

Mining Accident News No.0912

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Wednesday 8 April 2009

USA: Norwalk man dies in electrical fire at mine

Extract from DesMoinesRegister.com, USA

A Norwalk man died in an electrical fire at the Hallett Materials site northwest of Des Moines, Iowa, on Tuesday afternoon.

Tadd Bainum, 35, a Hallett employee, died after a transformer spark caused a fire near the gravel mine at 5255 N.W. 26th St. The fire started around 4 p.m., said Jana Rooker, spokeswoman for the Polk County sheriff's office.

The specific cause of Bainum's death is unknown and will be determined by the Polk County medical examiner.

MidAmerican Energy had to shut off power to the area for rescue crews to reach Bainum. He was in an electrical area that is under Hallett's control, said Ann Thelen, spokeswoman for MidAmerican.

Rescue crews' efforts also were hindered because the accident scene was near a body of

water, which is close to Hallett's mining operation.

Bainum leaves behind a wife, April, and three children: son Tristan, 12, and daughters Holly, 6, and Lacy, 3.

"He was a wonderful father," said Jeannette Lutrick, Bainum's mother-in-law. "I just can't believe this. It's so terrible."

Besides supporting his children's activities, Bainum restored vintage automobiles, including pickups and Jeeps, Lutrick said.

"He loved working in the garage," she said.

The Polk County sheriff's office and the Mine Safety and Health Administration are investigating.

Monday 13 April 2009

Two miners trapped in coalmine in Donetsk region for two days rescued

Extract from Kyiv Post, Kyiv, Ukraine

Two miners, trapped following a roof collapse at the Poltavaska coalmine in Yenakieve, Donetsk region, on April 11, have been rescued, the Ostrov Web publication reported on Monday.

The spokesman for the State Committee for Industrial Safety, Labor Protection and Mining Supervision's office in Donetsk region, Maryna Nikitina, told the publication that the miners had practically reached the surface by themselves before being rescued.

As reported a shaft roof collapsed at a depth of 477 meters on Saturday, April 11. Two miners were working at the scene at the time of the accident.

Tuesday 14 April 2009

Six trapped in north China iron mine flooding

Extract from Xinhua China

SHIJIAZHUANG, Hebei, - Six workers were trapped in a flooded iron mine Tuesday in north China's Hebei Province, local authorities said.

The accident occurred at about 10 a.m. at an iron mine in Huzhuangzi Village, said officials of Zunhua City, which administers the village. Zunhua city is under the administration of Tangshan City, one of China's major producers of iron and steel.

Rescue work is continuing. No other details are available at this time.

WA: Report finds there are too few mine inspectors, too late for some

A PARLIAMENTARY look into the findings of the Kenner report into the Mines Safety and Inspection Act has reaffirmed the common belief that there are not enough mine inspectors.



WA mine safety inspectors

The report showed that for every 1795 people working in the resources sector in Western Australia there is only one inspector, compared with a ratio of about one to 880 for Queensland and one to every 550 mining employees in NSW.

Recently a spate of accidents resulting in some fatalities has shone the light on mining giants, especially BHP Billiton fuelling a push for better safety practises.

Quote of the week

Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality.

**Nikos Kazantzakis,
Greek writer & philosopher**

Wednesday 15 April 2009

Massey subsidiary fined \$2.5M for fatal mine fire

Extract from The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A Massey Energy subsidiary was fined \$2.5 million fine Wednesday after a federal judge accepted the company's guilty plea to 10 criminal charges for a fire that killed two West Virginia coal miners.

U.S. District Judge John Copenhaver approved Aracoma Coal Co.'s plea deal despite a provision sparing Massey officials and the Richmond, Va., coal company from prosecution. The agreement also required Aracoma to pay a \$1.7 million fine for civil violations found by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The charges center on a Jan. 19, 2006, fire at Aracoma's Alma No. 1 mine about 60 miles from Charleston in West Virginia's southern coalfields. Aracoma pleaded guilty to violating several federal safety requirements.

Miners Don Bragg and Ellery Elvis Hatfield got lost when thick smoke entered what was supposed to be a sealed escape route. While other crewmembers escaped through a secondary tunnel, Bragg and Hatfield got separated and perished. Government investigators later faulted Aracoma for removing two air-control walls that allowed smoke into the escape tunnel.

Separate state and federal investigations concluded an overheated conveyer belt caused the fire.

The Aracoma fire — along with methane gas explosions that killed 12 men at the Sago Mine in West Virginia and five at the Kentucky Darby mine in eastern Kentucky in 2006 — prompted sweeping changes to federal and state coal mine safety laws.

U.S. Attorney Charles Miller said the government is giving up little by agreeing to limit the prosecution to the subsidiary.

"The evidence simply did not support a criminal prosecution of Massey or its officers," Miller said after the sentencing. "The violations were limited to Aracoma."

He said the investigation continues.

Last week, Aracoma foreman David R. Runyon pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of failing to conduct safety drills at the mine and his sentencing is scheduled for July 9.

Miller also noted federal law limits criminal prosecutions of mining accidents to willful violations of safety standards and falsifying records.

"It may not be adequate to make the victims whole, but that's all we have," Miller said.

He said he told that to attorneys representing the widows of Bragg and Hatfield during the sentencing hearing. He added that he can't legally ask Congress to change the law but victims' relatives are free to lobby their lawmakers.

"I tell them they're under no constraints to talking to their congressmen," he said.

Attorney Bruce Stanley, who represents the widows, asked Copenhaver to reject the plea deal, saying it protects Massey and Chief Executive Don Blankenship. Massey, the nation's fourth-largest coal producer by revenue, settled a separate lawsuit brought by the widows in November. Terms were not disclosed.

