

COAL FATALITY
BLACK DIAMOND, WASHINGTON
PACIFIC COAST COMPANY
MORGAN SLOPE
APRIL 26, 1907

On April 26th, at 10 a.m. I was notified by James Anderson, chief engineer of the company, that several men had been killed in an explosion which had occurred at 6:50 a.m. at Morgan Slope, Black Diamond.

A party consisting of Mr. Anderson, N. D. Moore, assistant engineer of the company; Dr. Wiltsie, deputy coroner, and myself immediately started for the scene of the accident by special train, arriving at Black Diamond about noon. Upon reaching the men we learned that the dead and injured had been removed from the mine shortly after the accident.

Accompanied by Messrs. Anderson, Moore, and Mine Foreman Frank Johnson, I went below to the sixth level, where the explosion had occurred, and examined the working places and the caved area as far as possible and found absolutely no gas.

The men who were killed outright or died of injuries received in the explosion were: Mark Bently, single, age 30; Albert Domenick, single, age 39; Joe Belmondo, single, age 25; Domenick Phillips, single, age 27; Reese Reese, married, age 45; Mike Mitchell, married, age 43; John Sobranto, single, age 38. Those seriously injured were: John Auclane, Matt Troyo, Harry Pistoria, Mike Sarri, Basill Phillips, John Sassetella.

*2
dead
6
injured*

The explosion occurred just as the men were going to work on the day shift, which begins at 1 a.m.

Examination of the mine and testimony at the coroner's inquest, which returned a verdict of

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The sixth level south was driven a distance of 950 feet from the bottom of slope. The upraises of breasts had been worked from No. 4, 170 feet from bottom of slope up the pitch of the seam, a distance of 300 feet. The pillars between these breasts were being pulled and had been extracted for about 200 feet down the pitch from breast No. 4 to breast No. 12.

A cave had occurred about two weeks previous, but no gas had ever been found in the workings. The firebosses had made their regular rounds of inspection on every shift, also on the shift prior to the explosion, and found all clear. At 6:10 a.m. on the day of the accident, as the night-shift men were leaving, a second cave occurred in the worked ground on the sixth level south. Although two men working in the gangway were thrown to the ground by the force of the compressed air resulting from the cave, they finished their shift, but did not report the accident to anyone as they were leaving the mine. This cave evidently liberated a small body of gas from over-lying strata, and the day-shift men, expecting to find the breast free of gas (for none had been detected since the main air-course had been driven through to the fifth level), entered breast 14 with open lights, which ignited the gas and caused an explosion in which these men--namely, Reese, Mitchell, and Troyo--were badly burned.

The force of the explosion expended itself down through breasts No. 14 and No. 12 and along the gangway and threw the men going to work in this gangway out against cars and other obstructions at the bottom of the slope. From this point, there being more room for expansion, the explosion gradually lost its force, and no other part of the mine was damaged. The workings were moist,

consequently there was no dust to augment or increase the explosion.

The ventilation was good. I examined these workings a few hours after the explosion occurred and measured 11,300 cubic feet of air per minute, which, owing to the slightly damaged condition of the mine, was probably some less than had been passing at the time of the explosion.

While the explosion in itself was . . . proportionately large. The men had safety lamps to examine their places of working for gas that might accumulate during change of shift, but they evidently made no use of this safe guard. To avoid a repetition of such an accident all employees of this mine are forbidden to use open lights.

Following is the text of the verdict of the coroner's jury:

"We find that these men came to thier death by concussion fire which was caused by an explosion of a pocket of gas, which brought down by an unavoidable cave, and was ignited by some known miner.

Joe F. Aniardi.

Earl Belloir.

Peter Frederickson.

Walter Wilkeson.

Viggo Jaspersen.

Shadrack Evans."