

21 MINERS KILLED IN GAS EXPLOSION

State and County Officials Sift
Cause of Third Catastrophe
in Illinois Pit.

WEST FRANKFORT, Ill., Jan. 10.—Gas, that invisible menace of the coal miner, has added 21 lives to lengthening list of victims.

The 21 were killed yesterday by a terrific gas explosion in a passage of the Peabody industrial mine 18.

About 600 feet underground, and more than a mile from the surface, most of the miners were killed outright. The others died from the after-damp that followed.

State and county investigations today sought to fix the explosion's cause. A. D. Lewis, state director of mines, who made a personal inspection, was conducting the state's investigation, while Coroner Joseph Hill of Franklin county impanelled a jury to investigate the disaster for the county.

Coming without warning shortly after the day shift of 800 miners had taken their places at 7:30 A. M., the explosion killed all the men working in four adjoining rooms.

Three Rescue Crews Worked.

Three mine rescue crews fought their way through gas and crumbled walls of coal and timber to bring the bodies to the shaft where they were lifted to the surface last night.

Two of the dead men were found within a few feet of fresh air and safety. Another had made his way almost to a trap door where he could have escaped.

A brave effort by David McPhail to save his brother, Robert, failed. David, upon hearing the blast, rushed into the passage and after three dashes into the gas found his brother but was forced to drop him within 15 feet of fresh air.

Evidently realizing his room, Ray Farrell chalked the number of his mine room on the soles of his feet, where it was found when his body was discovered. The other bodies were identified by the numbers on their safety lamps. Many were mutilated and disfigured.

Third Disaster in Mine.

B. Cremeans, a survivor, was found in a walled-in space, raving and irrational from shock.

The explosion was the third misfortune to befall workers in mine 18. The first was an explosion in 1920, which resulted in loss of life and gave the mine a reputation of being "hot," an adjective applied to gaseous mines. In 1925 the tri-state tornado swept away the tippie and men at work were forced to climb to the surface through the air shafts.

The mine was flooded with water for two years by the management after the 1920 explosion in an effort to extinguish a slow fire.

It was found necessary later to wall off a large portion of the underground workings because of gas and yesterday's explosion was within a short distance of the 23-inch concrete wall.

1928 Peabody No 18 Mine explosion
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Jun 7, 2025