

West Virginia gas well explosion leaves two dead, two critical

Written by Australian Business

September 17, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- Two men have lost their lives in the aftermath of a recent explosion at a West Virginia natural gas well, while two others remain in critical condition.

Two gas well workers die weeks after blast

Jason Mearns, age 37, and Tommy Paxton, age 45, both died within a week of one another after being hospitalized for injuries they sustained in a [gas well drilling accident](#) in New Milton, West Virginia, about 50 miles southwest of Morgantown. The explosion occurred at an Antero Resources drilling site around 4:00 a.m. on July 7, 2013.

Jason Mearns, the most recent fatality connected to the blast, was a resident of Beverly, West Virginia. Mearns was burned in the explosion and suffered a lung injury that deprived his brain of oxygen, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. He died on July 28 in the burn unit at West Penn Hospital.

Less than one week earlier, 45-year-old Tommy Paxton of Walton, West Virginia, died in the burn unit at the same hospital. Paxton had also been working at the Antero Resources gas well and was injured in the [explosion](#). Published reports indicate that he died after developing sepsis as a result of thermal burns.

Other gas well workers injured

In addition to the two men who lost their lives, several other individuals reportedly suffered burns and other injuries in connection to the explosion at the Antero site. Some received medical treatment at local facilities, according to news reports, while three others were transported to West Penn Hospital for treatment along with Paxton and Mearns.

One of the individuals admitted to West Penn is now in stable condition, according to WDTV, while two others, Charles Arbogast and Michael Murray, remain in critical condition. A fund has been established at Citizens Bank in Weston to collect donations for the men, according to the report.

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Work continues with new safety measures

The West Virginia Gazette reported that Antero attributed the explosion to an accumulation of gas from on-site storage tanks, a condition the company says was exacerbated by weather conditions. On August 9, just over a month after the explosion, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection lifted a stop-work order on the site, allowing Antero to resume operations.

Antero Resources, a Colorado-based company, will be required to conduct a three-tiered review of its equipment layout at the site to ensure that ignition sources are kept at a safe distance from fuel sources, the Associated Press reported. The company will also require gas well workers to wear portable gas monitors, and will install new cylindrical storage tanks equipped with latched hatches to prevent the accidental release of flammable gas.

Financial compensation for gas well injuries

People who are injured or lose a loved one due to gas well explosions, mining accidents and other work-related injuries in West Virginia may be eligible to receive monetary compensation for their injuries, lost wages and other damages. Contact a knowledgeable work injury lawyer for more information.

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