

COAL FATALITY  
BURNETT, WASHINGTON  
PACIFIC COAST COAL COMPANY  
BURNETT MINE  
AUGUST 28, 1918

An explosion occurred in South No. 3 seam, 3rd level, on the afternoon of August 28, 1918, at 4:20 p.m., by which twelve persons were killed and three others seriously injured. One hundred and eighty-three persons were employed in the mine on the day of the explosion.

The main entrance to the mine is through a slope on No. 2 seam to the third level. A rock tunnel driven from No. 2 seam about 500 feet from the slope bottom and driven in the foot wall intersects Nos. 3 and 4 seams. All three seams were being worked at the time of the explosion. The mine was on safety lamps and all shots were fired by the fireboss. Gangways north and south are driven off the rock tunnel on No. 3 seam. Thirty-eighth persons were employed in No. 3 south on the day of the explosion.

The pitch is about 50 degrees and the system of working was breast and pillar, the breasts being driven about 18 feet wide where conditions allowed it, with a manway on the rib side, wooden brattice between chute and manway to conduct the air to the face. In No. 3 south, breasts Nos. 18 and 27, inclusive, gangway, counter and No. 31 gangway chute, which was the inside place, were working on the day of the explosion. The fireboss fired the shots twice each day, at noon and between 4:00 and 4:30 p.m., which was quitting time.

At the time of the explosion the fireboss was making his last round and all the men working in that part of the mine had left their working places and all but the twelve killed and three injured had reached the rock tunnel leading from South 3, or had reached the slope bottom. Although the explosion was felt throughout the mine no one was injured excepting in South 3 gangway. It is thought that the explosion originated in No. 24 breast, South 3. Shots had been fired in most all the places from No. 18 into No. 24. No shots were fired in any of the working places inside of No. 24. The fireboss, who fired the shots, was found on the gangway between No. 31 chute and the face of the gangway. He had traveled that far after the shot had been lighted in No. 24, which was about 285 feet up the pitch from the gangway. The shot in No. 24 was in a crosscut which was about 17 feet back from the face. The shot was well mined and had done its work properly. The testimony of the miner who worked there was that two sticks of Monobel had been used. The miners in the place worked with electric lamps but did not have a safety lamp to test for gas but said they did not notice anything that would cause them to

The conclusion of nearly everyone who had made an investigation was that the shot in No. 24 must have caused the explosion for the following reason. The shots in the other places must have been ignited before the fireboss reached the point where he was found on account of the distance he had to travel after lighting them. That gas was present in No. 24 when the shot was lighted was the conclusion reached and it was thought that as there were no shots at the face of No. 24 the fireboss did not give it as careful an examination as he should. There is always a possibility in a gaseous mine ventilated on the gangway-counter system, of the loaders pulling the coal below the bulkhead, thereby short circuiting the air. This may have happened as two trips were loaded out of Nos. 19 and 21 chutes, between 3 and 4 p.m., and would account for the gas being present.

South 3 was not considered dusty. The gangway was wet and the pitch workings in most places were damp, but considerable dust was made by the coal running down the chutes. At the time of the explosion whatever dust was present was in suspension on account of so many shots being fired and the men traveling down the manways at quitting time. When the gas was ignited whatever dust was present was held in suspension which accounts for the explosion being carried throughout the workings and to the gangway where it died out on account of the gangway being wet. The men who were killed near the junction of the rock tunnel were killed by the concussion and were not burned, for the flame did not reach that far.

The lessons to be learned from this accident are that the safety of a mine depends a great deal on all employed therein from the trappers to the officials and a great deal depends on the fire bosses and shotlighters, especially in safety lamp mines where gas and dust are present, for if a careful examination is not made before shots are fired an accident such as the above can very easily occur. The system of firing shots at quitting time and having the shotlighter light them on the run as was done in Burnett is a very dangerous practice and should not be allowed, for men will be careless in their hurry to get through the places. A shotfirer who is allotted a certain time in which to fire shots generally requires the full time to do it properly. The practice of getting the shots fired and being able to leave the mine as soon as this is done is conducive to abuses in shotfiring and shotfirers should spend the allotted time in firing the shots in their district. If but few shots are fired, prolonging the time between shots is only liable to tend to greater safety. Wherever possible shooting should be done after the men leave the mine. Coal dust in gaseous mines, if only in small quantities, must be taken care of and the inspection department will order shooting stopped in all mines where this is not done.

The following is a list of the killed and injured:

NAME	AGE	MARRIED OR SINGLE	NATION- ALITY	OCCUPATION	ORPHANS
Mike Sladoje	29	Single	Austrian	Miner	
Wm. Johnson	42	Married	Finn	Fireboss	10
Gus Fieisher	36	Married	American	Miner	3
Elle Talt	36	Married	Italian	Miner	2
Chas. Makkela	37	Married	Finn	Miner	1
Otto Makkela	32	Married	Finn	Miner	3
Tom Flemming	32	Single	Irish	Miner	
Dan Reese	52	Married	Welsh	Miner	2
Reese Jenkins	23	Single	Welsh	Miner	
Jacob Sippola	43	Married	Finn	Miner	5
Claudius Tomaczat	43	Single	French	Miner	
George Marich	28	Single	Austrian	Miner	

INJURED.-- Martin McDonough, John Sertich, and Steve Vuryn.