

Beat: Travel

Gas explosion kills 17 miners in northwest China

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USPA News - Rescue workers have recovered the bodies of seventeen people who were trapped over the weekend after a gas explosion at a coal mine in China's western region of Xinjiang, state-run media reported on Monday, just a month after another deadly mine accident. The latest accident happened at about 8:43 p.m. local time on Saturday when 20 people were working at a coal mine about 120 kilometers (74 miles) from Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang.

Three of the miners were able to escape, but the other seventeen workers remained trapped underground in unknown condition. Rescue workers began pouring nitrogen into the coal mine on early Sunday morning to dilute the gas concentration, but the process had to continue for at least 24 hours before it was safe to enter the pit. Once the process was completed on early Monday, rescue workers went in and confirmed the seventeen missing miners had been killed. It was not immediately known what caused Saturday's accident at the mine, which is owned by the Dahuangshan Yuxin Coal Mining Company. The state-run Xinhua news agency said the cause of the accident was being investigated but offered no other details. Safety conditions at mines in China have rapidly improved in recent years, though they continue to be ranked as the world's most dangerous with 1,049 deaths reported in 2013, according to official figures. The Chinese government reported 1,384 fatalities in 2012, down from 1,973 fatalities in 2011, 2,433 fatalities in 2010, and 2,631 fatalities in 2009. China shut down scores of small mines in recent years to improve safety and efficiency in the mining industry. The country has also ordered all mines to build emergency shelter systems which need to be equipped with machines to produce oxygen and air conditioning, protective walls and airtight doors to protect workers against toxic gases and other hazardous factors. One of the worst mining accidents in China in recent years happened in November 2009 when 104 workers were killed after several explosions at a coal mine in Heilongjiang province. More recently, 22 workers were killed on June 3 in a gas outburst at a coal mine near the city of Chongqing.

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United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com