

Rescue Workers Find Scattered Belongings

Four Rescue Teams Extend Search Farther Into Island Creek Mine

LOGAN, W.Va. (AP) — Hope ebbed today for rescue of 18 trapped coal miners as rescue teams probed the areas where they might have taken refuge and found no one.

One area was found empty Monday night and another this morning. There were no signs of the men at the entrance to the third and final refuge where the men, trapped since last Tuesday, may have gone.

“If they’re up toward the slope, they’re dead,” said Paul Lingo, deputy state mines director.

Basic mine safety instructions call for trapped men to use chalk
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or other means to leave signs for rescuers.

The 18 were cut off about 8 a.m. last Tuesday when a small rock slide snapped an electric cable that ignited some timbers. The timbers in turn started a smoldering fire in the coal.

Communication was maintained with the miners for about four hours until that line, too, was broken, apparently burned through by the fire.

There are three honeycombed refuge areas, or "rooms," off the main passageway where the men might have barricaded themselves from the deadly fumes and smoke from the fire.

An alternative would have been to try to make it through the main passageway to an old mine entrance on the other side of the mountain. This way has been blocked for some time, and safety officials consider it the worst choice the men could have made.

The rescue team sent out to reach the third area—100 feet deeper in the mine—was told to check the barricade at its entrance for signs of the men but not to break any seal which might be protecting the trapped men from deadly fumes.

Hope was running high Monday when one crew finally reached the goal workers had been striving toward for more than six days—an underground room where the men might have taken refuge.

No one was there. It was empty except for the objects here and there.

One week ago today the 18 were trapped at work as the rocky roof of their tunnel tumbled down, igniting a stubborn fire which is still smoldering.

Rescuers struck out for a larger room 1,200 feet deeper into the mine. There was no official word on how long it might take to get there.