"The West Virginia delegation ought to heed the words that were said here today," Stanley said after the hearing. "There is absolutely no excuse for what happened at the Alma mine."

Besides West Virginia, Massey operates coal mines in Virginia and Kentucky.

NSW: Mine safety jeopardised by protesters

A GROUP of protesters have been arrested for protesting at Barrick Gold's Lake Cowal gold

mine forcing operations to halt due to safety concerns.



Barrick Gold's Lake Cowal gold mine

The protesters who claimed to have authorisation from Wiradjuri traditional land owners performed a smoking ceremony. The group say they were documenting the mine's impact.

The miner says about 50 of its employees were forced to wait for police to remove the alleged trespassers. The mine security decided to close operations due to safety concerns.

Barrick Gold says the mine continues to operate in an economically, socially, and environmentally responsible manner.

Thursday 16 April 2009

Five miners rescued from flooded mine in north China

Extract from Xinhua China

SHIJIAZHUANG, - Five of the six workers trapped in a flooded iron mine in north China's Hebei Province were rescued Thursday morning, rescuers said.

Their conditions were described as "stable" after being trapped underground for almost 48 hours. Rescuers are continuing to search for the missing miner.

More than 260 workers and 20 experts are helping in the rescue operation.

The flooding occurred early Tuesday at the iron mine in Huzhuangzi Village, Zunhua City, while eight miners were underground. Two managed to escape.

The Zunhua municipal government received a tip-off about the flooding Tuesday afternoon. Zunhua is under the administration of Tangshan City, one of China's major producers of iron and steel.

The iron mine has no production license. Police have detained the mine owner pending their investigation into the cause of the accident.

This week in mining accident history

Date
Mine / Country (Aust unless stated)

14 April 1874

Astley Deep Pit, Dukinfield, Cheshire, UK
Underground coal mine

Source: *Wikipedia* Both images taken from the *Illustrated London News*

Incident

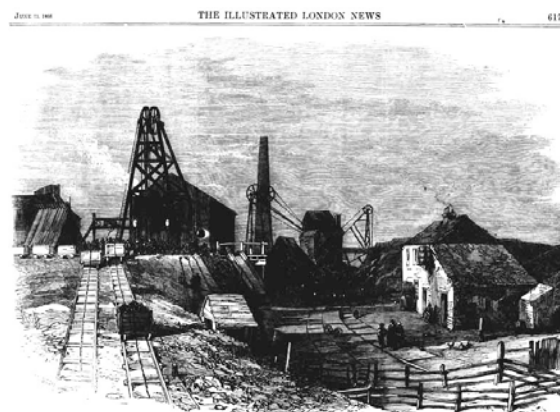
The Astley Deep Pit was a coal mine started during the first part of the 18th century to work the seam of coal known as the "Lancashire Black Mine".

The Astley pit was the deepest coal mine in Britain and possibly the world, at 686.5 yards or 2060 feet at the time it opened in 1858, although the main shaft was later sunk to a depth of 717 yards, or 2151 feet. This meant that the temperature at the bottom of the mine was quite high, gaining about one degree in Fahrenheit for every 60 feet descended. The mine had taken 12 years to dig and was reported to have cost the owner, Mr F.D. Astley, over £100,000 and the site employed around 400 people working in shifts 24 hours a day.

The **Astley Deep Pit Disaster** was a mining accident that occurred at the Astley Deep Pit, located in Dukinfield, Cheshire that took place on 14 April 1874. An explosion caused the roof of a tunnel to cave in and demolished several tunnels in the "Black mine" one of the mine shafts at the Astley "Black" mine. 54 men, some of them boys, were killed and 91 were injured.

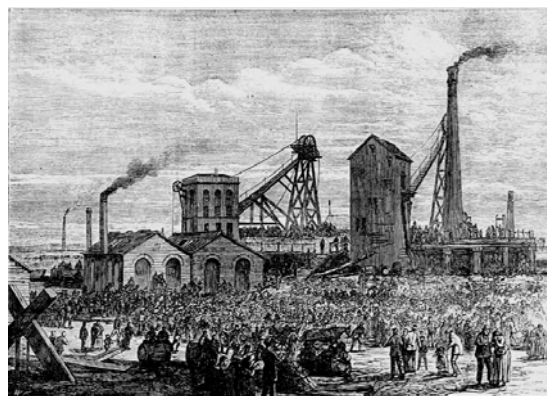
The collapsing roof released a large amount of "firedamp", a naturally occurring flammable gas, which commonly caused explosions as it had in the previous accident of 1870. Unfortunately there were

several miners nearby who were using a naked flame, Davey lamps and other safety lights had been available since 1815 but were not readily available for the miners who were expected to buy their own and so it was common practice for open lanterns to be used. The resulting explosions collapsed further shafts after setting fire to the support beams and caused the deaths of the 54 men.



ASTLEY'S COLLIER, DUKINFIELD, THE SCENE OF THE ABBEY FATAL DISASTER.
[Image from the accident of 1870](#)

The report to the House of Commons states that it may have also been caused by a blocking of the ventilation shafts, preventing any gasses from escaping and so making the mine at extreme risk of explosion.



[This reports the Deep Pit disaster of 1874](#)

The mine closed in 1901, after only 43 years of a promised 100 years of production.

Mining dictionary

A guide to common mining terminology

R

reduction The process for separating a mineral from gangue, in which oxygen is removed from the ore, the ore being physically reduced in size.

- Ed.