

Mine-shaft dangers targeted

Officials try to make abandoned sites safer

By Guy Webster
The Arizona Republic

A toddler's footprints in the snow led to the edge of an abandoned mine shaft, then disappeared.

Two-year-old Michael Mills had strayed from his baby sitter on a March afternoon last year near Central City, Colo.

Searchers found the body of the boy that night. He had been killed by a 200-foot fall down the shaft.

To reduce chances of an accident like that occurring in Arizona, state and federal authorities are recruiting volunteers to identify dangerous abandoned mines in the state.

Teen-agers and adults, rather than small children, are the victims in most accidents at abandoned-mine sites, said Bruce Christianson, manager of the abandoned-mines program at the state Mine Inspector's Office.

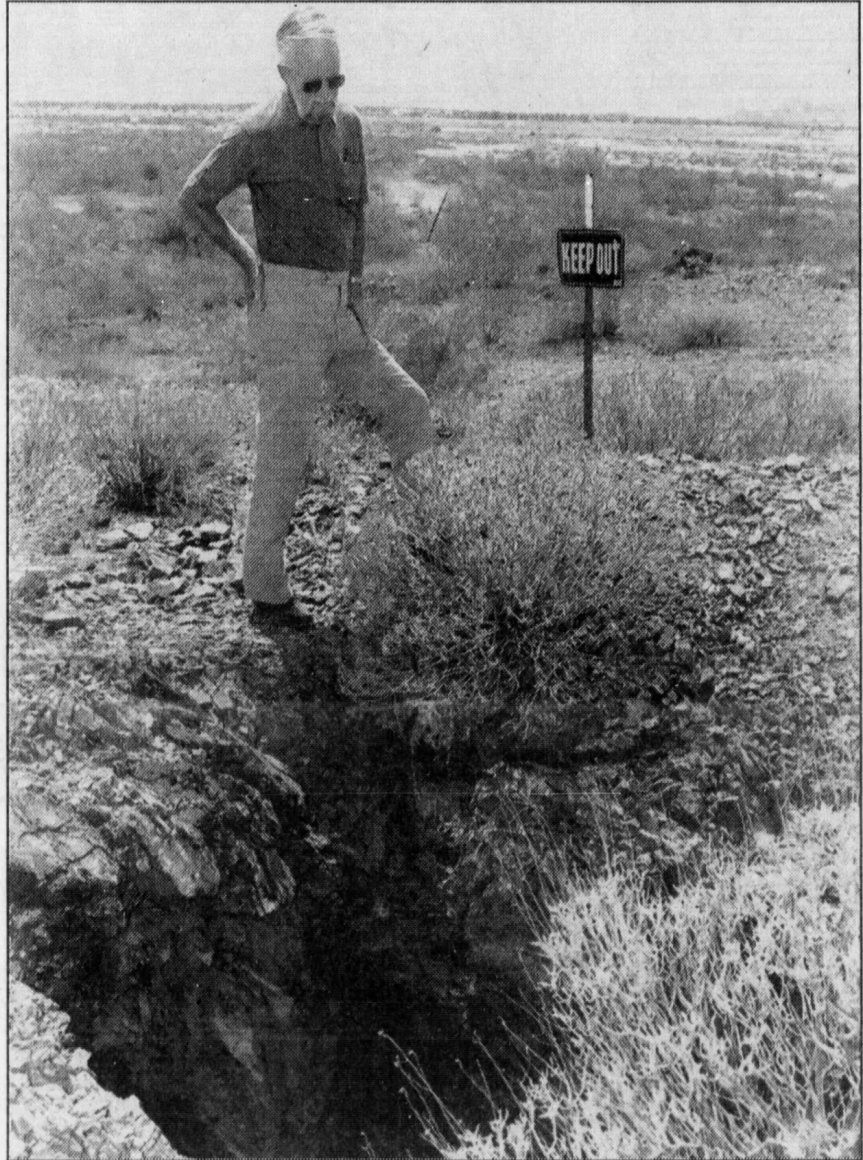
Many victims appear to intentionally disregard the sites' hazards, he said.

In December, in the most recent fatality at an abandoned mine in Arizona, 21-year-old Brian Mark Burgess of Chino, Calif., tumbled into a deep mine near Oatman, about 200 miles northwest of Phoenix. He was trying to climb a 20-foot chain-link fence surrounding the shaft.

"I'll guarantee you, though," Christianson said, "there's going to be another little girl or little boy fall down one of these mine shafts and die one of these days. It's our job to try to get to that mine before they do."

Agencies in both Colorado and Arizona have stepped up efforts in the past four years to make

— See **OFFICIALS**, page A4



Don Empie/The Arizona Republic

Jim Matt, chief deputy inspector for the state Mine Inspector's Office, peers down a shaft in the Union Hills area. Authorities are recruiting volunteers to identify dangerous abandoned mines.

1990 Arizona abandoned mines

Clipped By:
usmra_rob
Sep 15, 2024