

Four Watson konimeters have been issued to Inspectors of Coal-mines with a view to investigating air-borne dusts in coal-mines, to prevent conditions leading to diseases caused by mine dusts, and to minimize the ever-present risk of coal-dust explosions. These instruments can be used both for making counts of air-borne dusts and for the immediate demonstration of air conditions with respect to dust to miners at the working-faces.

A number of x-ray examinations of mine workers has been made to test the effect of working in mine atmospheres, and these tests are being continued.

To minimize shock in serious accident cases in coal-mines, an anti-shock injection treatment has been instituted and can be made use of in most of the larger mines within a few minutes of the accident.

All mine officials are to be required to undergo a refresher course in first aid every five years.

With a view to reducing shot-firing risks in gassy mines, a consignment of sheathed explosives is now on the way from England. Tests will be made with it on arrival.

The use of automatic stop-blocks of various types has been urged on mine-managers. Many jigs have been equipped with these devices, which should considerably increase safety.

DANGEROUS OCCUPATIONS

Thirty-six reports of dangerous happenings were made to Inspectors of Coal-mines, the Northern district having sixteen, the West Coast fifteen, and the Southern five. Thirty-one of these cases were heatings due to spontaneous combustion, and varied from active fires to reports of firestink from old workings.

These heatings are due to our method of working thick seams and are responsible for a heavy loss of coal every year, in addition to increasing the danger of mine work. They will never be eliminated until our method of mining is changed.

There were reports of three large accumulations of inflammable gas at the Liverpool, Wallsend, and Dobson Mines respectively. Two of these followed falls of roof, and the third was due to a heavy feeder of gas having been met in a level. Action was taken and the gas was cleared without risk in all cases.

An ignition of a small amount of inflammable gas in the Doel's Dip Section, Kamo State Mine, occurred on 13th May, a miner receiving burns. A further small amount of gas was later detected with the lamp in the same working-place. Safety-lamps were ordered for the section at once, it being impossible at the time to obtain lamps to equip the whole mine. These have now been obtained from overseas and the whole mine will be put on safety-lamps as soon as they are delivered.

A reported ignition in No. 6 Panel, Webb State Mine, Stockton, on 25th August, 1948, was investigated. No trace of inflammable gas could be detected in the working-place and samples submitted to the Dominion Laboratory were negative. No action was therefore taken in this case.

LEGISLATION

The Coal Act, 1948, was passed during the year making provision for the acquisition by the Crown of the property in all worked coal, and to amend the Coal-mines Act, 1925.

The Westport Coal Company Act, 1948, was also passed, making provision for the vesting in the Crown of the shares in the Westport Coal Co., Ltd., and to provide for the dissolution of the company.

PROSECUTIONS

Inspectors of Coal-mines found it necessary to take legal action in seven cases of breach of the Coal-mines Act, 1925, or regulations.

Five convictions were obtained, one information was withdrawn, and one was dismissed on a technicality connected with the wording of the charge.

I have, &c.,

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Inspecting Engineer and Chief Inspector of Coal-mines.