Beat: Health

Carbon monoxide poisoning kills 11 miners in northern China

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USPA News - At least eleven workers were killed Thursday when a small fire spread toxic carbon monoxide throughout a coal mine in northern China, local authorities said on Friday. Two other miners remained missing and are feared to have been killed as well.

The incident happened at around 8 p.m. local time on Thursday when an air compressor and wood caught fire at a coal mine in Huailai County near Zhangjiakou, a city in northern Hebei Province. The fire spread carbon monoxide throughout the mine where thirteen people were working. "The search-and-rescue team has so far recovered the bodies of eleven miners who died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning," said a spokesman for the country`s State Administration of Work Safety. "Two people are still missing. The rescue work is continuing to find those workers." The state-run Xinhua news agency said the mine belongs to Zhangkuang Group, a subsidiary of Jizhong Energy Group Co., Ltd. It said Zhao Heping, the general manager of Zhangkuang Group, has been removed from his post while an investigation by local authorities is being carried out. 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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