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Body found in Qld opal mine after collapse

—QLD News—

Man trapped in collapsed mine at Opalton, Queensland

Madura McCormack, Nathan Torpey, AAP, The Courier-Mail
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POLICE and firefighters have dug with their hands to retrieve the body of a 62 -year-old man from a collapsed trench at a shallow-cut opal mine in Central West Queensland.

Emergency services were alerted at around 4pm on Saturday after a friend visited the remote site between Winton and Jundah – 150km south of Winton – and found the trench filled with dirt and rubble.



It took emergency service six hours to travel to the station in Opalton due to the remote location and rugged terrain, police said.

Police and firefighters used their hands to dig through two metres of rubble before retrieving Sid Cuddy's body.

It is understood the well-known and well-liked Longreach man had been prospecting alone at the site.

"He always lent a hand to anyone who was in need out there and he was very experienced in the opal field," said a Winton local who did not want to be named.

"It's just very tragic for his family and the whole community," he said.

Queensland Boulder Opal Association Vice President Colin Duff said opal mine accidents in Queensland are rare.

"Hopefully this will be a slap in the face to everyone to be extra careful in the middle of nowhere when you're working by yourself," Mr Duff said.

"Usually the good go first and he will be missed because he was a legendary sort of a guy and I know he helped a lot of people in his mining."

The opal mining community of Opalton and surrounds is understood to be small, averaging about 50 full time miners with numbers increasing during the cooler months.



Opalton.



Sidney Cuddy, 62, was found dead in a collapsed opal mine in Queensland

The cause of the collapse is unknown at this stage but there were no suspicious circumstances, police said.

Opal miners *The Courier-Mail* spoke to said the collapse could be due to a swollen ground caused by increased rainfall in recent months.

The nearby town of Longreach received record-breaking rainfalls last month with 131mm of rain compared to 0.4mm in September 2015.

Workplace Health and Safety and the Department of Mines and Energy will be advised of the incident and police will prepare a report for the coroner.



📍 It took emergency crews six hours to reach the remote site 150km south of Winton in Central West Queensland.

OVERNIGHT: A major rescue operation is underway to save a man believed to be trapped inside a collapsed mine in Queensland.

Urban Search and Rescue teams from Mackay and Townsville have been called to the scene to assist firefighters from Winton who are co-ordinating the search for the missing man.

It is understood that a man went to the Arch mine at Opalton, 150km south of Winton in central Queensland, at 4pm to visit his friend and allegedly found a vehicle crushed by rocks inside the mine with no sign of his friend.

Police, ambulance and fire crews were called to assist in the search amid fears the man was potentially trapped inside a collapsed mineshaft.

A spokesman from Queensland Ambulance said, “all emergency services were having a tough time locating the remote private mine due to rugged terrain.”

It is understood that the terrain requires a 4WD to navigate and as at 10pm Saturday emergency services were yet to arrive on scene after leaving more than three hours earlier.

The man was reported missing after a friend found his damaged car at 4pm.

Police fear the man may be trapped inside a collapsed mineshaft.

The small community of Opalton is renowned for having one of the largest opal fields in Queensland and is well known for the quality of opal mined.