

Beat: News

At least 166 dead, hundreds missing in Turkey mine disaster

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USPA News - At least 166 miners were killed Tuesday and more than 400 others may still be trapped underground after an explosion triggered a fire at a coal mine in western Turkey, officials said on early Wednesday, warning that the death toll is certain to rise. The accident happened on Tuesday afternoon at a coal mine owned by coal producer Soma Group in the district of Soma, located in the western province of Manisa.

The company said a fire broke out about two kilometers (1.2 mile) underground after a faulty electrical transformer exploded, leading to a power outage that caused the mine's elevator to stop working. Speaking on early Wednesday morning, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Y?ld?z said at least 166 people had been killed, all of them due to carbon monoxide poisoning. He said a total of 787 miners were working underground at the time of the accident but only 372 of them had been either rescued or recovered, leaving as many as 415 people still unaccounted for. Of the 206 workers who were rescued, about 80 of them were injured, including four workers who remained in a critical condition, Y?ld?z said. Rescue personnel were working desperately early Wednesday morning to reach the hundreds of people still unaccounted for while scores of relatives gathered at the site. The office of Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the prime minister had canceled his planned trip to Albania and would instead travel to Soma later on Wednesday. The preliminary death toll already makes Tuesday's accident the world's deadliest mining accident in years. The most recent mine disaster in Turkey happened in May 2010 when 30 miners died in an explosion at a coal mine in Zonguldak province, but the country's worst ever mining accident happened in 1992, also in Zonguldak province, when a gas explosion killed 263 workers.

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