

## **Official: technology will boost mine safety**

January 22, 2008 - 15:29 BJT (07:29 GMT) xinhua

The nation's top work safety agency will this year "actively promote" the use of tracking and locating systems for miners working underground in response to rising concerns about safety, an official said.

The introduction of real-time supervision systems for underground mining operations - the dominant form of China's coal exploitation - is in line with the objectives laid out in the 11th Five-Year-Plan (2006-10), Peng Yujing, an official with the State Administration of Work Safety (SAWS), told a forum in Beijing on Sunday.

When accidents occur, the systems should be capable of identifying the exact location of trapped miners, help rescue teams analyze the underground environment and save precious time needed to ensure lives are saved, Peng said. Recent work safety campaigns have led to a reduction in the number of coal mine deaths. Last year's total of 3,786 was down 20 percent on 2006.

Manufactured by United States conglomerate Honeywell, the KJ297, or "Miner Management and Locating System", was introduced at the forum as the first of its kind developed by a multinational firm to meet the work safety administration's latest standards for mining products. Six domestic developers have released similar products and received relevant approval.

The KJ297 system "helps detect potential risks and avoid possible accidents," Shane Tedjarati, Honeywell's Global vice-president and China CEO, said.

"We believe with such efforts by Honeywell and like-minded companies, the national condition of mine safety, which has already seen great progress, will get even better," Peng said.

Despite a drop in mine fatalities last year, accidents still occur. On Sunday night, 20 people died in a gas explosion in an illegal mine in the city of Linfen, Shanxi province.

The blast occurred at about 9 pm in the Weijialing mine in Fenxi county. The rescue operation has been concluded.

According to the Shanxi work safety administration, the mine opened in 2004 but was later closed for failing to meet safety requirements.

Miners operating illegally took the opportunity afforded by heavy snow cutting the area off to enter the mine at about 7 pm on Sunday, the administration said.

It was not immediately known how many people were in the mine at the time of the blast, as the foreman was among those killed.

Police are looking for the organizers of the illegal mining.

Linfen suffered another mining tragedy in December, when a gas blast at a coal mine killed 105 miners and injured 18 others.

The country's total coal output, which was an estimated 2.55 billion tons in 2007, has been growing by an average of 200 million tons per year as a result of soaring energy needs.

Guo Yuntao, director of the SAWS's research center, said that more than 95 percent of the coal is mined by hand.

Many of these miners are working under a huge amount of pressure and in often intricate and potentially dangerous environments.

"In this context, the massive number of mine safety accidents is natural," Guo said.

[Print](#)