

Cost of Life-Altering Personal damage

Moura Disaster

When I was working in the corporate safety department of a major mining company I was focused on the 7 open-cut mines and had no responsibilities for the 2 company underground mines. My view was and still is that some of the safety work being done in the open-cut mines was world class. On the 7th August 1994 Moura underground coal mine suffered an underground explosion that saw 11 men entombed in the mine and the mine closed. If my memory serves me correctly the head of the Mining Wardens enquiry into the disaster said "What happened at Moura represents a passage of management neglect that must never be repeated in the mining industry" The people who said what happened at Moura was an enormous stuff-up are understating the situation. Professor Andrew Hopkins wrote a book called "Managing Major Hazards" on the Moura disaster that I think should be compulsory reading for every manager, supervisor and OHS professional.

Those who complain about the effort and cost of implementing safety measures should have been around to see the slump in the company share price, shareholder dissatisfaction, pain and suffering, cost, effort, media crucifixion , ruined reputations, wrecked careers, psychological trauma, union backlash, enormous investigation effort, massive counseling effort, threat of regulator action, legal action against the company and company officials and strained relationships I saw.