

Woman, 23, killed in mine mishap

LEADVILLE, Colo. (AP) — Two miners, one a 23-year-old woman, were killed 600 feet underground Tuesday at the Climax molybdenum mine when 100 to 150 pounds of dynamite they had set in place exploded prematurely, mine officials said.

Five other workers were hospitalized for injuries and shock.

The cause of the explosion was not known, said Nelson Fugate, a mine spokesman. All dynamite and fuses from the lots which included the materials involved in the premature detonation were removed from the mine, Fugate said.

Investigators from state and federal mining agencies and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union, which represents Climax miners, went to the mine to conduct investigations.

The explosion occurred shortly after 1 a.m. after a production crew placed 8½-pound bags on dynamite in a 45-degree shaft which funnels fractured ore into an area where it can be loaded into cars for transport to the surface, Fugate said. The slanting shaft had become jammed, he said.

Killed were Mary Bradley, who was living near Leadville and whose family lives in Boise, Idaho, and Porter Sims, 26, of Buena Vista. Miss Bradley, a helper on the crew, had worked at the mine since September 1977. Sims was lead man on the crew.

Women working in underground mines were a rarity until about three years ago when a series of federal civil rights suits succeeded in forcing mine operators to hire more women.

The first woman killed in an underground coal mine accident died last week at the Rushton Mining Co. mine in Center County, Penn. Marilyn McCusker, 35, who had filed suit to win the right to work underground, was killed in a roof collapse, said Frank O'Gorman, a spokesman for the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration in Washington.

The Billings Gazette

October 10, 1979