Mining, Oil & Gas: Process Safety Plus Personnel Systems Fatality File

Worker Killed in Rock Fall Due to Unsafe Ground Support System

Standin The Victorian workplace safety regulator has laid charges against two companies over a fatal gold mine collapse in March 2024.

WorkSafe, on Thursday, charged Victory Minerals and Carr Mining Services with breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Kurt Hourigan, 37, was killed and his co-worker Connor Smith, 21, seriously injured in a rock fall at the Ballarat Gold Mine while working 500m below ground.

Other miners underground at the time were able to make their way to a safety pod.

Victory Minerals, which operates the mine, and Carr Mining Services, which provides mining services, have each been charged with two counts of failing to provide or maintain a safe working environment.

The regulator alleges both companies breached the Act by failing to provide a safe system of work that required ground support to be installed in the section of the mine where air leg mining works were occurring.

It also alleged the pair failed to supervise workers to ensure adequate ground supports were installed.

The charges are expected to be heard in the Ballarat Magistrates' Court on December 18.

The announcement has been welcomed by the Australian Workers Union (AWU) as a “first step”, but the union has urged the regulator to pursue workplace manslaughter charges.

AWU Victorian branch secretary Ronnie Hayden said the union believed warnings were ignored and safety standards abandoned “just to save a dollar”.

According to the union, air leg mining is a “dangerous manual drilling technique” on unsupported ground, with the mine operators allegedly on notice of the risk of rockfalls.

“The AWU believe that WorkSafe has the evidence and the tools to pursue industrial manslaughter charges. We urge them to do so,” the union said in a statement.

“Victorian workers deserve better than a workplace safety system where the people in charge face nothing more than corporate fines when workers are killed.”

Source: https://www.news.com.au