

Man dies as tyres explode at Qld mine

AAP

February 16, 2015, 3:32 pm

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An exploding tyre has killed a worker at a Queensland coal mine. Source: AAP

Anglo American says it's too soon to say if systemic safety issues played a role in the death of a contractor killed by an exploding tyre at one of its central Queensland coal mines.

A tyre on a large mining truck exploded at the Dawson coal mine, in the Bowen Basin, early on Monday killing one contractor and leaving a second seriously injured.

It's the third fatality at an Anglo American mine site in Queensland in less than a year.

In December, a worker died when a wall beside an underground roadway collapsed at the company's Grasstree coal mine, also in the Bowen Basin.

Just months earlier, in May, an electrician died at Middelmount after succumbing to noxious fumes while working underground.

Monday's tyre blast death is also not the first at an Anglo American mine site.

In December 2010, contractor Wayne Robert MacDonald died while fitting a freshly inflated tyre to a prime mover used to haul coal at Anglo's Foxleigh mine in the Bowen Basin.

A spokeswoman for the miner told AAP it was too soon to say if the latest death could be linked to broader safety issues, and promised a thorough investigation.

But the CFMEU is alarmed.

"We are extremely concerned that this is the third fatal accident at an Anglo American-owned coal mine in the last 12 months," the union's Queensland president Stephen Smyth said.

"There has been a pattern of tyre-related incidents at Anglo American open-cut coal mines."

Operations at the Dawson mine have been suspended, while an investigation led by Queensland's Mines Inspectorate gets underway.

Just last year, Coroner David O'Connell examined the tyre-blast death of the Foxleigh contractor, Mr MacDonald, who was under a prime mover when a tyre exploded.

The tyre, which had just been inflated and fitted, had been marked in chalk with words SLOW LEAK/OK, with the words SLOW LEAK crossed out.

As the tyre was being lowered back to the ground, it suffered what's known as a zipper failure, and a percussive shockwave of air escaped, hitting Mr MacDonald in the chest and killing him.

The coroner made several recommendations, including that mine site managers and their contractors review tyre management practices to ensure tyres used on mine sites are operated within their design parameters.

Mr O'Connell said the review needed to happen by December 9, and that mine sites needed to introduce an annual process to ensure ongoing compliance.

The inquest also heard evidence that there was great confusion among workers at Foxleigh about the correct tyre pressure to use.

SIMILAR MINING DEATHS IN RECENT YEARS

- Dec 18, 2010: Contractor Wayne Robert MacDonald is killed while changing a tyre on a large mine truck at the Foxleigh coal mine, in central Queensland's Bowen Basin
- Aug 8, 2005: A 29-year-old contractor is killed by an exploding tyre on a coal hauling truck at the Foxleigh mine. Anglo American didn't own Foxleigh at the time of this death.
- Feb 9, 2004: A 47-year-old man is killed and a second is seriously injured while changing a truck tyre in the workshop of the Pasminco Century zinc mine in far north-west Queensland
- Nov 14, 1996: A man in his 30s is killed when a tyre explodes on a crane at the Bullabulling mine, in the West Australian Goldfields.