Man found dead in mine shaft

A 24-year-old West Newton man was found dead in a mine shaft yesterday in South Huntingdon Township, Westmoreland County.

The body of James Terry Toman, of 103 Vine St., was found on a 10-foot landing of an 80-foot shaft of the Banning Mine of Republic Steel, near West Newton, by a repairman at the mine.

Westmoreland County Coroner Leo M. Bacha said his deputy, Gerald Fritz, and two state policemen from the Belle Vernon Barracks started to get sick, apparently from gas fumes, when they tried to retrieve Toman's body from the landing.

Firefighters with gas masks were summoned to retrieve the body.

Fritz said that Toman had been in the area of the mine with a girlfriend Wednesday night. He said they separated and she had not seen Toman since. Fritz said there is a strong possibility that Toman fell into the mine.

An autopsy to determine the cause of death has been ordered.

1982 James Toman asphyxiated in Banning shaft