

# Non-Fatal Utah Abandoned Mine Rescue Incidents

## **August 1, 1977 (Monday)**

Unnamed mine, near 90th South and 3455 East near mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Utah — Benjie Suazo, 17, of Salt Lake City, required rescue after becoming stranded in a vertical airshaft. Suazo was exploring the mine with four friends. He climbed up an airshaft about 300 feet inside the mine and was unable to descend. His friends summoned help. Suazo was rescued uninjured by the Salt Lake County sheriff's search and rescue and fire department crews. Cottonwood Heights residents complained that the mine was dangerous. Drugs and explosives had been found there.

The mine was filled by Salt Lake County sheriff's deputies on August 8, 1977.

[Deseret News, Tuesday, 8/2/77, page B1, "Rescue spurs call to close mine"; Deseret News, Tuesday, 8/9/77, page B3, "Deputies close one mine shaft, seek others"]

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## **July 2, 1978 (Sunday)**

Unnamed mine, Rock Canyon, Utah County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Rock Canyon, Utah — Don Bateman, 16, of Castro Valley, California, suffered cuts and bruises when he fell 25 feet into a shaft in Rock Canyon. He was exploring the mine with two companions at the time. His companions summoned help. Bateman was rescued by the then new Provo City Alpine Rescue Squad.

[Deseret News, Monday, 7/3/78, page B2, "Teen rescued from mine" by Bill Klein]

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## **July 25 (or 18?), 1979 (Wednesday)**

Unnamed mine, above Evans shaft, southwest of Eureka, Juab County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Eureka, Utah — Sean Winters, 13, Christian Brown, 14, and Curt Conrad, 17, of Eureka, and their dog decided to explore the mine. The dog ran ahead and fell down a winze, landing on a ledge of rotting timbers 35 feet down, with a shaft of unknown depth below. The boys left and returned with a rope. They lowered Winters down to the ledge to retrieve the dog, but he got stranded there instead. The others summoned help. Winters and the dog were rescued by the Juab County sheriff. Williams suffered scratches and bruises, shock, and a possible concussion from a rock that fell on his head.

[Eureka Reporter, Friday, 7/27/79, v. 74 no. 30, page 1, “Boys, dog rescued from mine shaft”]

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### **May 8, 1982 (Saturday)**

Unnamed mine, Fivemile Pass, Utah County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Fivemile Pass, Utah — Kerry West, 24, of Lehi fell 25 feet into a shaft on his motorcycle. He sustained a broken leg and other fractures and required rescue.

[Deseret News, Monday, 5/10-11/82, “Cyclist hurt in shaft fall”]

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### **October 26, 1985 (Saturday)**

Maxfield mine (Site 4020214HO013), Big Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Utah — Brothers Dennis and Scott Workman, 26 and 25, of East Millcreek became lost while exploring the mine. They were rescued after 2½ days underground. Black damp was known to occur in the mine.

The mine was posted with “Danger” signs and put under UAMRP investigation for reclamation. After a second incident in 1988, the mine was sealed in the summer of 1988 as part of the UAMRP’s Wasatch Project.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Tuesday, 10/29/85 page B3, "2 Men Found Safe in Canyon Mine"; Deseret News, Tuesday, 10/29-30/85 page 2B, "Hikers rescued after 2 days in mine"]

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### **January 20, 1986 (Monday)**

Jim Fisk prospect, Ophir Canyon, Tooele County (noncoal)

Jim Fisk Prospect, Ophir Canyon, Utah — Stephen Sandford, 65, a Boy Scout leader from Ogden was exploring the mine with five scouts. About 300 feet inside he fell 60 feet down a winze and over a 12-foot cliff, suffering a broken wrist and sprains. The scouts hiked nearly two miles to summon help. Sandford was rescued by the Tooele County Search and Rescue Patrol.

The mine was posted with "Danger" signs in January, 1986, and put under UAMRP investigation for reclamation.

