Miner Dies in Roof Cave-in



A miner died of asphyxia following the collapse of a section of a mine he was working in. The cave-in is believed to have been caused by an earthquake in the area, which left 55 miners trapped in the 1,600 foot (487.7 m) deep mine.

All the men escaped except the victim, who was found 48 hours after the cave-in occurred. Rescuers pulled out the man and placed him on a backboard for transport. During their exit, they ran into a pocket of ammonia gas and momentarily collapsed, dropping the victim. When they regained their rescue efforts, the victim was no longer breathing. He was declared dead on arrival to hospital.

Investigators made several recommendations from this incident:

- Maintain on-site emergency rescue and medical teams with underground rescue capabilities.
- Establish a system for communication between responders and underground miners, and a capacity to access oxygen where it might be necessary.
- Ensure as much stability as possible in underground situations. Though the existing dimensions were within prescribed limits, companies are encouraged to err on the side of safety with additional roof supports.
- Workers should use a structured plan for organized evacuation and rescue efforts. Such a plan sees workers taking personal responsibility for each other’s safety, establishes trust and increases cohesiveness.