

Hole Drilled In Attempt to Find Miners

2 More Explosions
Delay Rescuers as
Smoke Fills Shafts

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FARMINGTON, W. Va., Nov. 22. — Rescuers began drilling operations amid mounting reverses Friday in an effort to reach 78 coal miners entombed by an explosion and fire two days ago.

The rescue efforts received an initial setback of "at least a day" Friday morning when two powerful explosions tore into the bowels of Consol No. 9 mine, where continuing fires have hampered rescue work.

And by late afternoon, smoke was issuing from four of the

Related Article on Page 26

mine's five entrances, indicating the underground fire may be spreading.

SINGLE ENTRANCE FREE

A company spokesman reported at night that smoke was now issuing from Atha's Run air shaft, leaving only the main entrance still smoke-free. He added the main entrance could begin belching smoke any minute.

"All it (the issuance from the fourth shaft) probably means is a shifting of air currents," he explained. "The fire has continued to burn, but it has not necessarily expanded."

He admitted, on the other hand, that it could signify an enlargement of the fire and "the beginning of the end."

3 HOLES PLANNED

The all-important word on the lives of the miners remained the same: not very optimistic, but don't give up all hope yet.

The company brought in 30 trucks filled with more than 500 tons of coarse limestone to dump down the Mod's Run double air-shaft before reconstructing the concrete cover. The limestone was supposed to act as a plug to keep any possible explosion bottled up.

Mine officials plan to drill three bore holes to sample air in the mine tunnel and—hopefully—communicate with any miners who may be alive. The miners, they said, could shout up the holes.

One 820-foot-deep hole already exists. Air sampling equipment lowered through the hole's cop-

Continued on Page 26, Column 3

Drill Attempts to Bore Into Cavern Where 78 Miners Are Lost

Continued from First Page

per tubing showed men could breathe the present air mixture and live.

WORK DELAYED

The first hole is not in the exact area where the trapped miners were working at the time of the blast 5:40 A. M. Wednesday. Officials plan to drill the three new holes in areas where they hope to find some signs of life.

The drilling on the first new hole was supposed to start Thursday night, but was delayed because of difficulties in pinpointing the proper location. It will take two to three days to complete each hole. The holes will be 3½ inches in diameter and anywhere from 600 to 850 feet deep.

For the first time Friday—and without raising any false hopes—William N. Poundstone, executive vice president of Consolidation Coal Co., hinted at some details of a possible rescue attempt.

The best chance for recovery of the miners, Poundstone said, is through the Mahan airshaft, where eight of 21 miners brought to safety Wednesday were lifted out in a crane bucket. The rescued men were working several miles from the blast side.

EXPLOSION NOTED

The Mahan shaft is about two miles south of the Llewellyn portal where the first of a series of explosions occurred Wednesday. Smoke started coming from the Mahan shaft, however, for the first time Friday afternoon.

Friday started with an explosion at 2:45 A. M. and another at 4:40 A. M. at the Mod's Run airshaft, 1½ miles east of Llewellyn. A 20-ton concrete cover that had capped the shaft was shattered and pieces were blown 100 feet away. The ground rocked and homes shook five miles from the explosion.

A concrete cover had been placed on the Mod's Run airshaft once before, but this, too, had blown away. Undaunted, workmen late Friday started laying a third cover over the

shaft in an attempt to cut off oxygen from the out-of-control fire and thus "calm it down."

Friends and relatives of the trapped miners maintained their three-day vigil in the coal company's general store, The Champion Stores, although there was no great optimism that any of the men would be found alive.

At the morning briefing when Poundstone announced that the early morning explosions "have essentially put us back where we were yesterday," there were screams and cries of "Oh, no" from the mothers and wives of some of the miners.

Mrs. Barbara Toler, whose husband, Dennis, is trapped some 600-feet underground, had to be led out of the store. She's expecting their third child any minute.

RESCUE PUT OFF

Originally it had been hoped that the first of the six-man rescue team could enter the mine sometime Friday. But with the fire still out of control, it had to be put off for at least another day.

"It would be criminal to send rescue teams down there now," said Lewis B. Evans, safety director for the United Mine Workers of America.

"But we want to make it very clear that this mine is not going to be sealed without agreement until we exhaust every possible avenue of contacting these men and effecting a recovery."

Poundstone warned mine families hanging on his every word not to expect too much to come from the fresh borings. "We have to be fortunate to hit an open cavern," he added. The drill would have to hit a 16-foot-wide opening from a distance of up to 850 feet.

3 SAMPLES BAD

Several miners who worked in Consol No. 9 have told reporters that the mine was not completely safe. Poundstone went into an elaborate explanation of safety procedures and Federal and state mine standards.

In the last Federal inspection, completed Aug. 30, three out of 125 rock dust samples were below minimum standards. Rock dust—which is pulverized limestone—is blown onto mine walls to render explosive coal dust incombustible.

"There was only one really bad sample," Poundstone said, "and it's unfair to single this out. The important thing is that the adjacent areas were well dusted, and this would stop any coal dust explosion if one started." The deficiency noted on the Federal report was corrected immediately, he added.

CAUSE GIVEN

Evans said there was little doubt the first explosion was caused by an ignition of a pocket of methane gas in the mine. "This was one of the most violent explosions . . . I have ever seen," he added.

Elmer Workman, director of the State Mines Department, insisted Friday the mine was one of West Virginia's safest, despite 12 safety violations since August.

Dance Shooting Wounds Seven

Seven youths were wounded, one critically, Friday night when an altercation during a young people's dance in North Philadelphia resulted in a series of shotgun blasts.

Detectives were searching for a man who fired four shots into a crowd outside a hall at 502 W. Susquehanna ave., where participants in a brawl at the dance had spilled outdoors. They said the dance was sponsored by the Young Black Society.

James Johnson, 23, of 640 W. Cumberland st., was in critical condition with a head wound at Episcopal Hospital.

The others, listed in fair or good condition with wounds of the legs and arms, were Eugene