



37 Chinese miners die in Henan just days after the rescue of 33 miners in Chile

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Officials [confirmed today](#) that all 37 miners trapped underground during a massive gas explosion at a coal mine in China's central Henan province on 16 October have died.

A total of 276 miners were underground when 2,500 tonnes of coal dust enveloped the mine in Yuzhou after a gas explosion in the early hours of Saturday morning, just two days after the dramatic rescue of 33 Chilean miners, trapped underground for about ten weeks.

The Yuzhou tragedy is just the latest mine disaster in a year that has seen China's mine accident and death rates begin to rise again after a steady decrease from a peak of 7,000 deaths in 2002. There were around 2,600 deaths officially reported in 2009. Moreover, the accident occurred just a week after the Chinese government introduced new measures to ensure mine safety whereby mine leaders should accompany miners down the pit for the entirety of their shift.

The China News Service reported that Pingyu Coal & Electric Co. Ltd's deputy chief engineer was in the mine at the time of the explosion and helped to evacuate 239 of the miners. However that was not enough for the head of China's State Administration of Work Safety, Luo Lin, who reportedly rebuked mine managers for conducting gas tests while workers were still underground.

China's [netizens, bloggers and columnists](#) were even more critical in their judgment of the mine managers for their negligence and local government officials for failing to enforce safety standards.

Many writers commented on the lack of emergency shelters in Chinese mines, a stark contrast to Chile, where the shelter allowed the trapped miners to stay alive in relative comfort for ten weeks.

And one the survivors of the Yuzhou mine, Chen Jiaguo, confirmed in an interview with the [Beijing News](#) that the safety zones in the mine lacked any survival equipment or even basic necessities, and had actually been filled with debris.

"There was no rescue equipment in the tunnels, no food or water and most of the time, the safety zones were filled with scrap metal and debris. Also, the ventilation fans were not strong enough to circulate the air sufficiently," Chen was quoted as saying.

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