[Deseret News, Tuesday, 1/21/86, "Ogden Scoutmaster rescued from Ophir mine"; Tooele County Sheriff Case #86-0567]

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### **May 21, 1988 (Saturday)**

Unnamed mine, Fivemile Pass, Utah County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Fivemile Pass, Utah — John Carlson, 25, of West Valley City was lowering himself into the mine when the rope broke. He fell approximately 50 feet and sustained minor injuries. He required rescue by the county search-and-rescue team.

The shaft was backfilled on June 1, 1988 under the direction of the UAMRP in a cooperative effort with the Bureau of Land Management and the claimholder.

[Deseret News, Sunday, 5/22/88 page B18 "W.V. man survives fall down mine shaft"; Deseret News, Monday, 5/23/88 page A6 "W.V. man rescued from abandoned mine near Fairfield"]

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**July 9, 1988 (Saturday)**

Monarch mine, North Willow Canyon, Stansbury Mountains, Tooele County (noncoal)

Monarch noncoal mine, North Willow Canyon, Utah — Phillip Butterfield, 15, entered the mine portal without a flashlight or safety gear and slipped down a 30-foot winze. His father, William Butterfield, 44, went after him and could not climb out. They were rescued by the Tooele County Sheriff's search and rescue unit.

The mine was flagged with "Danger Do Not Enter" warning tape. See also the October 22, 1988 report for this mine under "Mines as Nuisances" below.

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**July 11, 1988 (Monday)**

Maxfield mine (Site 4020214HO013), Big Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake County (noncoal)

Maxfield noncoal mine, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Utah — John Mazuran, 16, and two companions tried to explore a winze located about half a mile inside the mine. Mazuran lost his footing about 60 feet down and slid another 100 feet to the bottom. He was unable to climb out. His friends summoned the Salt Lake County Sheriff's office, which performed the rescue. Lt. Mike Wilkinson, Salt Lake County Sheriff's office, also reported another incident of a group of four people trapped 1/3 mile inside the mine unable to climb out. The mine contains vertical drop-offs and 18% grades.

The mine was sealed in the summer of 1988 as part of the UAMRP's Wasatch Project.

[Reported by Lt. Mike Wilkinson, Salt Lake County Sheriff's office, 7/12/88; Deseret News, Thursday, 8/4/88 page B1 "State aims to seal off abandoned mines and hazards therein" by Jerry Spangler]

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**September 23, 1989 (Saturday)**

Hidden Treasure mine (Site 3030515HO030), Dry Canyon, near Stockton, Tooele County (noncoal)

Hidden Treasure Mine, Stockton, Utah — Joshua Dennis, 10, of Kearns was exploring the mine with his scout troop. He became separated from the group and was lost for five days underground. After an intensive search, he was rescued uninjured, but required hospitalization.

The mine was sealed under the direction of the UAMRP by the landowner, Sharon Steel, on October 5, 1989.

[This incident received extensive local and national print and broadcast media coverage at the time, including: Deseret News, Monday, 9/25/89 page B1, "Searchers combing mountains around mine for missing boy" by Jerry Spangler; Deseret News, Tuesday, 9/26/89 page B1, "Hope fading fast for boy lost 4 days searchers now battling fatigue, despair" by Jerry Spangler; Deseret News, Thursday, 9/28/89 page A1, "Alive: Boy's faint cry for help leads to rescue after 5 days in mine" by Lisa Riley Roche. The incident was given book treatment for young readers in *The Hidden Treasure* by Gayla B. Schmutz (2000, Granite Publishing).]

