

2-year-old boy killed in fall down abandoned mine shaft

Associated Press

CENTRAL CITY, Colo.

A 2-year-old boy wandered away from his home in this historic silver mining town and fell to his death in a nearby abandoned mine shaft, authorities said.

Gilpin County Coroner Dick Allen said the child, identified as Michael Mills, apparently was killed instantly from massive head injuries.

John Rittenhouse, search coordinator for the Gilpin County Search and Rescue Team, said the boy's body was found Friday night about 150 to 200 feet down the shaft, lodged among timbers and rocks. He said the shaft went far below that point.

Central City, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains about 30 miles west of Denver, was a silver mining boom town from the mid-1800s till the turn of the century.

Authorities said probably 5,000 abandoned mine shafts are in the area, many of them uncovered.

The boy had been playing in his yard with his older sister, whom Rittenhouse described as being in her 20s.

"There was a phone call and when she came back out

he was gone. We were called out about 2:45 p.m. . . . We followed his tracks up to an abandoned mine shaft that's maybe 100 yards behind his house and found an area that something apparently had slid down into the mine shaft," Rittenhouse said.

The mine rescue unit was then called out, and an access road had to be bulldozed about 100 yards up a hill to the shaft site, he said.

A special boom truck rigged with cable winch and an enclosed cage was brought to the mouth of the shaft.

Two men were lowered in the cage about 10 p.m. "We got down about 50 feet with the cage and the shaft narrowed to the point the cage wouldn't go any further," Rittenhouse said. "At that point we pulled it up and hooked a smaller ore bucket to our boom truck and lowered it down with two men in it. We were able to get down to the boy."

The boy's body was found about 10:40 p.m., Rittenhouse said.

About 30 rescue workers participated in the search under the bright glare of floodlights in mild weather.

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