

16 GIVEN UP AS DEAD IN EXPLOSION

Trapped Mile and A Half Down In Pioneer
Coal Company Mine at Kettle Island,
Near Pineville, Ky., Saturday.

FIRST TO RESCUE ARE OVERCOME

Volunteers Who Started to Aid Without Gas
Masks Have to Be Resuscitated; Terrific
Gas Blast Shatters Timbers.

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PINEVILLE, Ky.—Sixteen men were trapped a mile and a half down in Entry No. 12 of Pioneer Coal Company mine at Kettle Island, seven miles northeast of Pineville, following a gas explosion Saturday afternoon.

Early Sunday no hope was held that any of the men would be found alive. Mine rescue crews by then with gas masks had gone more than 4000 feet into the mine.

A rescue crew, with John H. Daniels, chief state inspector in charge, came out of the mine at 12:30 a. m., Sunday. They had gone 4000 feet without finding any bodies, and believe that the 16 men must have been trapped 10,000 feet back.

A supply men's base was established 400 feet in. Mine cars were going in and out of the mine, carrying material to put up brattices.

As one crew comes out of the mine another goes in. A crew from Pineville was at the mine early Sunday to go in.

The explosion occurred Saturday at 2:30 p. m. Immediately afterwards mine rescue crews in the coal fields were notified and preparations were started to rush equipment by special trains.

Gas Halts First Volunteers

Lowe Kuhn with four volunteers first tried to go into the mine. They had no gas masks and were almost overcome by black damp and gas. The five crawled out and were resuscitated.

At 8:30 p. m. rescue men arrived from Harlan, Jellico and Lexington. Two of these started into the mine without gas masks and had gone only 100 feet when they fell down. Others brought the two out and resuscitated them.

The fact that the men without masks could go only a short distance indicated that the 16 more than a mile back in the mine must be dead.

Another crew from Norton, Va., arrived at 10:30.

Timbers and Brattices Broken

The terrific explosion broke timbers and brattices which were barriers to the progress of rescue crews.

A rescue crew of 12 from Kilday went in at 9:45. They found the mine entry virtually shattered and did not believe that anyone could have survived the explosion.

Five officials of the U. S. Bureau of Mines are taking part in the rescue work. John H. Daniels of Lexington, state mine inspector, is also helping.

Coal operators were joining with miners in doing what they could. E. R. Clayton, secretary of the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association, went to the mine.

Miners were huddled in groups around bonfires. Relatives waited hopefully under a shed for news from the rescue workers.

There was no lack of mine experts as a convention of them was being held at Lexington and they came over to help in the rescue.

L. & N. special trains took rescue equipment to the scene of the disaster. Dr. H. C. Davison of Middlesboro, master of trains, was in charge.

The Pioneer Coal Company mine at Kettle Island is the second largest in southeastern Kentucky.

Ambassador Is An Owner

The company is owned by Fred M. Sackett, former Kentucky senator and now United States Ambassador to Germany, and by J. B. Speed of the Fulton Speed Cement Company, Louisville, Ky. They also own the Black Star mine in Harlan county and the Wilton mines in Knox county, Ky.

The mine is non-union and there has been no strike since 1922. Wages have been satisfactory.

More miners would probably have been killed if the explosion had not taken place Saturday afternoon. Usually 275 men are at work in the mine, but most of them quit work at noon on Saturdays. One of the men killed was a foreman and another was an assistant foreman.

The last explosion at the mine was two years ago when a foreman was killed.

16 BELIEVED DEAD

The 16 men entombed and now believed dead in the mine explosion at Kettle Island, 85 miles northeast of Knoxville, are:

J. E. Hill, foreman.

M. J. Vann, assistant foreman.

J. L. Jones, coal loader.

Jess Lasley, coal loader.

Dave Sowders, coupler.

Mason Fultz, timberman.

Luther Hodge, motorman.

Edd Osborne, coupler.

Harvey Allen, coal loader.

Elmer Steele, coal loader.

John L. Cox, coal loader.

John Engle, coal loader.

Lee Johnson, coal loader.

Adrion Helton, coal loader.

Raymond Simpson, coal loader.

Sam Proffitt, brattice man.