

Mine Rescuers Launch Drive

By ROBERT E. MILLER

LOGAN, W. Va. (AP) — Tired, begrimed rescue crews, beaten back by choking fumes and deadly carbon monoxide earlier in the day, launched an all-out effort Wednesday night to reach 18 men trapped in a coal mine.

A fire and slate fall at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday cut off the 18 miners four miles inside the Island Creek Coal Co. No. 22 mine at nearby Holden in southern West Virginia.

Silent Since Tuesday

They haven't been heard from since noon Tuesday, when the flames apparently burned through a telephone line that was their only connection with the mine entrance.

State Mines Director Cranford L. Wilson said rescue crews will try to work beyond the fire area to a distance of 850 feet. There they will try to build a barricade and move over into another passageway which runs parallel to the one in which the men are trapped.

Explains Plan

It is about 2,500 feet from where the barricade will be set up to the point at which the miners are believed to have taken refuge.

Wilson said the round-the-clock plan will have at least one crew in the mine at all times. Six eight-man crews will spearhead the effort, he said.

Still Have Hope

Wilson branded as "absolutely false" a report that tapping was heard from inside the mine indicating the men were still alive.

"We are concerned about the fate of the men," he said, "but we still have hope. There is ample time to reach them if they are barricaded properly."

The mines chief said there was not much flame in the mine but thick smoke and carbon monoxide were hampering the operation.