

Iowa worker killed in partial mine collapse

By Matt Rigel and Marcus Day
27 January 2017

A mine worker at Linwood Mining and Mineral in Davenport, Iowa was pronounced dead after being recovered from a collapse that occurred just before 10 p.m. on Wednesday night. The worker was identified as 52-year-old Ronald Trich, Jr., who lived in nearby Rock Island, Illinois. Trich was a mine truck operator who had worked at Linwood for 12 years.

Little information has been released about the accident. According to company statements, Trich was outside his truck in a remote part of the mine, which was not in operation, and was found buried under rock. Trich was seemingly killed by the collapse itself and was pronounced dead by the Scott County Medical Examiner after his body was recovered.

Jonathan Wilmhurst, Linwood's president, has said the collapse was "an isolated incident," and that the portion of the mine where it occurred is now stable. "Nobody is at risk," he added.

The company also stated that there were no witnesses to the incident. The US Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is conducting an investigation into the death, which is expected to take between two to six months.

Linwood Mining and Mineral, which dates back to 1944, employs about 100 and claims to be one of the largest underground limestone mines, supplying limestone, calcium and magnesium oxides to manufacturing companies. The sprawling mine and associated processing facilities stretch from Buffalo to Davenport, Iowa, part of the Quad Cities region located on the Mississippi River.

Linwood is a subsidiary of McCarthy-Bush corporation, which operates multiple companies specializing in construction, real estate, steel and mining. The company states in its profile that it commands a "proven limestone reserve of 400 million tons," ensuring that the mine will "operate at high capacity levels into the 22nd century."

The last death at Linwood occurred in 1997 at the company's nearby lime plant. James M. Smith, a contract truck driver, slipped from his trailer while working and fell over 11 feet. As the company's web site currently notes, the plant operates "24 hours a day for 365 days of the year."

In 2016, Linwood received 73 "citations, orders or safeguards," according to MSHA's mine data retrieval system, the most the company had received in the past 10 years. The company was forced to pay over \$87,000 in related financial penalties.

In 2009, Linwood Mining was also cited for air pollution after air quality violations were found at their mining site in Davenport in 2006.

Trich's death is the first mining fatality in the US this year.

The collapse that caused Trich's death occurs in the backdrop of statements by President Donald Trump, who has pledged to swiftly and dramatically cut regulations, telling corporate executives this week, "We think we can cut regulations by 75 percent. Maybe more, but by 75 percent." One of Trump's first actions following his inauguration was an executive order freezing any new or pending regulations. The order forces federal agencies to clear any regulations not yet published or implemented with a department or agency head appointed by Trump.

Although Trump has promoted his plans to slash regulations as supposedly intended to "create jobs" and benefit American workers, in reality, he aims to shred any restraint on the ability of the corporate and financial elite to extract the maximum amount of profit from workers under the most brutal and dangerous conditions.

While Trump made demagogic appeals during his campaign for president to coal miners and other sections of the working class who have been ruined by decades of deindustrialization under both Democrats

and Republicans, the president's cabinet picks and statements regarding cutting regulations give a glimpse of the anti-worker onslaught being planned. Trump's pick to head the Department of Labor, which oversees MSHA, is Andrew Puzder, a multimillionaire CEO who ran fast-food giants Hardee's and Carl's Jr. Puzder has vocally criticized increasing the minimum wage, in addition to opposing mandatory overtime for salaried employees.

Trump's picks to head the Department of the Interior, Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke, and Department of Energy, former Texas Governor Rick Perry, are both fervent proponents of US "energy independence," i.e. opponents of environmental regulation and stooges of the various oil and mining conglomerates.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>