, the small-scale miners activities are highly unregulated, resulting in dangerous practices.

Most of the artisan miners lack skills, the technology and capital needed for such activities, which makes their pursuits always risky.

Although no death has yet been confirmed in the latest incident, about a dozen people are believed to be still trapped since Sunday.

Mgusu village chairman Isack Wandiba said miners who were identified included Emmanuel Sumbuko, Nendi Magembe, Bertha Nuglaji, Emmanuel Bulandi and Ngalika Joba.

Others are Nesi Simon, Matthew Shashala, Jumanne Mbeu, Lusegna busu, Mwikwabi Chacha, Matondo Bulili and Matondo Shaaban.

Regional authorities are working together with rescue experts from the Geita Gold Mine (GGM) to rescue the miners.

Qld: Miner killed in drill and blast accident

A MINER has been killed in an explosion at 4 North Phoenix Mine, an underground gold mine at Gympie, Queensland, on 1 April 2009.

Authorities believe Edwin Davies was coming down through the stopes when he and two other men noticed a bad hole which had not been fired.

Davies put a steel drill in the hole to see how deep it was which resulted in a terrible explosion.

It appears that the man who had been charging the hole, thought there was not enough dynamite to do the work required and had gone away to get another plug and before he returned the explosion had taken place as described. Davies died the following day in hospital.

Thursday 2 April 2009

MSHA fines Ala. mine in October ignition

Extract from The Charleston Gazette, USA

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced it has assessed \$280,000 in civil penalties against Shelby Mining Co. LLC, which operates Coke Mine #1 in Shelby County, Ala. The fines resulted from a methane ignition last October that left two miners seriously burned

On Oct. 2, 2008, a continuous mining machine operator and a helper were seriously burned when an air-methane mixture was frictionally ignited by worn cutter bits coming into contact with roof rock. Ten bits were worn off on the side of the cutting head where the ignition occurred, and 22 cutting bits were worn or missing.

"The stated obligation of every mine operator is to seek out and eliminate safety and health hazards that may adversely affect its employees," said Michael A. Davis, MSHA's deputy assistant secretary for operations. "In this instance, the foreman failed to do that, and a serious yet avoidable accident occurred."

MSHA's accident investigators also found that mine management failed to take air readings and to ensure that water sprays and the methane monitor were maintained in functional condition. MSHA has cited three unwarrantable failure violations determined to be reckless disregard and one high negligence unwarrantable failure violation.

This mine has a history of methane ignitions at the face, with eight being reported since October 2006. On Oct. 25, 2006, two miners were seriously burned as a result of such an ignition.

USA: Mine Employee Accidentally Dies

Extract from MyFox Birmingham, AL, USA

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - A man died after an accident at a Walker county mine on Thursday morning.

His name has not yet been released.

The man was operating a rock truck at the Town Creek Mine in Sipsey. Reed Minerals owns the mine.

The company says that no other worker was injured in the accident.

State and federal investigators are investigating the death.

Saturday 4 April 2009

Man killed in Hunter Valley mining accident

Extract from The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia

A WORKER was killed by a piece of heavy machinery in an underground coalmine in the Hunter Valley yesterday.

The 34-year-old man was hit in the head at the Glennies Creek Mine on Stoney Creek Road near Singleton about 2.30am.

His wife and three children were being comforted by friends and colleagues yesterday.

A mining union spokesman said the man had lived at Lorn, near Maitland, and had been mining in the area for about five years.

The union spokesman said the accident was the latest of several that had plagued the Hunter Valley coalfields in recent months.

A contractor suffered a mishap loading his truck at the surface of Xstrata Coal's Ravensworth longwall mine in February.

In September, a miner survived an accident but died of a blood clot that developed later and two other miners have been killed in vehicle accidents.

The man killed yesterday was working at a mine owned by Integra Coal, a subsidiary of Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, a giant Brazilian company whose main product is iron ore.

Integra Coal also operates an open-cut mine near Singleton.

Hunter Valley police and Department of Primary Industries officials are conducting inquiries into the incident.

16 trapped in NE China colliery flooding

Extract from Xinhua, China

HARBIN -- Sixteen workers were trapped in a flooded coal mine Saturday in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at about 5 a.m. when 22 miners were working in Xingnong Township, Jixi City. Six escaped and 16 others were still missing as of Saturday noon, according to the information office of Jixi city government.

Rescue work and an investigation into the cause of the flood are underway.

This week in mining accident history

Date

Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)

26 March 1898

Rock Springs Mine No.8, Wyoming, USA
Underground coal mine

Source: *State Coal Mine Inspector Report to the Governor of Wyoming, Dec 31, 1898*

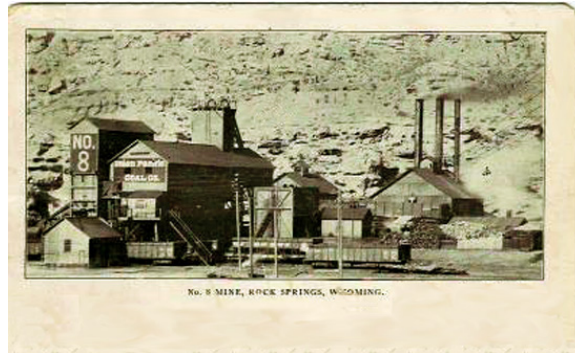
Incident

Chan Park; age, 42; occupation, miner; nativity, China; married--no children; in employ of company six years.

Jap Yew; age, 58; occupation, miner; nativity, China; single, had been in employ of company sixteen years.

Chan Park and Jap Yew were killed in Rock Springs mine No. 8, on March 26, 1898. At the time of the accident the two men were running a loaded car down their room. No witnesses were present. A careful examination of the place showed that the car had left the track, knocking out a prop and let down the rock which killed them. The room was well timbered and the general conditions good

An inquest held March 27, 1898, by Coroner D. L. McNamara, rendered a verdict that the killing was purely accidental, and exonerated the Union Pacific Coal Company and its officials from all blame.



Rock Springs Mine No. 8, 1905

Tuesday 7 April 2009

Qld: Inquest into mine surveying helicopter crash begins

AN INQUEST into the fatal helicopter crash which ploughed into a hill and exploded near the Gunpowder copper mine Mount Isa, in February 2006 has commenced.

CopperCo had chartered the aircraft from North Australian Helicopters (NAH) to perform an aerial survey of proposed mining facilities when it crashed. Ian Harvey, counsel assisting state coroner Michael Barnes, says the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) in the wake of the crash suggested the helicopter had been overloaded at the time.

The ATSB report found the weight of the aircraft would not have been suitable for hovering given the hot weather conditions on the day of the crash putting the safety of the operation in jeopardy.

The inquest was told NAH would dispute that conclusion, as it believed the ATSB had miscalculated how much fuel the helicopter had been carrying at the time.

Harvey claims the inquest will also explore whether other issues such as whether the pilot was a safe and competent operator.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

P

race An open channel for conveying water. It can be a simple earth ditch, or lined with timber or metal, or a masonry structure, and often incorporated flumes (which see) to cross declivities and maintain a constant fall. Races ranged from short earthen ditches gathering storm water for opportunistic alluvial mining, to company-operated water supply channels many miles long and linked to workings or mill was a 'head race' while that removing water or tailings was a 'tail race'.

Referred to a 'ditches' in the US literature, and often as 'leats' in British usage.



Gold miners working box sluice at end of a wooden race Victoria, circa 1861

- Ed.