

Coal mine cave-in kills three

HUNTINGTON, Utah (AP)—A vice president of Peabody Coal Co. entered the Deer Creek Mine today with federal inspectors to determine the cause of a double cave-in Monday which killed three men and injured three others.

One man was trapped inside an iron cage for two hours before he was rescued.

Joseph Craggs, vice president for underground operations, said inspectors were still trying to "put all the bits and pieces together."

He said the first cave-in was "immediate and undetected," just 30 seconds after a routine inspection of the mine roof.

He said the second collapse occurred 45 minutes later as rescuers shored up the walls with timber in a 20-by-20-foot area where a new mine cut was being made.

Craggs said there was no chance that operation of machinery caused either cave-in.

He described the second cave-in as a "rib bounce" in which the weight of the coal burst like an explosion, knocking timbers out of the walls.

"The timber was there and everything that should have been there was there. We don't know why it fell," Craggs said, describing the second collapse.

Craggs said he did not know when the mine would resume operation, but it

would not be until federal officials had finished their inspection.

In a telephone interview from St. Louis, Mo., earlier today, D.C. Hall, senior operations vice president for Peabody, said the U.S. Bureau of Mines approved the firm's mining plan for the Deer Creek facility.

Hall said mining plans are required to be filed with the bureau.

"Normally, the mine roof had been extremely good out there," Hall said.

A hearing attended by Craggs and Bureau of Mines officials began this morning.

The latest body recovered was that of Russ Larsen, 28. Brought out Monday were Alfred Willis, 28, Carbonville, and Roger Luke, 19, Orangeville.

Larsen's body was recovered some three hours before authorities announced the recovery to newsmen.

Two other miners were hospitalized after crews pulled them from the cave-ins at Peabody Coal Co.'s Deer Creek Mine in east-central Utah.

The mine is the only source of fuel for Utah Power Light Co.'s 430 megawatt power plant. The plant reduced its output nearly half with closure of the mine after the cave-in.

The Emery County sheriff's office blocked newsmen from getting within two miles of the mine, which is up a rocky canyon south of the power plant.

A sheriff's office spokesman said

three carloads of relief rescuers were taken to the mine late Monday, nearly 12 hours after the cave-in.

David Cave, 33, and Vernon Wilson, 29, both Price, were listed in good condition at Carbon Hospital. They were injured in the cave-in.

Chester J. Housekeeper, 28, Wellington, said that "I feel lucky and sick" after he was removed from a machine called a "miner" buried in the cave-in.

One of the men who reached him said Housekeeper was "deathly white but uninjured" inside a cage atop the coal-mining machine. The equipment was constructed to hold up under 18,000 pounds of pressure per square foot.

The rescue worker said Willis was killed when an overhang of rock left from the first cave-in collapsed on rescue workers. He said Cave also was injured in the second collapse.

Cave, contacted at the hospital, said, "I'd just rather not talk about it right now."

The unidentified miner drew a map for newsmen in dirt showing how the cave-ins occurred. He said the first brought tons of coal and rock down on Housekeeper, Luke and Larsen as Housekeeper was chewing into coal about one one-half mile in the mountain-side.

Man admits guilt in ex

The third adult male arrested in connection with a recent \$75,000 extortion attempt has pleaded guilty to a felony charge.

Bobbie Gene Thompson, 19, of 760 Belford, pleaded guilty today in District Court to a charge of attempted theft.

The charge carries a penalty of up to five years in the Colorado State Penitentiary or Colorado State Reformatory, and up to a \$15,000 fine, Judge William Ela said.

Dist. Atty. Terrance Farina said a

second charge of conspiracy to commit theft would be dismissed since the sentence incurred for possible conviction of that crime would be served concurrently with the sentence for the felony to which he pleaded guilty.

Thompson is free on \$5,000 bond and sentencing is scheduled for 9 a.m. June 4. Earlier he had been released on \$5,000 bond and then rebooked when bond was revoked, according to Mesa County Sheriff's reports.

1975 Miner trapped in Deer Creek mine cavein for 2 hours



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