

Coal Miner Dies from Head Injuries

FAIRVIEW, W.Va. (AP) — A West Virginia coal miner has died of severe head injuries suffered as he tried to put a loaded supply car back on track at CONSOL Energy's Loveridge Mine, a company official said Thursday.

The mine has temporarily shut down out of respect for 51-year-old Glen Clutter of Baxter and will resume production at 4 p.m. Friday, said spokeswoman Lynn Seay.

The accident happened Tuesday night near Fairview. State mine safety officials say Clutter was using a long-handled tool called a slate bar, typically used to pry loose material from a mine's roof and walls. It somehow popped loose and struck him.

The investigation will likely look at whether he was using it to re-rail the car.

Clutter began his career in 1981 at the Blacksville No. 1 mine, and Seay said he'd worked at Loveridge for the past 10 years.

Pennsylvania-based CONSOL said it's working closely with state and federal mine safety officials on the investigation.

"Safety remains at the core of everything we do at CONSOL Energy," Seay said in an email. "It is our priority to prevent events like this one from ever happening and we continue to strive for a workplace experience of zero accidents."

It's the third West Virginia fatality in four months at a CONSOL property, long considered one of the nation's safer operators.

Last month, a worker was crushed when a gas drilling rig near the Loveridge Mine's preparation plant overturned.

The rig was doing independent exploratory work on Marcellus shale gas deposits, drilling 30-foot holes and setting off explosives for seismic testing. Omni Energy Services Corp. of Louisiana confirmed the victim was one of its employees but has never publicly identified him.

That investigation is being conducted by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration because it occurred off bonded mine property. "The independent testing was not associated with CONSOL Energy's active coal mining or gas operations," Seay said.

On Nov. 30, bulldozer operator Markel Koon of Shinnston drowned when an embankment collapsed on a massive coal slurry pond at CONSOL's Robinson Run mine near Lumberport. His body wasn't recovered until Dec. 14.

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CONSOL was working to raise the elevation of the impoundment when the accident happened, but the company and federal investigators have declined to speculate on what caused the failure.

In all, three coal miners have died in West Virginia so far this year, two of them just last week.

Edward L. Finney, 43, of Bluefield, Va., died at Pocahontas Coal Co.'s Affinity Mine. State investigators said he was pushing a scoop bucket insert full of trash onto a hoist when the hoist moved unexpectedly. The preliminary investigation suggests the hoist picked up the scoop and trapped the victim underneath.

A day earlier, 34-year-old Brandon Townsend of Delbarton died when a hydraulic jack exploded on a belt press at Midland Trail Energy's Blue Creek preparation plant in Kanawha County. Another worker was injured.

Midland Trail is owned by Patriot Coal.

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