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### **September 1, 1991 (Sunday)**

Unnamed mine, near west rim of the Kennecott pit in Oquirrh Mountains, Tooele County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Tooele County, Utah — Terry Blackburn, 16, of South Jordan was hiking with two friends after dark to camp near the rim of the Kennecott pit. Around 10:30 or midnight Blackburn stumbled 20-30 feet into a 4-foot-wide ventilation shaft. His friends summoned help, but were unable to relocate the shaft for some time. Blackburn was not rescued until 5:25 a.m. He suffered a broken leg, four broken teeth, and cuts and bruises.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Tuesday, 9/3/91 "Teen Survives Fall, Night In Mine Shaft" by Mike Gorrell; Deseret News, Monday, 9/2/91 "Teen hiker is rescued from Oquirrh mine shaft"]

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### **November 2, 1991 (Saturday)**

Unnamed mine (Site 4030305VO099), near Alta Guard Station, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Salt Lake County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Utah — Kent Parker, 16, of Sandy fell down a 50-foot shaft near Alta while snowboarding. He did not see the shaft until he was airborne in it. His companions did not see him fall and continued down the mountain. He was trapped for 90 minutes before being discovered. It took an hour for rescuers to remove him from the shaft. He suffered a concussion and hypothermia and was hospitalized for several days.

The shaft was backfilled on Aug. 27, 1992 as part of the UAMRP's Cottonwood Project.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Sunday, 11/3/91 page B11, "Teen Injures Head After Fall Into Mineshaft"; Deseret News, Sunday, 11/3/91 page B3, "Snowboarder in good condition after falling 50 feet into shaft" by Karen Owen]

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### **December 7, 1991 (Saturday)**

Rocky Mouth Canyon mine (Site 4030123HO002), near Sandy (11000 South 3000 East), Salt Lake County (noncoal)

Rocky Mouth Canyon Mine, Sandy, Utah — Adam Smolensky, 19, of Sandy crawled through a steel barrier installed by the UAMRP to enter the mine around 8:30 a.m. and fell into a 25-foot-deep winze located about 20 feet inside the mine. Passers-by discovered him around 1:15 p.m. and summoned his parents, who unsuccessfully tried to rescue him. Smolensky was finally rescued by Sandy Fire Department and Salt Lake County Search and Rescue crews about 3:00 p.m. Smolensky was hospitalized with a shoulder injury. Sandy firefighter Tad Norris suffered a broken nose during the rescue when a steel bar being removed from the entry hit him in the face.

The mine was sealed on January 9, 1992 as part of the UAMRP's Rocky Mouth Project.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Sunday, 12/8/91, "Curious Hiker Survives 25-Foot Fall Down Shaft" by Vince Horiuchi; Deseret News, Sunday, 12/8/91, "Sandy man rescued

from old mine shaft” by Amy Donaldson; Salt Lake Tribune, Saturday, 1/11/92, “Crews Seal Mine in Sandy That Trapped 19-Year-Old” by Mike Gorrell]

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**February 5, 1995 (Sunday)**

Unnamed mine (Site 3060321VO002), Sunshine Canyon, Oquirrh Mountains, Tooele County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Tooele County, Utah — Mark Hoefnagel, 20, and Anthony Ballif, 23, both of Sandy, crashed their Jeep through a fence and plunged 50 feet down a mine shaft around 3:00 p.m. They survived the fall and were able to get out of the vehicle, but not climb out of the shaft. The two were rescued around 7:30 by another party of off-roaders who heard their calls for help. Hoefnagel was hospitalized in serious but stable condition with internal injuries; Ballif was treated for minor injuries and released.

The UAMRP capped the shaft with a rebar grate on August 23, 1999 as part of the Fivemile Pass/West Dip Project.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Monday, 2/6/95 page C3, “Sandy Men Survive a Drive Into Abandoned Mine Shaft” by Cornelia DeBruin; Deseret News, Monday, 2/6/95, “4-wheelers rescue 2 Sandy men” by Dennis Romboy]

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**December 4, 1998 (Friday)**

Stateline mine, Hamblin Valley near Modena, Iron County (noncoal)

Stateline noncoal mine, Modena, Utah — Todd Meeks, 36, of Ivins, slipped and fell about 100 feet down a mine while prospecting. He suffered a broken arm, broken leg, and other injuries and was not discovered and rescued until the day after the accident. He was hospitalized in critical condition.

