

# Mine Officials Await Probe Of Explosion Near Beckley

## Seven Bodies Found By Rescue Crews After Blast

BECKLEY, W. VA., Dec. 18. (AP) —All mines of the Raleigh Coal and Coke Company in the New River Field were closed today while officials waited an additional 24 hours before beginning investigation of an explosion which killed seven men and injured five others.

Without definite knowledge of the cause of the explosion yesterday in the No. 4 mine just outside Beckley, officials said the inquiry would be started tomorrow.

The company's other mines, following custom of the southern fields, closed in respect to the dead.

The blast occurred two miles back in the "slope" mine, actually under the streets of this southern West Virginia city in the heart of the coal fields.

Five men were brought out soon after the blast and taken to hospitals.

### Found Seven Bodies

Rescue crews found seven bodies four hours later.

Officials said they could not determine the cause of the blast, whether it was from gas or coal dust. Superintendent Ellsworth Shriver said the mine was not gaseous and safe lamps were used.

Meanwhile, there was new agitation in Washington for action on the Neely-Keller bill for inspection of coal mines which has passed the senate but has been in a house committee for several months.

Senator M. M. Neely, governor-elect of West Virginia, co-author of the measure, said the blast just outside Beckley was another reminder to opponents that "more innocent blood is on their hands."

Representative Joe L. Smith, (D-W. Va.), whose home is in Beckley, left last night for Washington, saying he was going primarily for a meeting of the house mining committee which he heads, to a meeting called before the explosion.

Smith said the disaster should have the effect of speeding up committee action.

The last time the committee was called to discuss the measure, backed by United Mine Workers but opposed by coal operators and officials of several states, a quorum was not present.

There were about 70 men in the mine at the time of the explosion, but all but 12 were in unaffected areas. The company employs about 300 men in its three mines in the county.

### Were Setting Sights

Yost and Anderson had been

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# Mine Officials

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setting sights for water drain, and ordinarily would not have been in that section of the mine. Except for Patrick, the other men in the blast area were working on a conveyor.

It was the first serious accident in the mine in 40 years of operation.

The workings were not damaged by the explosion, Shriver reported after returning from the blast area with N. P. Rhinehart, chief of the state mine department.