

M/NM FATAL

REPORT OF FATAL ASPHYXIATION ACCIDENT
KENTUCKY UNDERGROUND MINE - JULY 3, 1961
(Contributed by the Bureau of Mines, Duluth, Minnesota)

INTRODUCTION

A foreman, age 43, with several years mining experience, died from asphyxiation, at about 10 a.m. July 3, 1961, when he entered an abandoned mine to inspect equipment.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF INJURY

FATAL

CAUSE OF INJURY

Suffocation

CAUSE OF ACCIDENT

Failure to test for oxygen deficiency before entering an abandoned unventilated mine.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

When the victim and two other workmen arrived at the mine to recover underground mining equipment, they found the slope caved, and the removal of a large amount of material was necessary before they could enter the mine. A truck and tow rope, was used to drag the larger pieces of rock out of the slope, but progress in moving the debris was slow and difficult.

The mine owner stated that about 10 a.m. the victim told the men that he would enter the mine through the shaft, which was only 19 feet deep, and attempt to determine the extent of the fall and inspect the mining equipment. The deceased asked for a carbide lamp, but the mine owner told him that none was available, and he should not go into the mine because the air was bad, and that he, the mine owner, would not be responsible for anything that might happen. The victim obtained a flashlight, and accompanied by another workman left for the shaft, leaving the mine owner and a workman at the slope portal.

A few minutes later, a shout for help was heard from the shaft. Workmen nearby went to the shaft and found the victim's partner lying face down at the edge of the shaft. They could see the victim at the bottom of the shaft. The victim's partner said that he followed the victim down the shaft ladder, and as soon as the victim reached the bottom, he shouted "Hit the top, and I will be right behind you." The victim's partner made it to the top, but the victim made only a few rungs of the ladder and fell back down the shaft.

A flame safety lamp would not burn at the mouth of the shaft, and an air sample collected 3 feet down the shaft, contained 3.90 percent carbon dioxide and 6.88 percent oxygen.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Before any workmen enter an abandoned area, tests should be made with a permissible flame safety lamp for methane and oxygen deficiency.