The specific mine opening involved in this incident is not known, but the UAMRP filled or sealed all of the mine openings in the area in 2004-05 as part of the Stateline Project.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Sunday, 12/6/98 "Prospector Survives Fall In Mine Shaft" by Ben Winslow; Iron County Sheriff Incident Numbers 98-2840, 98-2857, 98-2860]

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**April 4, 2000 (Tuesday)**

Unnamed mine, 3.5 miles south of Eagle Mountain Development, Lake Mountains, Utah County (noncoal).

Unnamed noncoal mine, Utah County, Utah — Randy Gatton, 26, of Provo, was riding a motorcycle with a friend when he fell approximately 30 feet down a mine shaft and landed with the motorcycle atop him. He suffered a sprained ankle, scrapes and bruises. He was in the mine for three hours before being rescued.

[Salt Lake Tribune, Friday 4/7/00 page B2, "For The Record: Motorcyclist Injured"; Deseret News, Wednesday, 4/5/00 page B2, "Utah County dateline briefs"]

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**June 20, 2004 (Sunday)**

Unnamed mine, Fivemile Pass area, Utah County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Utah County, Utah — A 21-year-old Riverton man was hospitalized after falling about 60 feet into a gravel pit on his all-terrain vehicle. Utah County Sheriff's deputies say he was riding with a group of friends around 3:30 p.m. in the Fivemile Pass area when the accident happened. Officers say he drove his four-wheeler through a break in the wall and fell. The man suffered neck and back injuries and several broken bones. He was flown to the University of Utah Hospital.

[Mine Safety and Health Administration, Stay Out, Stay Alive campaign website; <http://www.msha.gov/SOSA/NearMisses/2004/20040620.asp>, from a KUTV-TV news report]

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**August 28, 2004 (Saturday)**

Unnamed mine; Hidden Valley trail above 22nd Street trailhead, Ogden, Weber County (noncoal)



Unnamed noncoal mine, Ogden, Utah — Steve Mahoney, 46, of Ogden suffered a broken leg (tibia-fibula fracture) from a fall in a mine. He had descended an 85-foot winze located 150-200 feet inside the mine using a 75-foot polypropylene waterskiing tow rope. He jumped the remaining ten feet and was injured (how he planned to reach the rope to exit is unknown). A companion summoned help, although she originally denied being in the mine and gave changing stories to emergency responders. The rescue by Weber County Search and Rescue required a difficult in-mine litter hoist and a scree slope evacuation to get the victim to an ambulance.

[Weber County Sheriff Search and Rescue Training Newsletter, September 2004; Weber County Sheriff Case #GO WC 2004-36278]

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**May 7, 2017 (Sunday)**

Unnamed mine (Site 3060320VO100), Sunshine Canyon, Tooele County (noncoal)

Unnamed noncoal mine, Tooele County, Utah — Trent Widdop, 27, of American Fork, fell into a mine shaft on his UTV (utility task vehicle) at about 2:00 a.m. while searching for firewood. The UTV lodged in the shaft at a depth of about 15-20 feet, but Widdop fell off the vehicle. He fell 15-20 feet to a ledge and then slid another 50 feet to the bottom of the shaft. His family began searching for him when he did not return to camp and finally located the UTV around 5:00 a.m., when they called 911. Crews from the Utah County Sheriff's office, Tooele County Sheriff's office, Unified Fire Authority, and Tooele County Search and Rescue responded. Search and Rescue retrieved Widdop from the shaft and he was flown to the hospital with serious injuries.

This shaft is one that the UAMRP had backfilled on August 19, 1999, as part of the Fivemile Pass/West Dip Project. The fill had collapsed.

[Tooele County Sheriff Incident Report 17-S02930; Utah County Sheriff Incident Report 17UC04378; Deseret News, 5/8/17, "Rescuers pull missing man from mine shaft" by McKenzie Romero]