

Eight Others Are Missing Practically No Hope That Any Will Be Found Alive

CLARKSBURG, W. Va. (AP)—Cinchfield Coal Co. announced shortly after noon that 14 bodies of 22 men trapped by an explosion in its Compass No. 2 mine near here have been recovered.

There was practically no hope the other eight—even deeper in the mine—would be found alive.

Three bodies were found first near the main mine tunnel, about a mile and a half from the main entrance. Eleven other were found a short time later in a lateral working section.

The 22 men, all married, had 63 dependents.

Announcement of the finding of the first victims of the Thursday's explosion was made by mine Supt. Harry Chapman, whose brother is one of the missing miners.

Near Opening

The bodies, Chapman reported, were found near the opening of a drift in which 13 miners were scheduled to be working when a rumbling gas explosion hit the mine.

Seven other men were assigned to a drift 2,000 feet farther into the mine and two men were assisting both crews.

Outside the mine's entrance, women, coal miners in working gear, police and coal company officials kept vigil.

Shaft Not Damaged

There was nothing on the outside to indicate what had taken place. Fans which circulate air through the mine continued to operate. The shaft was not damaged. The elevator which can carry 10 men down into the working area was still operating.

Leonard Timms, state mines director, said the trapped men were about 1 1/4 miles from the shaft when the explosion rumbled through the deep works.

As rescue crews leaptfrogged through mine drifts toward the explosion area 5,000 feet back in the mine, a company official said:

"We have hopes, but chances are slim they're still alive."

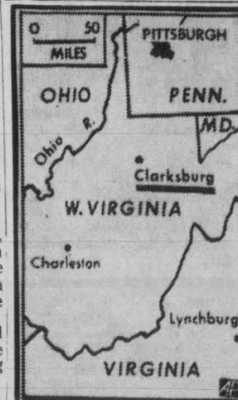
At the shaft head at Dola, six miles northwest of here, wives of the trapped men, officials, off-shift workers and miners who escaped the blast kept a dawn vigil.

State Police blocked rural roads to keep away the curious. Ambulances and rescue vehicles stood by.

Methane Gas

The explosion, tentatively laid to deadly and explosive methane gas, possibly in combination with coal dust, blew dirt and debris out the 330-foot main mine shaft just after 11 p.m. Twenty-nine miners working away from the explosion area tumbled out of the mine.

But 22 others—14 working on one seam, seven on another and a foreman who could have been with either group—did not appear.



(AP) Wirephoto

MINE TRAP—Two work crews of miners were trapped 400 feet underground by an explosion in a mine near Clarksburg, W. Va., underlined, last night.

The area was a mile and three quarters from the nearest mine opening.

A hurried call was put in for mine rescue crews, equipped with oxygen breathing apparatus. Teams rushed to the mine from Clarksburg and Fairmont. Five six-man teams were on the job before dawn.

Stephen Canonico, Cinchfield vice president, said the lead rescue team encountered traces of methane gas about 3,500 feet from the area in which the men were working. Blowers dispersed the deadly fumes.

The rescue groups penetrated to within 1,500 feet of the work area by dawn. Smoke thickened as the teams advanced. No rock falls were encountered and Canonico was hopeful the area of the trapped men could be reached in a matter of hours.

"If they were physically able, they would have tried to throw up a bulkhead or barrier," he said. "But in the circumstances, I don't know if they had the chance."

Names of the trapped men were not immediately available. Canonico said a list would be released after their fate is determined. All were local men from the Clarksburg area.

The Compass No. 2 mine, a shaft and drift operation as opposed to open surface mines, employs 185 men.