

TEN LIVES LOST IN MINE EXPLOSION.

Splash Dam, June 14.

A mine explosion in Mine No. 5 of the Splash Dam Coal Corporation, located on Russell Fork river in Dickenson county one mile east of Haysi at 8:20 a. m., Monday morning, claimed the lives of ten miners, all white and all married except one. Investigation by state mine inspectors as to the exact cause is now under way. It is believed to have been a gas explosion, collecting dust as it blazed its way outward. Final report of the rescue men did not give any information as to the cause nor where it started. The operation had not worked since Thursday, June 9th and the men were taking rock, cleaning track and bailing water. Mine No. 5 would have contained around 85 men if running. Mines 5 and 6 are located near the river bed of Russell Fork at about a distance of 200 feet apart and five employees were at work in No. 6 mine, two of which were cleaning track near the drift mouth and saw the smoke and heard the report of the explosion. They were Reece Kene, motorman and Bascome Owens, helper. Keene says that they had loaded 3 cars and Owens suggested that they pull them to the outside and dump them and he set one foot upon a car and began telling a joke which took about three minutes and during the time the explosion occurred. Thinking the magazine had blown up they ran for the outside as the smoke was being drawn back into the mine. Keene and G. K. Beavers, supt., reached the body of Oscar Dowdle, fire boss and first victim about 150 feet inside the mines. The safety lamp that he carried was found on the hand of Ray Garrett, who was bailing water. It has not been determined yet whether Dowdle had made his rounds of inspection before starting out or not.

Ten dead men, nine widows and thirty-one orphans was the result of a few seconds of deadly gas. The rescue squad was delayed from 1 a. m. Tuesday morning until 6:30 on account of the poisonous black damp and their safety lamps being burned low. A rescue crew of 12 men under direction of Wm. Wolfe from Clinchfield Coal Corp., at Dante, arrived early Tuesday morning with a charging panel or safety lamps and work was immediately resumed. Aid summoned from the Virginia Coal Operators Association at Norton arrived at the scene within a few hours after the explosion, under direction of Chas. Neal.

Two undertakers from Coeburn and Norton with all supplies, changed the one-room school into a morgue. Six dead men were being embalmed in the same room that not fifteen hours before had attended church with large portrait of George Washington, the only picture in the room, silently watching the procedure.

Altho a heavy fog and rain hung like a blanket over the terror stricken camp of 75, screaming wives, sobbing children and heart broken relatives kept a vigil watch for the dead. The six weeks bride of Dave Adams kept his bath water and food hot until 11:45 today at which time his body was brought to surface.

Space had to be roped off near the mine to keep the crowd from surging too close to the poisonous gas filled entrance.