

**54 missing**

# ***Fire, blasts trap miners***

MANNINGTON, W. Va. (AP)—Thundering explosions ripped through a rich coal mine early today, trapping as many as 75 miners. But the Marion County sheriff's office and coal company officials said 21 had been located or rescued.

Smoke and fire billowed from one entrance to the mine and smoke clogged others.

Sheriff Robert Tennant said eight men had been found at the bottom of a shaft and were scooped out, two at a time, by a bucket lowered into the shaft by a crane.

The mine is the Mountaineer Coal Company's No. 9 located just west of Mannington in the coal country of north-central West Virginia, near the Pennsylvania state line. Mountaineer is the state's third largest coal producing company and is a division of Consolidation Coal Co.

Mountaineer president Dave Davis said 13 miners had come out of the mine at the slope opening near the coal preparation plant.

"The severity of the explosive forces in the Llewellyn portal area were of such great magnitude as to place in jeopardy the lives of the employees in the immediate area," Davis said.

The company said 360 men work the mine in three shifts. The more than 70 men on the third shift were due off about 7:30 a.m. EST. The first explosion rumbled through the long shaft about 1½ hours earlier.

Wives and children of the miners rushed to the entrance, as did rescue teams from across the area.

Tennant said seven to nine men reached the surface safely just after the first blast. The force of the blast, Tennant said, blew machinery through the Llewellyn portal and destroyed it.

Rescuers concentrated on the Farmington portal, about one mile from the Llewellyn entrance.

West Virginia Gov. Hulett C. Smith said in Charleston that he sent mine experts to the scene and that he had received an offer of assistance from Washington.



**Smoke billows from wrecked mine**

1968 Consol No 9 Mine Explosion NEWS2

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Jul 11, 2025