

Rock House Powellton Mine Rescue, Clear Creek, West Virginia — Four people had gone missing on Saturday, Dec. 8, 2018. Their abandoned ATV was found near an opening into the mine. **More than 48 hours** later, Eddie Williams, 43, safely came out of the mine on his own. On Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, after **more than five days**, Erica Treadway, Cody Beverly, and Kayla Williams were brought out safely by rescuers. The three were taken to the Charleston Area Medical Center to be checked out. The idled mine is owned by the Elk Run Coal Company, a subsidiary of Alpha Natural Resources. The rescuers were from both Alpha and the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety & Training.

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### **3 people trapped in Raleigh County mine rescued**

*By Elizabeth Suarez; WSAZ News Staff*

**Raleigh County, W.Va. (WSAZ/ AP) -- Update 12/12/18 @ 10:40 p.m.**

It was a scene of pure jubilation Wednesday night at the Salamie Memorial Center in Whitesville where three people rescued from an underground mine were reunited with family and friends.

About 100 people burst into tears and applause when they received news that Erica Treadway, Cody Beverly, and Kayla Williams were alive. All had been in the Rock House Powellton mine in Clear Creek since the weekend.

"God is good," said West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice who was at the scene when the trio was rescued.

Rescue teams found Treadway around 6 p.m. About 30 minutes later, they found Beverly and Williams. While all three appeared healthy, they were taken to Charleston Area Medical Center to be checked out.

Crews at the scene say many of the rescuers worked on 19 percent oxygen Wednesday. Rescue officials say the ventilation from fans was a breakthrough in being able to rescue all three people.

A fourth person, Eddie Williams, 43, safely came out of the mine on his own Monday night. At this time, no charges have been filed against the four people.

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## **Original Story 12/9/18**

A West Virginia mine rescue team is searching for four people reported missing at an underground coal mine.

The state Office of Miner's Health, Safety and Training says in a news release it began assisting the Raleigh County Sheriff's Office on Sunday. The search is at Elk Run Coal Co.'s Rock House Powellton Mine near Clear Creek.

The Sheriff's office says that an abandoned ATV the four were believed to be riding was found near the mine entrance that was sealed at one time.

Members of the state mine safety office and mine parent company Alpha Natural Resources entered the mine Sunday afternoon to begin the search.

According to the mine safety office, coal has not been mined at the underground location for two years.

Rescuers are not sure if all four actually entered the mine but their location and condition are still unknown at this time.

They were last seen early Saturday morning.

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## **UPDATE 12/10/18 @ 10:50 p.m.**

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is on his way to a coal mine in Raleigh County, where a rescue operation is underway.

Justice said one of four people lost inside the mine since Sunday was able to get out safely on his own, and now rescue efforts are underway to retrieve the other three.

The man who was able to escape tells rescuers the other three are in a part of the mine with a pocket of good air, but it's about 1,000 feet deeper than the rescuers have gone so far.

Justice said, "If there's any way on this earth to rescue these guys, we're going to do it."

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## **Three rescued from W. Virginia mine may have been seeking copper scrap**

Reuters

By Brendan O'Brien and Dan Whitcomb

Thursday, 13 December 2018 04:56 GMT

Dec 12 (Reuters) -- Rescuers on Wednesday found alive three people who had been lost in a West Virginia mine for four days after crawling in through a ventilation shaft, and brought them to the surface, a state spokeswoman said.

Erica Treadway, 31, Kayla Williams, 25, and Cody Beverly, 21, were all being taken to a hospital for treatment after the rescue, said Samantha Smith of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

Smith said she had no immediate information on the condition of the three, who had been stranded in the Rock House Powellton mine near the town of Clear Creek since Saturday.

A fourth person who was with the group when they entered the mine while riding all-terrain vehicles, 43-year-old Eddie Williams, found his way out on Monday to alert authorities about his missing friends.

Randy Williams, the father of Kayla Williams, one of those rescued, told an ABC News affiliate that he believed the group entered the abandoned mine to look for scrap copper to sell.

"It's worth money," he told the network. "A couple of years ago it was almost \$4 a pound. You could make \$1,000 a day."

Search and rescue crews had been hunting for the missing amateur explorers since early on Sunday, pumping water out of the mine and pumping in fresh air with large fans.

The West Virginia National Guard assisted local and state agencies, the office of Governor Jim Justice said.

"All West Virginians who are driving, riding ATVs, or hiking near abandoned mines please stop entering the abandoned mines," Justice said on Sunday.

"This is extremely irresponsible behavior that puts our first responders and mine safety crews in unsafe situations when they should be focused on ensuring safety at active mines."

