

Beat: Travel

Gas explosion kills 28 at coal mine in northeast China

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USPA News - Twenty-eight miners were killed Friday and more than a dozen were injured when a powerful explosion ripped through a coal mine in northeastern China, officials said on Saturday. It comes just weeks after two other deadly mine accidents in which dozens were killed.

The accident happened at approximately 10:36 p.m. local time on Friday at the state-owned Babao coal mine near the city of Baishan, located in Jianguan district in the northeastern province of Jilin. A total of 41 people were working underground when the gas explosion happened. Liu Sen, an official at the State Administration of Work Safety, said the mine is part of Tonghua Mining Group Co., Ltd. "As of now, the rescue work is over. As a result of the accident, twenty-eight people were killed," he said, adding that the thirteen other workers were initially trapped but later rescued. A spokesman from the provincial Work Safety and Supervision Bureau told the state-run Xinhua news agency that the survivors were injured, although their conditions were not considered to be life-threatening. Jilin Governor Bayanqolu visited the scene on Saturday and met with survivors at a local hospital. The cause of Friday's accident was not immediately known, but it follows two other mine accidents in China in recent weeks. Thirteen people were killed on February 28 when a small fire spread toxic carbon monoxide throughout a coal mine in Hebei province, and 21 miners were killed on March 12 when a gas outburst occurred at the Machang coal mine in Guizhou province. Safety conditions at mines in China have significantly improved in recent years but they remain among the world's most dangerous with 1,384 deaths in 2012, a significant decrease from the 1,973 fatalities in 2011. The Chinese government reported 2,433 fatalities in 2010 and 2,631 in 2009. China in recent years shut down scores of small mines to improve safety and efficiency in the mining industry. The country has also ordered all mines to build emergency shelter systems by June 2013 which are to be equipped with machines to produce oxygen and air conditioning, protective walls and airtight doors to protect workers against toxic gases and other hazardous factors. The first manned test of such a permanent underground chamber was carried out in August 2011 when around 100 people - including managers, engineers, miners, medical staff, and the chamber's developers - took part in a 48-hour test at a mine owned by the China National Coal Group in the city of Shuozhou in northern China's Shanxi Province. One of the worst mining accidents in China in recent years happened in November 2009 when 104 workers were killed after several explosions at a coal mine in Heilongjiang province.

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