
Hearings of case of Raspadskaya mine explosions start



The Mezhdurechensk Town Court of Kemerovo Region started today to hear the case over explosions in the Raspadskaya coal mine in Kemerovo Region in which 91 people were killed and 146 more were injured.

There are 8 people in the dock: Technical Director of ZAO Raspadskaya Coal Company Anatoly Ryzhov, Director of OAO Raspadskaya, Deputy CEO of ZAO Raspadskaya Coal Company Igor Volkov, chief engineer of OAO Raspadskaya Andrei Druzhinin, commander of the Novokuznetsk separate paramilitary mine rescue squad Aleksandr Apalkov, ventilation, degassing and prevention service manager Vladislav Valts, ventilation and safety section manager Vyacheslav Radtsev, shift manager Igor Belov and state inspector of the Mezhdurechensk territory mining supervision office of the Kemerovo Region technological and ecological inspectorate of Rostekhnadzor (the federal environmental, technological and nuclear inspectorate) Fyodor Veremeyenko. The latter is charged with a crime under Part of Article 293 of the RF Penal Code (negligence) while others are accused of a crime under Part 3 of Article 217 of the RF Penal Code (violation of safety rules at explosive facilities which entailed the death of two or more people by negligence).

It took the investigators more than 4 years to look into the case which was due to the necessity of a large amount of investigative operations. Over that period the investigators assigned about 700 different forensic inquiries, including mine and technical one which took two and a half years.

As a result the investigators found out the reasons for the accident and revealed that the tragedy was caused by a desire of the enterprise management to increase volumes of coal mining and of financial profit consequently. The initial project provided for the safe volume of coal mining in size not exceeding 8 thousand tons a day for an area. Ryzhov, Druzhinin, Volkov, Waltz, and Radtsev

devised and approved own industry documentation in violation of set rules of safety in accordance with which coal mining respectively reached 21,5 thousand tons. Veremeyenko was in charge of control over an organization of dust-explosion protection measures in the mine which was not de facto exercised. Shift manager Belov approved orders for implementation of works in the mine, perfectly aware about explosive situation in there. As a result of systematic violations of the safety rules the first explosion which entailed the death of 65 people occurred.

The chief engineer Druzhinin who was de facto self-dismissed from fulfilment of obligations entrusted to him had to manage emergency containment under the plan approved by the mentioned persons. Technical Director Ryzhov who did not also take necessary measures had to assume management or appoint a one responsible for its implementation. Instead of it shift manager Belov and the mine director Volkov directed not less than 140 next shift employees for pressurization of above-mine buildings in conditions of real threat of a repeat explosion. In his turn, Commander of a mountain-rescue troop Apalkov sent subordinates not having the status of rescuers also for establishment of circumstances of the accident and rescuing people from the mine. Investigation found saving them by that moment had not appeared possible any more, veracity, the leader of the troop had known that. Apalkov also knew there was potentially explosive methane concentration in the mine and repeat explosion was inevitable, and it occurred at the moment of people descent to the mine. There were 19 people in its epicenter; they did not have any chance to survive. In addition, mountains-rescuer and six next shift employees present on the surface died.

Following the results of the investigation, under the current legislation, the Investigative Committee submitted to Rostekhnadzor a request to eliminate the reasons and consequences that contributed to the crime. The request offers a number of organizational and regulatory measures aimed at elimination of safety breaches. Unfortunately, despite the chance to take account of previous mistakes, the tragedies did not stop. Now, as you all know, we are investigating a similar tragedy that happened on 25 February 2016 in the Severnaya coal mine in the Komi Republic. It is too early to speak about the causes of the accident, while the investigative operations are in their active phase. But we would like to know if the owners and managers of the Severnaya mine took account of previous accidents and recommendations. And did the control authority know about it? I assume that considering the number of different kinds of accidents that keep happening in coal mines in Russia, which by the way are about 50 in the past 5 years, we need to completely revise the approaches to organization of labor at such facilities making safety the top-priority.

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