In 2010 a coal mine explosion in the area killed 29 people in the worst such U.S. disaster in four decades.

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## **After five excruciating days, three people trapped inside an abandoned West Virginia coal mine have been rescued**

Washington Post  
December 13, 2018

Jobs are hard to come by in the mountains of southern West Virginia, where closed-up coal mines scar the landscape. So when four people ranging in age from 21 to 43 became trapped in an abandoned mine near the small town of Clear Creek over the weekend, their family members had an inkling of what they might have been doing there.

"The reason they're in there is to get copper," Randy Williams, whose daughter, Kayla, was among the missing, said in a Tuesday interview with ABC News. "It's worth money . . . A couple years ago it was up to almost \$4 a pound. You could go into a mine and make \$1,000 a day."

For five days, Williams and others in the close-knit Appalachian community held their breaths as they waited to see if their friends and family members would make it out. On Monday, Eddie Williams, 43, managed to escape on his own. Then, just before 7 p.m. on Wednesday, West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice announced that Kayla Williams, 25, Erica Treadway, 31, and Cody Beverly, 21, had been located alive and were being transported to a nearby hospital.

"This is an outcome that I really, truly, in my heart didn't think would happen," the Republican governor told reporters, calling the rescue "a Christmas blessing."

The four appear to have entered the mine early Saturday morning. At some point before daybreak, a man who lives near the Rock House Powellton coal mine noticed a four-wheeler driving up the mountain, Raleigh County Sheriff Scott Van Meter told the Register-Herald. The people in the ATV left their car parked along the side of the road, and by Saturday night, it hadn't moved. Concerned, the man called the authorities, who began searching the area. When they found the abandoned ATV parked outside the entrance to the

mine on Sunday morning, they knew that there was a good chance that someone was trapped inside the mine, which has gone unused for the past two years.

Rescuers from the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training arrived later that day, as the area was hit by a winter storm that closed schools and government offices. On Monday morning, Justice announced that snow and rough terrain had blocked the rescue team from accessing the entrance to the mine. The rescuers had tried another entrance instead, but water that had pooled inside in the mine prevented them from going any farther.

Tensions were running high at the community center in the town of Whitesville, where family members had gathered to wait for updates. Coffee cups were scattered across the folding tables and a Christmas tree topped with a gold bow did little to lighten the mood. "I got a grandson in there and, sir, I know what you're thinking, I know he shouldn't have been in there," Greg Scarbro, a local pastor and the grandfather of Cody Beverley, told the search-and-rescue officials. "But that's beside the point. He's in there."

Whitesville is home to the Upper Big Branch Miners Memorial, which honors 29 people who died in a 2010 explosion. Just about anyone in the area would have known that without ventilation systems running, oxygen levels inside abandoned mines can be dangerously low. No one knew how much food and water the four had been carrying, and some feared that they had gotten separated in the dark. Camelia Williams, the sister of Kayla Williams, told WVNS that locals wished they could take matters into their own hands. "Everyone here is a coal miner, and there's not one person here who wouldn't walk into that mine right now and search for all of them if they would let us in," she said.

On Monday night, they got a glimmer of hope: Eddie Williams, the oldest member of the group, had managed to escape from the mine. The other three were still alive, he reported, and had enough snacks and water to survive for a few days. Using a map, he showed rescuers where to find them. All night long, two four-man teams plumbed the depths of the mine, emerging just before dawn when their breathing apparatus ran out of oxygen.

All day on Tuesday, family members waited at the community center in Whitesville, leaving only to shower and get fresh clothes. Local churches and community businesses kept them fed, dropping off pizzas, trays of sliced meats and a breakfast buffet complete with biscuits and gravy. If Scarbro

could see Beverly, his grandson, he told WVNS, the first thing he would do would be to tell him that he loved him. "And the next thing I would do is kick him real good," he added.

That night, the mine rescue team tried something different. Using large fans, they blasted fresh air inside the mine, while also using pumps to siphon out the standing water that kept getting in their way. By Wednesday morning, there was enough pure oxygen inside the mine to allow the rescuers to go in without their breathing apparatus, Eugene White, the director of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training, said at a news conference that day. By 4 p.m., he said, they had explored about two miles of the mine.

On Wednesday night, the packed community center erupted in cheers when the phone call came. Family members clapped their hands, jumped in the air and broke down in tears. Forming a circle, they swayed from side to side and sang "Amazing Grace." Choking back tears, Scarbro told WVVA that he had never given up hope, even when others thought that a happy ending was impossible.

"Now I get to tell my grandson I love him," he said, "And, hold me to my word, kick him in the heinie."